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Riverfall.

Issued Sept., 1903.



PUBLISHERS' NOTE

When the original of this story was published, a dozen years ago, under another title, Edward Bellamy wrote, "I have read your book and hope a hundred thousand others will read it." That hope was more than fulfilled, but the novel was never satisfactory to the author. A vein ran through it which he now admits had no rightful place there. A distinguished woman said, "You have carved a marvellous white statue and dashed mud over the pedestal."

It is to offer the public that statue with the stains eliminated that "Riverfall" has been prepared. Stronger even than its predecessor, it contains no line that cannot be read aloud in any circle. We believe it the most powerful and most readable presentation of the subject of which it treats that has been offered.

It is our intention to withdraw the original book from circulation.

G. W. DILLINGHAM COMPANY.

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RIVERFALL

I

The tall elms and maples that bordered the walks were nearly denuded of their brilliant foliage, and the grounds of the Agency were alive with scurrying leaves of brilliant colors, tossed hither and thither by the autumn winds. The well-kept lawn was brown and the faded shrubs and flower beds testified that winter was not far away. Even the vines that clung to the old mansion were withered and seemed to shrink from the long windows which earlier in the season they had half covered with their verdure. The chill of September was in the air.

Two gentlemen came down the granite steps, and the elder buttoned his long overcoat tightly about his slender frame as he felt the force of the east wind. The other, less than half his companion's age, put his ungloved hands in the pockets of his short walking coat, and pressed his elbows closely to his sides.

"Are you sure you won't take cold, Uncle John?" he asked, with a thoughtful smile. "We mustn't be reckless, just because the sun happens to shine again."

"I shall be all right, Philip, if we keep walking," responded the other hoarsely. "Let us promenade on

the paths. I'm weary of staying indoors. I have a number of things to say to you, and I can think better when on my feet."

As he spoke, John Westland, President of the Great Central Corporation for nearly forty years, and one of its largest stockholders, looked with knitted brows across the terrace, beyond the place where he stood, to the factory village in the valley. It was the typical village where cotton is manufactured into cloth, with its seven huge structures of red brick, where the processes of spinning and weaving were carried on, each dominated by a tall chimney, from which black masses of smoke were pouring. The stream which gave in connection with its dam a name to the town—Riverfall—supplied at some seasons sufficient power to move the machinery, but the past summer had been unusually dry, and at present steam had to do practically all the work. A dozen houses of the better class could be discerned along the hillside of which the Agency grounds occupied the crest, but below them long stretches of "barracks" showed where the great majority of the inhabitants ate and slept.

Perhaps a little better than the negro quarters on a Virginia plantation in the days before the war, these buildings were still far behind the best American standard for housing the working class. They were owned by the Corporation, and occupied by its operatives and their families. The walls were as a general thing on a line with the street, giving little chance for adornment, had any been desired by the tenants, nor of course for anything like a veranda or even "stoop."

Small children played in the streets, while their mothers conversed in a high key from house to house. Dealers in foodstuffs varied the monotony with cries of articles for sale. The rattle of wheels and the coming and going at the sound of the mill whistle were the chief events of the day.

“The doctor says it won’t do for me to risk another winter here,” said John Westland, after a short spell of coughing. “I’ve fixed on next week as the time for starting, Monday, if possible. Nathan, that new valet I engaged in New York, will attend to me and see that I get everything I need for my comfort in Florida. Edna” (he hesitated at the name) “will—stay here. She understands and is quite content. As to the business, I must leave that pretty much in your hands. You can communicate with me daily, and of course use the telegraph, if necessary. There’ll be nothing you can’t handle—unless the operatives make trouble.”

Philip smiled confidently. “I think I can handle that, too, if it comes,” he said, showing his white and even teeth. “I’ll risk their getting very far from my control.”

The younger man was about twenty-eight, tall, athletic, dark and well poised. He had not been intended for a manufacturer by his father, who engaged in other business during a life that ended abruptly several years previous to the opening of this story. He had, in fact, settled down to nothing regular until the summer just ended, when his uncle sent for him to take some of the burden from his failing shoulders. After leaving the university Philip had traveled considerably, and when

he found himself at his father's death in possession of a comfortable income he saw no need of entering the rush and tumble of business life.

The call to Riverfall, however, partook of the nature of a sacred duty. His only surviving uncle needed his services, and they were placed at once at his disposal. Philip set about acquiring knowledge of matters connected with the mills with the cheerful earnestness of a healthy and energetic young man, whose pent-up force found occupation of any kind delightful. He was fond of his uncle, and glad to do all he could to aid him. Soon he found, to his surprise, that work was in itself a pleasure, compared to which idleness was a decided bore. He could not acquire in a few months the immense technical knowledge that had come in many years to his uncle, but the management of men seemed his natural forte.

Above all, he had a supreme confidence in himself, and in his ability to overcome obstacles. While he deeply regretted the state of health that made it necessary for John Westland to avoid the rigors of a northern winter, he welcomed the responsibilities he would be called to assume.

"I don't believe there'll be another strike," said the elder man, after a long look of gratification into his companion's face; "though nothing but a miracle can prevent our making a cut of ten per cent. in wages. The stoppage of business ten years ago must have taught our workmen that we always win in the end, and that living on half rations for six months is not as nice as some of their hotheads tried to make it out. It's always

two or three that cause the trouble—the bulk of the people are managed easily. Get hold of the leaders and scare 'em off—or buy 'em up if that seems the easiest way—and you'll have no strike. As for the mass it never does to let them think their talk amounts to anything. My great mistake when they last struck was in dickering and palavering with them at all. If I'm here the next time they start a row I'll settle it in short order. At the meeting of directors to-morrow I'll have authority given you to take the strongest steps in case they're required. I don't believe you'll need more than snap the whip if they act fractious."

President Westland spoke and thought of the people in his mills as he spoke and thought of the horses who drew his carriage. He would not have been wantonly cruel to either of them. He believed himself a kind and considerate employer, and would have resented an imputation that he could do anything unbecoming a gentleman and a Christian. He was a fine looking old man, with snow-white hair speaking benevolence in every fibre, and a carefully trimmed beard that gave a venerable cast to his face. Coming to Riverfall in his long past youth he had founded here the manufactures which he believed should have been rewarded by a monument, or at the very least a tablet, procured at the expense and by the initiative of the employés, who had shown, instead, the basest ingratitude for his labors.

Did he not give them work—steady employment at regular wages? Almost every mouth in the community owed its sustenance to him. And yet he felt, with a bitter pain at the heart—that the only emblems of

mourning when he died would be paid for out of the treasury of the company.

If his horses were balky he would lay his whip on them; they knew no other form of reason. If his operatives struck he would drive them into submission to what was for their good, until they learned that hunger and cold were the rewards of idleness. Animals—and children—and mill workers, he thought required superior intelligence to decide what was best for them.

“It would be a fine thing if we could break up their union,” suggested Philip, thoughtfully, as they came to a bend in the path, from which they could see the mills more plainly.

“The union does little harm if you pay no attention to it,” was the sharp reply. “It serves to amuse them and gives a chance for the hotheads to air their troubles. Just now, too, they’ve got a woman running things, and it will be easy to manage her. But I—I think I’d best go into the house. Even this sunshiny atmosphere is too cold for me.”

Philip offered his uncle an arm, which that gentleman condescended to take. It was clear that his physical strength was at a very low ebb.

“Is this woman really at the head of the operatives?” questioned Philip, as they walked slowly along.

“I don’t know. There’s a spinner named Hugh—I forget his other name—who runs things about as he pleases, I guess, though Ellen holds the nominal position of chief. The whole idea is ridiculous, but as long as a snake only shakes his rattles we don’t need to bother. If he ever forgets himself enough to strike we’ve got to

put our heel on his head and teach him a lesson. Half way measures are lost on these ignorant people. The severest means are really the kindest, for they are only well-meaning dunces, led astray by agitators."

At the veranda, which Mr. Westland, Sr., ascended with difficulty, leaning heavily on his companion's shoulder, he paused and looked over the valley.

"When I first came here," he said, huskily, "there wasn't a building of any kind in all the space your eyes cover; just a little stream meandering through the farms. I had \$5,000—not a penny more—to set up the first loom. I got my power by the rudest dam you can conceive of, and with three Englishmen I began to teach the farmers' girls how to spin and weave. It was five years before I could feel the earth solid under my feet. When the Civil War broke out I had my plant made over to a corporation, the nucleus of the one here to-day. The difficulty of getting cotton nearly swamped us then, and we didn't dare ask too many questions about how what we could buy came through the lines. In 1864 our third mill was finished, and we ran night and day. That was the time money was made, cloth retailing at forty and fifty cents a yard! Then Yankee help began to get scarce—farmers' girls wouldn't go into the mills any more—and we took in Irish, that were coming in droves from the other side. And after that," the speaker paused for breath, "it was the Canadians, half of whom couldn't speak a word of English when they arrived, that we had to rely on. Now there are, as you know, some Poles, Swedes and Armenians; and they all get twice the pay they could earn in their own

countries, with steady work from one year's end to another. Who gave it to them? I did! Do they show the least gratitude? Not one!"

Mr. Westland sank into a chair on the veranda and thanked Philip mutely as the latter spread over his knees a heavy lap robe. The note of discouragement at the ungratefulness of the mill people furrowed his brow deeply and met a responsive chord in the breast of the listener. There was a moment of silence and then the long noon whistle was sounded. As the two men gazed toward the mills the doors of one after the other were thrown open, and men and women, boys and girls, came out in swarms. The younger people were running, some pushing each other and "skylarking." The faint noise of shouting was wafted through the air. Then the older people appeared, walking at a quick gait, but more soberly, and the crowds spread in the direction of the boarding houses.

"Happy, careless scamps!" muttered the manufacturer—"I could envy them. No worry, no need to think of the future—work always provided, pay as regular as the sun—with an average state of health I would give half I own to possess. And not one stops to think of what they owe *me*—not one reflects on the years I have given to turn this unproductive spot into bread and meat for *their* benefit!"

Philip felt the force of this statement as he heard the tired voice and noted the weary eyes. At that moment he could have taken a whip to the ungrateful sharers in this philanthropist's bounty.

"You have done so many things for them," he mur-

mured. "You have contributed, I hear, to all the churches; and I know you were the largest subscriber to the Young Men's Christian Association. My dear uncle, there is but one consolation in a case like yours—the work you have done is recorded to your credit in heaven!"

He lifted his hat reverently as he spoke, but Mr. Westland tapped his foot impatiently on the floor of the veranda.

"Heaven!" he retorted, with a sudden rage. "What has Heaven done for me? It has sent me broken health when I should be in the prime of life; it has denied me a son and inflicted blindness on my only daughter. I know," he added, quickly, as he saw the shocked look of his auditor, "that I ought not to say this, but my nerves are unstrung. I try to be patient—I try to believe that God is just. Don't discuss the matter, please. It is time I took my medicine and got ready for lunch."

"Tenderly as a woman"—that is the usual expression to describe the way Philip assisted his uncle to his feet and escorted him within doors. Tenderly as a man who feels that one he loves is rapidly nearing the end of his earthly days, and has a right to complain of thanklessness sharper than a serpent's tooth—is a clearer way of expressing the idea.

"Riverfall is my pride—its industries are my monument," faltered the manufacturer as they entered the mansion. "I shall rely on you to keep it what I have made it, when God calls his unworthy servant hence."

II

“ A spinner named Hugh ! ” The name interested the new manager of the Great Central Corporation; and soon, when the rumors of dissatisfaction began to grow loud enough to be heard outside the lodge rooms, it struck him that it would be a stroke of diplomacy to make Hugh’s acquaintance. He wanted to study this lieutenant of the woman who was said to control “ his ” operatives.

When Philip obtained a formal introduction from one of the men in the counting room, Hugh took the outstretched hand with a firm grasp, and his clear blue eyes looked unflinchingly into the young gentleman’s. The spinner was a trifle under the medium height, of sturdy build and engaging countenance. He wore a short blond beard and moustache and had a forehead noticeably high. Any one who had once met his frank but determined glance would have picked him out as worth a second look.

Although young Westland had imbibed many ideas common to employers of labor in relation to their “ help,” he was not by nature an “ aristocrat.” He had been educated, to be sure, in the common notion that class distinctions are a necessary part of the arrangement of human society, but he had a generous desire that those about him should be as comfortable as the nature of things permitted.

He had, for instance, thought a good deal during the past summer of the houses in which his employés resided, wishing to make them better fitted for self-respecting human beings. A vacant piece of ground here and there in the village could be laid out as a garden, too, and a night-school established for the workmen who needed its advantages.

But a hint of these ideas to his uncle had met with decided opposition. The instant these people got it into their heads they were to be "pampered," said Mr. Westland, Sr., there would be no getting along with them. Socialists and anarchists were putting them up to enough queer thoughts, without those whose duty it was to govern adding fuel to the flame. There were already the public schools, supported almost wholly by the Corporation, as the largest taxpayer in town. As to gardens with flowers in them, he asked if it was likely that a village which could hardly show a dozen plants in all its windows would care to have "posey beds" maintained for its delectation. The boys would rob every one as soon as the first blossoms appeared, and trample the plants in the mud before a month was over.

There seemed a fault in this reasoning somewhere, but Philip did not think it becoming to argue the point with a man who had known these people for forty years and who should be aware of what was best for them. Perhaps he stored away in the interior of his brain a resolve to make a trial of the matter on a small scale at a later date, when he had fuller control; for the present it was quite enough to meet the problem of keeping

the established rate of dividend ready for distribution among the stockholders.

The latter object—which as every one knows is the primary one in operating a cotton mill—had already given him some uneasiness, for, owing to the impending Presidential election, prices of finished goods had fallen and the demand had grown smaller. In the warehouses of the company hundreds of bales were stored which must be sold, if at all, at considerably less profit than usual. Owing to a shortage in the crop, cotton had also risen at the same time that the product of the mills had taken a slump.

The reserve in the corporation treasury was less than at any time during the past decade. At the two last meetings the directors had seriously considered reducing wages, but had hesitated, partly from disinclination to cause distress, and partly because such action might result (nobody could tell) in a strike which would disarrange business. They knew, of course, that such a strike could have but one result—a victory, sooner or later, for the mill-owners—but in the meantime, if it lasted long enough, the corporation was pretty sure to be a loser as well as the wage-earners. New as he was to the business, Westland felt that he ought to get at all points of view in this matter—yes, even at that held by these French-Canadians, Swedes and Armenians, who might make it uncomfortable for him as well as themselves if they followed bad advice.

Everybody talked to him of Ellen. “A dangerous woman,” all said. She had gained such an ascendancy over the mill people that they would do practically what

she directed. And Hugh Mayfield, this ordinary spinner, working a dozen hours a day at his usual task, had found time to act as her assistant in banding these ignorant people into a "Union" that claimed rights coördinate with, if not superior to, the owners of this immense plant. Philip decided without much reflection that this was the place for him to begin. The man must be the true source of power, and the woman merely a figurehead; it did not take much discernment to figure that out. To go to the root of the matter he must get acquainted with Hugh.

The few moments that the manager and the mill-hand had together at their first meeting served, at least, to put them on good terms. Westland liked the broad forehead and clear eyes of the young fellow, and Hugh thought he saw something more than the ordinary task-master in the smiling countenance that beamed upon him. He had seen Philip at a distance several times, and had heard favorable reports of him from the village gossips. They had noticed the tender way in which he cared for his blind cousin Edna, when they were out walking or riding, as well as his assiduous attentions to the poor old man for whom, in his decrepitude, even those who had felt his iron rule found their hearts going out in pity. Hugh believed he could read character, and was as glad to know Philip as Philip was to know him. Besides, he had talked the matter over with Ellen, who advised him to get as intimate as possible with the man on whom all their interests were to depend.

A few days, therefore, after John Westland's departure for the South, Philip and Hugh were strolling to-

gether along a road a mile or so from the village, at the close of a pleasant afternoon. It is needless to say it was Sunday, for the workingman had no other time for such recreation. In accordance with Philip's plan, the conversation dwelt almost wholly on matters connected with the business in which each was in his own way vitally interested. Slowly the talk came around to the matter of the Union, and the name of "Ellen" was uttered by Mayfield.

"Isn't it something unusual," remarked Philip—"putting a lady at the head of a union in which fully half the members are——"

"Gentlemen?" interposed Hugh, with a smile. "I don't know how that would be; Ellen is not a lady."

"Not—a—lady!"

"She would be the last to claim such a title," said the young mill-hand. "She is a working girl—a working woman, if you like that better, though she is only twenty. If you ever meet Ellen and wish to annoy her you may apply to her the term 'lady.'"

Philip took out a silk handkerchief and wiped his forehead.

"You startled me," he explained, as he noticed his companion's look. "And why do you—why does every one—allude to this strange woman simply as 'Ellen'? I have never heard any other name given her."

In the deep blue eyes of the mill-hand there was a pained expression that might have dignified the orbs of one much higher in the estimation of the world.

"She has no other name," he said, gently. "She could take that of her mother, if she would, but she

prefers otherwise. We respect her wishes in this matter, as in all others.

“Then, she does not know her origin?”

“Yes, she does. Her mother, Margaret Perry, was an English weaver, who lived here for some years. Her father was the son of a very wealthy family, and is now a member of the New York Senate.”

The calm manner in which these words were uttered, the absence of concealment of their full meaning, astonished the listener greatly. He stood stockstill in the road.

“Yes,” repeated Hugh, soberly. “Ellen is what the law calls illegitimate.”

“What the law calls!” repeated Philip. “What else can it be called?”

“Love-born.”

“I fear the Senator deserves no such compliment,” retorted Westland. “He must be a cold-hearted villain to leave his child to be brought up in poverty.”

“My reference was not to him, but to the mother,” was the quick reply. “Margaret Perry came to America hardly more than a child herself, poor and friendless. Ellen’s father was a young college student, whose family had large interests in these mills, and here he met her. A sweet, shy, pretty girl she was, people say who remember her, ignorant of the world as an angel. He trapped her into what she supposed was a marriage—she too flattered and pleased to doubt his word—the same old story that has happened so often. She loved him to the last, would never hear a word against him, and died with his name on her lips.”

Westland shuddered.

“He knew of what had happened—and never even sent her money!”

Hugh’s face hardened. “I thought you would ask that,” he said. “He sent money and it was returned to him. The neighbors helped his victim through, she was gone in a few years after the baby came. Since then Ellen’s father has never appeared in Riverfall; I do not think it would be quite healthy for him,” added the speaker grimly.

The walk was resumed under the nearly bare arms of the maples that lined the roadway. The sun was declining and the autumn winds were playing with the dead leaves.

“Ellen could have taken his name, though,” said Westland, after some moments of silence. “I have known such cases.”

“She would not honor him so highly.”

“You speak warmly. One would think she were a relation of your own.”

“She is!” Hugh stopped short in the road. “She is my sister.”

“I am sorry!” cried Philip, putting his hand on his companion’s shoulder. “I did not understand—I do not understand now. Your *sister*?”

“Yes—and yours!”

A ray of light began to penetrate the puzzled brain.

“Ah, in the broad sense—a daughter of our mother Eve! You can’t imagine how you startled me.” He tried to shake off the depression. “Well, if accounts are true she is a credit to her lineage. I have heard

much of her—would it be too great a favor to present me?”

Hugh glanced with momentary suspicion at the other's face. Every lineament showed that its owner belonged to what is known as the “upper class.” He noted, also, the elegant clothing, the newest style of every article of dress. Then he thought of Ellen and the contrast her poor garments would present to such a picture.

“Why do you wish to know her?” he asked, the smile gone from his face. “You would call her haughty—probably think her impolite, if she consented to talk with you. She has little love for people in your station. Do you know what she considers a ‘gentleman of wealth’? Merely one who has plundered others more ignorant or weaker.”

Breaking off a twig from a willow, Westland chewed the end meditatively for a minute. What he had heard was certainly novel. A woman earning five or six dollars a week applying such terms, even in thought, to one who owned the very roof over her head—what nonsense! Still it was well to know if these insane ideas were really held by one who had such influence with his employés. He was more than ever anxious to meet her.

“Waiving for the moment the point that I am *not* a ‘gentleman of wealth’ but a hardworking man of business, Hugh, I don't see as Ellen's opinion differs very much from those you were giving me an hour ago as your own. If it be true that I am an agent of organized thievery I ought to bear hearing it even from feminine lips.”

“You would find it quite different, though, from my colloquial manner. When Ellen sees how strongly you take the opposite side she may say unpalatable things.”

Westland was glad of a chance to laugh. His natural spirits came to the surface.

“Perhaps I should not take the opposite side,” he replied, brightly. “One of the few things I have learned since I dropped on to this planet is to be careful how I dispute a woman. If Ellen should ‘accuse me of such things it were better my mother had not borne me,’ as Hamlet remarks, I would listen meekly. If she stirred me beyond endurance I would only ‘roar as gently as any sucking dove.’”

Hugh shook his head decidedly.

“You have no idea of the things she would say——”

“For instance?”

“Oh, I can’t pretend to imagine in advance a conversation between two such people as Ellen and you. Both are well equipped for an argument, but I assure you she wouldn’t come off second best. You would be wiser than to try it.”

“But, with your assistance, I shall,” answered Westland, decidedly.

“Let me warn you, then, not to adopt a frivolous vein. Nor must you assume a patronizing air, if you wish the conversation prolonged more than a minute.”

Strange words these, from a “mill-hand” to the manager of the Great Central Corporation! Democratic as he tried to be in his manner, Westland’s face flushed.

“Have no fear,” he responded, drawing himself up

an inch. "I shall act as if this la—this woman—was in every sense my equal."

Hugh's thoughtful countenance was a study.

"She considers herself vastly your superior," he replied calmly.

Westland wiped his lips with the handkerchief he had retained in his fingers.

"Indeed!" was all he could find to say.

"Yes. I might as well prepare you a little, if you insist on talking with Ellen. When she meets people in her own class she is gentleness itself. When she meets one of yours it takes little to bring out her disdain. I have seen Mr. Baker paying her off on a Saturday night when she would have made an excellent model for a statue of Contempt."

Westland put the handkerchief into his pocket, remarking laconically—

"But she took the money."

"Yes, she took the small part of what she had created that he was willing to give her; and as she swept it into her purse he could read in her face, as in illumined print, 'They have kept the lion's share—and this man is a jackal that lives off their plunder.'"

Westland stopped again in the road. He had never heard such talk as this.

"Mr. Baker must be a most affable man to endure that," said he. "Were he a mere heartless 'tool of capital' he would have her discharged immediately."

It was just as well to carry the war into Africa, he thought. He meant to keep his good nature, but there were limits. As he finished he saw the brows of his

companion contract again, and from the blue eyes flashed a new gleam.

“Discharge her! Discharge Ellen! How long do you think her people would endure that? Until she was reinstated, not a spindle of these mills would revolve. Mr. Baker has arbitrary powers. He can do many things, but he knows better than to force that issue.”

With a great effort Philip Westland controlled himself. What he heard made it seem as if the world had suddenly turned upside down.

“Are you sure you do not overstate the case?” he asked icily.

“Absolutely. The people of Riverfall have suffered great hardships before now, sometimes without a fight and sometimes with one. The greed of capital may grind them lower yet for all I know—though” (he hesitated) “I doubt it. But, put them face to face with the simple question of whether they will stand by Ellen, and not one would budge. Mr. Baker is a bold man, but he never’ll do that.”

Without changing his tone or expression in the slightest degree Westland said—punctuating his remarks with extended finger:

“A nice state of affairs, if true, in a country that calls itself free! A corporation compelled, whether it will or no, to employ a certain person or have its entire establishment closed! Why, there is no greater tyranny in Russia! Our fathers fought Great Britain for infinitely less. Let me tell you solemnly, if Mr. Baker came to me with a complaint of what you mention I would have this woman discharged instantly. If you

wish to do her a service you can tell her. Understand, any conversation she and I may have outside of business hours is another question entirely; I hope and trust she will speak then with absolute freedom. But a set of mills like those yonder must be run on a system; and I will see moss cover the walls, the waterwheels go to decay, and the machinery fall into rust before any man, woman or child in my employ shall tell me how to manage my business!"

The last rays of the autumn sun were reddening the western sky, and the chill had fallen on the darkening air, but Philip Westland felt it not. In spite of himself he had grown somewhat excited. Hugh Mayfield, on the contrary, was imperturbable as ever.

"I don't know as you'd like me to reply to that statement," he began slowly.

"On the contrary. I have an immense curiosity to know what reply can be made to it."

"We must keep good natured," said Hugh, "otherwise our arguments will do neither any good. I am sure you will; and I mean to try to imitate you in that, at least. I question then, whether the running of seven mills on the product of which thousands of people exist is the 'business' of any one man or hundred men. I have an idea that it is the 'business' of every person who works there. If an official, for a fancied injury to his feelings, deprives an employé of the chance to earn her bread he can deprive as many others as he pleases. Naturally all are concerned. Their rights are identical."

Westland bowed stiffly.

"People have a right in this world to do anything

they can," he said impressively. "The employés of my mills have a right to quit work if I discharge one of their number for conduct subversive to discipline. But if they all went out, and stayed out till the surface of Sheol became congealed, they could never force me to employ such a person again. No, not if it took my last dollar!"

Notwithstanding the impetuosity of the speaker, and the sharpness of his language, Hugh's smile met him as he finished.

"To return to the original question," he said, "you will do well not to talk like that to Ellen."

"Why? Is she dangerous?"

"In argument—yes. Unless you adopt broader ground she will soon get the better of you. You are on controversial soil that to her is only the alphabet of this matter."

"And the burden of her song will be, I suppose, the oppression of the honest laborer by the bloated capitalist," replied Westland, trying to resume his ordinary manner. "Well, I am ready to meet her. It is not very ancient history that the bloated laborer deprived the honest capitalist of a year's income from his money, in this very village. More than one family was seriously inconvenienced in the loss of income that ensued."

The two men were walking slowly now, and it would be hard to say which was more interested in the argument they were having. Hugh, as his companion paused, asked quietly what was the source of the income to which Mr. Westland referred.

“ Mill stocks, left for their support by husbands and fathers.”

“ And where did the husbands and fathers get those stocks? ”

“ Where? Bought them, of course—and paid for them! ”

“ Of whom? ”

“ Why, of people who had them to sell.”

“ But where did the original owners get them? ” persisted Hugh doggedly.

Westland looked sharply at the speaker. Was he trying to perpetrate a joke at his expense?

“ I only want to prepare you a little for what you may expect of Ellen,” continued Hugh. “ She will demand that you go back to first principles. If I find you in the possession of property that my great-granduncle willed to my great-grandfather, and of which he never was honestly dispossessed, I can oust you from your claim, no matter how many false deeds lie between us. Therefore, I wish to know how these stocks became the property of your unfortunate widows and orphans. Ellen would be sure to make the same inquiry.”

Westland was quite calm now. His hat was tipped back on his forehead, and he had his hands clasped behind his back, while an incredulous expression played around the corners of his mouth.

“ I would say to Ellen, as I say to you,” said he, “ that the laws of this Commonwealth are sufficient to decide such questions, for all the vagaries theorists may bring to bear. The ownership of those shares is as well settled as that of the gowns and bonnets she professes to call hers.”

“ Ah! ” cried Mayfield. “ Perhaps so. But you forget one important thing—the law cannot establish their *value*, which is the important point after all.”

A new thought had evidently penetrated the brain of the manufacturer, for he made no response for a moment.

“ Their value,” Mayfield proceeded to explain, “ depends on their power to produce dividends. A stock that fails in that particular ceases to be desirable from the capitalistic point of view. The employés of this corporation can destroy your dividends any year they please. Does not this show that running the mills is not alone the ‘ business ’ of the alleged owners, but of the people who do the work, as well? ”

“ Very ingenious, upon my word! ” was the pleasant rejoinder. “ But really, as a man who, I suppose, means to be honest, have you not forgotten one important thing? Do not the employés agree that a stipulated wage, paid regularly, shall compensate them for their part in producing the cloth we make? What, in law or reason, entitles them to the earnings of that other great factor, called capital? If they don’t like the prices offered, why do they apply for places? There are always more applicants than positions. I tell you, my dear fellow, the American workingman would be better off if all the agitators and theorists were shipped to Siberia! ”

The merry laugh of the mill-hand met this earnest statement.

“ Tell that to Ellen and see what she will say,” said he. “ I have gone much further with the discussion

than I intended, and no doubt have trenched on her particular ground. I was rather afraid to have you meet her, but your good nature seems able to stand considerable strain. When shall I say you would like the interview?"

"The sooner the better. Why not this evening—why not now? As it is Sunday we shall have plenty of time. She won't object to talking because it's the first day of the week, will she?"

Hugh looked as if he did not understand the question.

"Why should she?" he asked. "The welfare of the people she loves better than her life is Ellen's religion. I will take you there immediately, if you like. She will need no preparation. Come!"

III

As the two men entered the narrow streets of Riverfall village their appearance together created a sensation. People in groups ceased conversation and stared open-mouthed as they approached, turning toward each other in mute wonder when they saw that the acting-president and their comrade were really walking together in the most familiar manner. Half-grown children ran to tell their parents indoors, and faces soon filled the windows along the route. Even young couples who found time on this one day of the week to loiter in each other's company forgot the "old, old story," and gave themselves up to the new wonder.

The rich "aristocrat" who represented all the wealth of the manufacturing village was actually strolling with one of his humble employés, as if it were the most natural thing in the world! Surely that was astounding enough to give Riverfall something to think and talk about.

"If a circus had come to town," said Westland, in a low voice, "it could hardly attract more attention than we seem to be doing. Are you or am I responsible for this excitement?"

"Both," was the reply. "That is, the fact that we are together. The question uppermost in every mind is, 'What does it mean?' I suppose no manager of the mills has walked along a public street here with a work-

ingman in his holiday clothes, within the memory of any one."

Westland looked somewhat uneasy at the houses where his employés lived, which seemed to him even less attractive than he had thought them. Unfaced brick, monotonously red, or wood painted in colors selected with an eye to durability rather than attractiveness, gave them a hard appearance. Places to cook and sleep in they undoubtedly were, but who could apply to them that bright English word "home?" Like many others in the factory towns of America the rent of these tenements was sufficient to pay their full cost every five years. Nothing in the way of modern improvements, hardly a thing, in fact, but walls, floors and chimneys, went into their construction. Many of the entryways were open, and as the manager stole glances into the interiors the sight was not pleasant. Generally a bare floor, or a piece of faded carpet met his gaze. Children not too clean of face, poorly dressed and often badly nourished; women sluttish of costume, men surly of feature.

He could hardly repress a cry when Hugh entered one of these buildings and proceeded to climb the rickety stairs. He felt like exclaiming, "Surely *she* does not live here!" but the words died on his lips. On the third floor were the two rooms used by the woman who, he had been told, could dispute with him the control of three thousand spinners and weavers, and he was decidedly uneasy as he stopped with Mayfield at her door and heard his gentle tap on the panel.

Westland had never seen Ellen, and his preconceived

notions illy prepared him for what met his gaze. He saw a beautiful young creature, about five feet, six inches in height, with a most engaging countenance, and a form that approached perfection; dark and expressive eyes, that looked anything but dangerous as she smiled upon her callers, and made way for them to enter; heavy masses of dark hair arranged becomingly upon a queenly head; a complexion fresh as an apple blossom; slender hands (these he noticed instantly) that might have been elegant but for the effect of millwork; a plain cambric dress, with linen collar and cuffs; and a stateliness of carriage that seemed quite out of place with her station and surroundings.

“Ellen,” began Hugh, “I have brought Mr. Westland here at his own request. He wants to know you; I want you to know him. He is a thoroughly conscientious representative of our enemies the capitalists, and I hope you will convert him.”

A slight cloud passed over the young’s woman’s face as she listened, a cloud she seemed endeavoring to drive away.

“You are very welcome, sir,” she said to Westland, with a bow, “but unfortunately I am hardly in condition to talk to any one.” (The mill manager noticed that her voice was as engaging as her countenance.) “Mr. Baker has employed three more of our little children who ought to be at school, and his reply to my protest shows that he intends to keep them at work. He seems to care nothing for the plain letter of the law—and I don’t know why he should, as the authorities never seriously interfere with him. The parents of these

children are French-Canadians and want their wages. The youngest is nine and the eldest thirteen." She turned the full beauty of her dark eyes upon her auditor. "Too young, is it not, sir, to begin a life like ours, a life they will probably relinquish only for the grave?"

The visitor found himself plunged into argument sooner than he expected. He knew that the laws against employing young children were constantly violated in his mills, and he had heard his uncle's excuse for it—that they were better off indoors than roaming the streets and learning evil from bad companions.

"I beg your pardon," he answered, in his most polite tones, "if the parents of these children need their wages, what remedy would you suggest? Hunger must be satisfied."

The lovely eyes grew stern. The handsome mouth hardened.

"Do you contend, sir, that it is an equitable rate of wages which does not provide infants with the bare necessaries of life?"

He was in for it, and his answer came quickly:

"How many children has this Canadian? If he is like the rest of them he has very likely a dozen or more. Would the Corporation be justified, in that case, in paying him proportionate wages as compared with a man who has two children or none?"

A strange idea came into his brain as he saw the mobile face assume another pose. This girl in the cambric dress was *pitying* him.

"But where is our great mother, the State!" she cried, throwing back her head superbly, and pointing

one of her long fingers in his direction. "The State claims our allegiance; it can take our last penny for its revenues; it can draft our brothers into its armies; it can punish our treason with death! Every child that is born adds to its strength and glory. Shall it then demand our all, and give back nothing? Mr. Baker is only a *man*, limited in his powers by the greedy capitalists who employ him; but the State is a *god*! It has the power to protect its children!"

She paused and stretched her arms above her head while tears fringed her long eyelashes. "We who make the State," she exclaimed, almost in a wail, "how long must we appeal to it in vain!"

To Westland this was most impressive, but not in the least convincing. In his mind the question at issue did not call for heroics, but for plain principles. There were many times in the affairs of this world where it would be very convenient if two and two made five, but that did not alter the facts of arithmetic. He knew practically nothing of the claims of socialism, and would have ridiculed the idea that manufacturing could be carried on by the government with anything like success. He found himself more at ease now that she had taken this course.

"I shall be glad to discuss the entire question with you whenever you have sufficient leisure," he remarked. "I should like to go to the bottom of the matter, which seems to me rather deep. I desire to hear everything you have to say in relation to a subject important to both of us. Neither may be able to convince the other, but we ought in an honest discussion to get new ideas."

Ellen's features relaxed as she listened.

"Would next Wednesday evening suit you?" she asked. "My sick patients will take all my time tomorrow and Tuesday. There are always a number of persons," she explained, "broken down under their work, whom I take to a certain extent under my care. I could not think of disappointing them. Wednesday, after nine o'clock, I shall be free."

"I will meet you at that hour. And—would it inconvenience you to come to the Agency? Hugh would pilot you, I am sure, and see you safe back."

"I will come there, if you desire," was the quick response, "but I need no escort, in either direction. I have all Riverfall for my bodyguard," she added, somewhat proudly. "No person has ever offered to molest me."

As soon as they were out of the house Westland turned to his companion with enthusiasm:

"What a beauty!" he exclaimed. "She would adorn a palace! I never saw a more queenly air. And yet I suppose she would not give up her position as head of these operatives for a mansion on Fifth Avenue. A strange eccentricity!" Then, after a moment's pause, he added, more soberly, "She will probably work on till she grows old and faded, with never a husband or child to adore her."

"Good-night," said Hugh, abruptly. They had reached a corner.

"Good-night."

Philip looked a little astonished at the rapidly vanishing figure. "With all his intelligence," he mused, "that

fellow has a woeful lack of manners. He evidently shares Ellen's views, and in his heart considers me a cruel taskmaster who willfully grinds him in the dust. There'll not be much gained by talking to either of them, I fear."

He quickened his step and soon had mounted the eminence on which the handsome buildings of the Agency stood. Lights were in so many of the rooms that he wondered if company had arrived. As he stepped into the hallway he saw a tall, coal-black serving man who had been with John Westland for years.

"Who's here, Amos?" he asked.

"No one but Miss Edna, sah," was the answer, delivered in a low tone. The negro came closer. "It's 'cause of de lights, sah, ain't it, dat you asks? She done tole me to light 'em all up, sah, so 'twould look bright an' cheery when you come home."

Philip sighed. There was something pathetic in this thought of his blind cousin, and who had never seen the sun since she was a little child. As he hung his hat and coat on the rack he heard the rustle of skirts, and the object of his thoughts came through the doorway, touching the furniture in her path to guide her steps. She was nineteen, pretty in spite of her misfortune, and dressed in deep black.

"I heard you on the walk," she said, joy beaming in her pale face. "Did you notice how bright the house was? I know it's lonely for you since papa went away, and I wanted to make it as cheerful as I could."

He put his arm around the slender figure and drew

the girl close. As his moustache touched her cheek, she divined that he was in a thoughtful mood.

“What is it?” she asked. “Something has saddened you. Sit by me on the sofa and tell me your troubles.”

“Troubles?” he echoed. “You are mistaken. I have only been thinking a little harder than usual. Nothing is the matter; nothing at all. I wish, dear, you had as little trouble in this world as I.”

“When by your side I am perfectly happy,” she answered, smiling again. “It is only when you are away that the time drags. Where have you been for the past three hours? I have heard you say there was nothing in Riverfall worth seeing, out of this house and your counting-room. As it is Sunday I know you have not been at work, at least.”

“No.” He gave no further answer for the moment, but added, “Play me something, dear. It is a week since I have heard your violin.”

She sprang up and took the instrument from an adjacent table. Had her sight been perfect she could not have handled it with more ease. The manner in which she held her bow showed her love for the task. Soon music floated out upon the air, filling it with low sweet sounds. She was mistress of an art too rare among American ladies, and her cousin was soon under the charm of the melody. He lay back and dreamily watched the striking face that bent over the violin, and the long, slender fingers, plentifully adorned with rings, that plied the bow. The loose sleeves revealed some space of forearm, whose delicate white flesh appealed to his sense of refinement.

“Do you know that tune?” she asked, when she came to a pause.

“No. Is it new? You lulled me into such a complete reverie that I had almost ceased to think.”

“I was attracted to the name; so sweet, so full of the land I have always wanted to visit. The title is ‘Love in Italy.’ Philip, when are you going to take me there?”

He drew his hand across his forehead, absently. “Oh, sometime; when—when your father is able to go with us.”

“It will be full of wonderful things—‘that sometime’ of yours. But poor papa! I fear he will not be able to take a journey across the ocean soon. I have always wanted so much to be in Italy. I can scent in imagination its balmy air. I can hear the glad notes of its song birds. I can imagine the gondolas, gliding through the water with the easy motion of swans. I can feel the delicious breezes of the Adriatic. I have dreamed of these things from childhood—yes, ever since you used to write home about them, when you were only a boy; and sometime—yes, sometime, you and I will experience them together!”

She threw her arms in cousinly affection around his neck and drew his head down to her lips.

“You must not forget,” he said, “that we are no longer children. You and I have not noticed the passing years, but these privileges we permit ourselves would have to be much curtailed on a journey.”

Her face wore a disappointed look, and she nestled her head against his broad shoulder.

“You can conjure up hobgoblins, but they do not frighten me,” she answered. “There are secluded villas in the country, away from the big hotels, where we can go. There are waiting maids who speak no English, and understand no more than one desires. I have not been listening to all those Italian stories in the book-case yonder for nothing.”

He took out his watch, and her countenance fell.

“Don’t do that!” she pleaded. “It is early and I shall be so lonesome if you go to your room. Talk to me. I never knew you so taciturn. What has happened during your walk to put you in this mood?”

He drummed for several seconds with his fingers on the sofa arm. Then he straightened up.

“I have had a strange experience. I have been with a young fellow named Mayfield, one of my spinners, to see a woman whom my employés recognize as the supreme head of their union. She talked to me as no one ever did before. She thinks that as manager of these mills I am the agent of a band of robbers——”

“Oh, Philip!”

“Well, not in the sense you understand, perhaps. It is the labor question reduced to its lowest terms, but that is what it amounts to. I had never been brought so close to one of its advocates before.”

“But—surely such ideas are fallacious to the last degree. You don’t mean that this woman has infected you with her notions?”

“She has impressed me. She is a remarkable person. Next Wednesday evening she is to come here to continue the conversation, and you shall meet her if you wish.”

Feminine instinct dictated the next words.

“Describe her.”

Like most men he could give little but generalities. She was grand, magnificent, queenly; this he said and then stopped. In answer to her curious queries he admitted that he could not tell the color of Ellen’s hair or eyes, nor guess at her height or weight.

“She was dressed in the commonest clothing,” he went on, in a sort of a daze. “Her gown was cheap print, and you must remember that this is Sunday, her one holiday. Her chamber was bare of furniture, but there were birds in cages, and flowers, and a few books and pictures. Fifteen or twenty dollars, I should say, would buy everything there.”

The blind girl’s next query was a natural one. She judged strangers so much by their tones.

“Her voice—masculine and rough, I suppose?”

“On the contrary, winning and gentle. Even when she is displeased the chords are full of music.”

Miss Westland threw up her hands with a sigh.

“Ah, Philip!” she cried, “you are in love with this factory girl. I know you are going to deny it, and you may be honest in your denial, but it is true! Don’t answer me for a minute. Search your heart before you speak.”

He smiled upon the earnest face before him. When a full minute had elapsed he said——

“After a careful survey of my most vital organ, I find no love for Ellen—nor for any other woman.” Then, seeing he had hurt her, he added, placing a hand on her shoulder, “Do not misunderstand: There are

women whom I esteem highly, one for whom I entertain sentiments of cousinly affection. But I never was—never can be—in love. I have told you that so often, Edna, you should believe me.”

The pensive expression on her face deepened, but she remained silent. Soon he continued:

“I am a man of business now; I have no time for love. Dividends must be looked for, rents collected, trusts carried out. There is a possibility of another big strike. If it comes and lasts long it will entail heavy losses to my friends, yourself among the number. I fear there will be something more important to claim my attention this winter than affairs of the heart. As for you, my child, would you not find more to interest you in the city than in this lonesome place, while your father is away?”

Her breath came quick and short, and she shook her head quickly.

“No!” she exclaimed. “I will not go. How could I pass days and weeks without the sound of your voice, without the touch of your hand? If you remain here, so shall I. What do those terrible operatives want now?” she added, when he had moved a little away.

“Ellen says they want a fairer share of what they earn.”

“And they think they can get more by striking! The last time they stopped work, I’ve heard papa say, the Corporation paid no dividend. I presume they’ll want to assess us next, for their benefit. What can they be thinking of?”

“That’s what I mean to find out,” he replied, reflec-

tively. "That's why I went to see Ellen; that's why I've invited her to come here. The most remarkable woman I ever met! You must be in the room when she presents her case, and see if you do not agree with me. But I have several letters to write," he added, "and that will bring all sensible members of this household to their bedtime hour."

He walked to a window, drew back the shade and looked on the moonlit lawn. Then he returned to his cousin's side, placed his arm around her, pressed a kiss to her cheek and left the room.

IV

John Westland had had two brothers, both of whom were now deceased. One was, as has been stated, the father of Philip, and the other had died a bachelor. His only sister had married a gentleman named Melbourg, who went through life so rapidly that at thirty he left a young widow dependent upon her relations for support, although a goodly sum of money had come to him from his ancestors. This sister died shortly before the opening of this story, leaving a son named Ralph, whose uncle, Abner Westland, had bequeathed him some property, but under the guardianship of his cousin, Philip, who, though still young, was deemed prudent enough for such a trust.

On the previous Saturday Philip had thought it wise to write a letter to this young man, foreshadowing the possibility of a strike, which he had come to think was more than likely to occur, and to suggest that a curtailment of certain extravagances in his manner of living had best be made without delay, in view of the prospect of a reduced income. Ralph was of a type often found in our large cities. He had fallen into habits of light dissipation, and having little idea of business, considered life as something to be passed in the pleasantest possible manner.

It is one of the worst effects of our system of inheritance that aggregation of wealth in few hands not

only robs the producer of a large share of the results of toil, but destroys the useful energy of those to whom great fortunes are bequeathed. It is a popular theory that a young gentleman whose ancestors have provided him with enough to live upon does wisely in keeping out of the overcrowded channels of trade. "Let him live as becomes his station," say the wiseacres. "Why should he struggle to increase a store already large enough for his needs?"

The man of elegant leisure, living comfortably on his income, seems to many to have reached the ideal state. He who has thus lived from childhood, without the least exertion of hand or brain, is regarded as in the highest sense, a "gentleman." Let no laborer's son, with grimy hands or tired head, presume to dispute his title. And if the young heir chooses to spend some of his money in "sowing wild oats," whose business is it? He pays his bills, doesn't he?

This popular impression regarding the rights of inherited wealth is old as history. But the present writer hazards the prediction that the public mind is to undergo a change; that the possession of a great fortune will bring new obligations; and that more equitable laws will make it impossible for any man to become a Colossus, under whose huge legs the majority must crawl for the privilege of sharing the fruits of an earth a beneficent Providence created for all alike.

(These few thoughts may, perhaps, be offered by the novelist without causing him to be accused of posing as a dangerous reformer; at the worst he need only be charged with pausing to indite a sermon in the midst of

a history. And now let us return to our sheep, which in this instance happens to be Mr. Melbourg.)

By the will of his uncle, Ralph could only claim the income of his property until he was twenty-three years of age. Philip's letter had, therefore, disturbed him greatly. He had spent nearly the last dollar he had been permitted to draw, and the prospect of having the figure lowered was very discouraging.

"What's this confounded stuff you've been writing me, Phil?" he exclaimed, bursting into his cousin's office one morning. "I'm hardly able to exist now on \$200 a week. What should I do with that sum cut in two, or, in fact, reduced at all? You must make some arrangements with these operatives—give in a little at some point or other, and avoid a general strike at all hazards."

Westland laughed at the boy, for such he always called him. A handsome young fellow he was, with curling hair, dark eyes and good figure. The excitement of the moment had brought a vivid color to his fair cheek.

"I'm afraid you're an extravagant young rogue," he answered, smiling pleasantly. "You've laid up nothing for a rainy day, then?"

"Extravagant!" echoed Ralph, contemptuously. "Why, look at Astorfelt, my chum, who has \$1,500 a month, and more if he wants it, while I have to pinch along on a measly eight hundred. Do you think I can associate with decent people, and get a fat bank account on enough to feed a cat?"

"Astorfelt's family goes back several generations.

He had a great-grandfather. You date from your mother's second cousin."

"*Oh——!*" An expression of disgust covered the young man's face. "I can't live on less than \$200 a week, and there's no use talking about it. If the mills pass a dividend you'll have to give me something out of my principal. What difference will it make, when the whole will be mine in less than two years, anyway?"

To this Philip responded, in a manner which admitted of no misunderstanding, that Ralph might as well ask him to break into the sub-treasury as to touch one penny of Abner Westland's money till the right time came.

"Then, if the income on those devilish stocks drops to zero, I suppose I'm to starve to death!"

"Perhaps, in such a dire contingency, the courts would intervene. As for me, I am sworn to follow a certain line of policy, from which I cannot deviate. But what do you do with \$800 a month? I'd like to see an accurate account of your expenses."

The suggestion brought the least trace of a blush to Ralph's face. He twisted the ends of a moustache that was hardly long enough to make the task an easy one.

"You know, Phil," he said, "a young chap who wants to see anything of life finds money slipping away from him all the time. I have to live in a suite of rooms, don't I? I must dine once in a while. I take an occasional spin on the road—in a hired rig—I can't afford to own one, let alone an auto, which every one has but me. I may sometimes want a box at the theatre, and I've been known to wear clothes. How much will \$200 a week do after paying for these things? And there's one

credit you must give me, I don't run deeply in debt."

Philip looked at him quizzically.

"There's another expense you've forgotten," he said.

"No, hang it!" was the sharp reply. "I know better than to tie a millstone around my neck. But, say, what about this strike? It's not settled yet there's to be one, is it?"

"No, but it looks mighty squally. Uncle is against any concession whatever. He thinks the best way is to refuse everything and fight it out. Now, as most of your property is in the plant, if we pay no dividend for a year you'll have not over \$50 a week to spend."

Ralph uttered an ejaculation of horror.

"Fifty dollars!" he exclaimed. "That wouldn't pay my tailor."

"It would pay mine," responded the other soberly. "In fact my expenses are not much over fifty dollars a week, the whole year through."

"Oh, but you're so—so steady, you know. You stick right to business, and you've nothing to spend money for. You don't need clothes, nor go to entertainments, and you never have to buy wine. Hang these fellows who make wills! Uncle Abner lived like a miser all his life, and he must needs put me on this starvation allowance, when he is in his grave, where I can't appeal to him."

At this the elder man frowned a little.

"Supposing he had left you nothing?" he suggested.

"We would have had a double funeral, that's all. I couldn't do anything to earn a dollar, if I starved to death. They said at school I'd never amount to any-

thing in a business or professional way. This legacy of a quarter of a million was all that stood between me and beggary. If I could get hold of the main slice I'd be all right as it is, though I suppose if there's a strike the value of our stocks will tumble awfully."

Attention from the long face which accompanied this statement was drawn in another moment by the sound of a sweet voice. Across the lawn the music was borne from the residence to the office where the acting-president of the mill Corporation did his work.

"She misses her father so much!" said Philip. There was a vein of sadness in his tone.

"When will he return?"

"Never, I fear. Yes—be careful you don't let Edna know I think so—it is unlikely we'll see Uncle John alive again, Ralph. You can't think how feeble he was when he went away. What will become of that poor child when she has him no longer!"

"She'll always have you." Ralph spoke in a more softened tone than he had yet used.

"No, not always. As soon as the right man can be found to run the business I'm going to get out. I only stayed to please uncle, because he pleaded with me so hard."

A puzzled expression contracted the brows of the other as he listened.

"But, you and Edna are engaged, aren't you?" he asked. "You are going to get married—sometime?"

Philip was so disturbed by this statement that he rose to his feet. He asked whatever put such a preposterous idea into Ralph's head.

“Why, I never had any doubt about it; and between us, Phil, I don’t think Edna has. I’ve never found you together that your arm hasn’t been about her, and you always kiss her exactly like the lovers I’ve seen on the stage and read of in books. When she’s in New York and gets a letter from you her joy is beyond words; when she knows you are coming her excitement is evident to all the house; and after you go again she’s *triste* for days.”

Philip moved uneasily in his chair and tried once or twice to stop this impetuous flow of words.

“You are entirely mistaken,” he replied, as soon as he was permitted to speak, “in all of your suppositions, except that Edna and I are the best of friends. We are, in fact, quite like brother and sister. Her blindness keeps her in the childlike frame of mind which vents itself in caresses and delights in fondling. If you were half good enough for her—which you are not—I should say the wisest thing for all concerned would be a marriage between you two. No,” he added, quickly, as he saw that it was now Ralph’s turn to be uneasy, “I would not think of such a union with the trifling young idler you have been up to date. Had you steady habits and a business head it would be another matter. Edna will have a large fortune and will be open to the proposals of designing men unless her future is arranged by those who love her best. I wish from my heart you *were* a little different, Ralph. You may be what the world calls wild, but you’ve nothing really bad about you, I’m sure. You’d never wilfully injure the feelings of a wife, if you had one, and I think marriage—to the right woman—might be the making of you.”

The young man paled and reddened by turns during the delivery of this speech. He opened and closed his palms nervously, and stirred in his seat.

“I’m greatly obliged for your sermon,” he replied, with an attempt at irony. “When I want your advice I’ll ask for it. As for marriage, if it were not for this cursed cut-down in my income which you say is impending I’d be a married man before this month is over.”

“What!” cried Philip. “You’ve gone and engaged yourself without letting us know a thing about it! Well, you *are* a sly dog. Come, don’t look so sulky; tell me who she is. Upon my word, I’m rather glad, you know.”

A look out of the window, and a shuffle of feet on the floor was the only answer.

“I’m going to guess: One of the Crowninshield girls?”

Ralph’s shoulders were shrugged, and his back was turned a little more on the questioner.

“Miss Gwynne—the younger one? No? Bob Fanning’s sister Grace? Say, have you been lucky enough to catch Grace Fanning?”

“No, I haven’t, thank the Lord!” snapped the other angrily, still keeping his back turned.

“George! Why didn’t I think of it? Your financial needs have set your gaze a little higher. Miss Vander-schmidt, by all that’s——”

Ralph rose from his chair and turned wrathfully on his cousin.

“Haven’t you got anything better to do than make fun of me!” he exclaimed, now thoroughly angry. “A beggar marrying the heiress of sixty millions! I didn’t

mean to say a word, but you might as well know, for your opinion will make no difference one way or the other. I'm going to marry—as soon as I'm sure of enough to buy bread and cheese with—a girl who hasn't two dresses to her back, who never went through a grammar school, who hasn't a relation, good or bad, in the whole world! That's what I'm going to do, Phil Westland!”

It was now the mill manager's turn to look distressed. He felt a strong affection for his young cousin, even though he liked occasionally to banter him; and this statement, made with too much sincerity to be doubted, worried him.

“Some day, when you're in a mood to talk calmly, I hope you'll give me a few minutes to discuss this subject with you,” he said impressively. “It is a great deal more serious, I'm afraid, than you realize.”

“Why? Because Nathalie is poor and without relations and has to work for a living? It's not you who's going to marry her, remember! She's got a dowry in goodness and beauty—and affection—that's worth more than all the Vanderschmidt railroads, or the Fanning mines! And I'll marry her, even if I have to buy a pick and shovel and get a job on the streets, you see if I don't!”

The picture of his fashionably dressed young cousin employed at the labor suggested was too much for Philip. He burst into a hearty laugh, and after trying to look angrier yet at this, Ralph was forced to join him.

“Do me one favor at least,” said Westland, when he grew sober again, “promise not to carry out your plan

until we can have a friendly talk in relation to it. Perhaps when I have heard your story in full we may agree your idea is wise, but at first thought it's a trifle startling. Of course you wouldn't think of marrying any woman without first introducing her to Edna and me, the only relations you've got, except Uncle John, in the world. It has been my hope, I will admit, that you and Edna would eventually——”

“That'll do!” interrupted his cousin.

“I'm afraid so. I'm afraid you will never become good enough to make it reasonable, for no man shall marry Edna, with my consent, simply to break her heart. She's an angel—and an angel, too, who will some day have \$100,000 a year.”

Youth, a bright face and well-knit figure well attired constitute a handsome picture. Added to this was an expression in Ralph Melbourg's eyes that only first love can bring.

“You haven't seen Nathalie,” he answered, softly.

V.

On the evening when Ellen was to meet the representative of the Riverfall mill-owners, Hugh Mayfield came to her door about eight o'clock, by appointment, to accompany her to the Agency. Not because she needed a protector in the streets that were filled with her fellow workmen, nor because she thought herself unequal to representing the side of Labor against Capital in the debate she was to have with Mr. Westland; but Hugh was her chief of staff and reliable aid in dealing with the operatives she had been selected to lead. She wanted him to hear all that passed between her and their employer, as one who knew both and would have much to do in case of a rupture of relations.

As she answered Hugh's knock by opening the door of her sitting-room the "mill hand" removed his hat, with the air of one who salutes his sovereign. No spinner or weaver in Riverfall ever met Ellen without some sign of the high respect with which she was regarded, and to none did her person seem more deserving of veneration than to her chief lieutenant. Yet between these two there was no gulf, such as usually divides ruler and subject. They met rather as attached friends, adherents of a common cause, believers in the same creed, equally confident in the ultimate emancipation of their class from the capitalistic yoke.

Both performed faithfully their day's work in the

mill and devoted their leisure hours to ameliorating the present and endeavoring to safeguard the future condition of their fellow-workmen. Contrary to the custom of many "labor reformers" neither accepted any recompense for their services. They were only too happy to aid the cause on which their hearts were set.

"Have you heard what the directors did at their meeting this afternoon?" was the immediate inquiry of Ellen.

Hugh marked her anxious expression.

"Yes. A cut-down has been ordered, to take effect in one week."

They seated themselves on opposite sides of a common wooden table. Ellen placed her elbows upon it and for an instant buried her face in her hands.

"They say," continued Hugh, when she looked up again, "that they have a right to a reasonable dividend on their investment, and that the present rate of wages does not permit it. I learned this from Carter's son, Mr. Baker's errand boy, who was in the room during the meeting."

Ellen's expressive countenance showed that she drank in the utterances of her companion with eager interest. Not a sign of discouragement was visible, however.

"Was Mr. Westland present?" she inquired.

"Yes."

"Did he have anything to say?"

"Yes. 'We must teach these people a lesson,' were his words, substantially. 'It is time it was settled who owns these mills. If our operatives do, let us abandon

the property to them; but first we will make the test.' ”

“It is eighteen centuries since Christ died and we still feel the oppressor’s hand, as did His people of old. Shall we, therefore, say He lived on earth in vain? No, Hugh. The seed He planted is surely if slowly bearing fruit.”

He returned the radiant look she gave him.

“How hopeful you always are!” he exclaimed. “At the darkest hour it is ever to you almost daylight. But you have not heard all: ‘We will inaugurate a league of the mill owners,’ he said, ‘so that, when the workers in one mill go out, every spindle in the country will cease to revolve. If a strike follows this cut-down it must be so managed on our part that we never shall have another. These people must be given a lesson they will not need again in this generation. If necessary we should lock every door in Riverfall for a year or even longer. In former troubles we have seemed anxious to resume. The hands knew they could go back to work merely by accepting our figures. Next time they must await our pleasure. That will cost us something, but we shall profit by it in the end. The day has passed when any irresponsible man—or woman—should dictate to five millions of capital.’ ”

When he pronounced the words “or woman” a stray lock of hair fell carelessly across Ellen’s face. She had started unconsciously. The throbbings of her full bust, innocent of corset, betrayed the effect of the story.

“What does he think we are—cattle?”

“Worse!” replied Hugh. “He would not risk the lives and health of cattle as he risks ours. No flesh is as cheap in the market as human flesh. To use the expression of the hour, our race is suffering from overproduction. We are slaves to masters who are not even obliged to procure us food. Our condition is as bad as that of the Russian serf when he was tied to the soil. We have no trade but that of the mills. If one company grinds us beyond endurance we can go to another—and find the same condition. Well! the cut-down has been ordered; what shall we do?”

“Strike!” said Ellen, laconically.

“At the approach of winter? You see how adroitly they have laid their plans.”

“We must destroy their profits,” she said with decision. “They are open to no other argument. But we will not wait till the date they have set. We will send a committee to demand that the cut-down be rescinded. If they refuse, or strive by delay to take away our slight advantage, I will order every man, woman and child to quit work at once.”

Hugh looked slightly alarmed at the audacity of the proposition.

“We shall obey you, of course,” he said, lowering his head. “But have you thought of everything?”

She clasped her hands spasmodically together.

“What have I not thought of? Hunger? Cold? Nakedness? Suffering women, despairing men? Little children crying for food and fire? Yes, I have thought of it all. I realize to the full what a long strike means. But imagine yourself on a lonely prairie, with your

larder exhausted and no means of replenishing it from any point near by. What would you do—sit down and weep? No, you would undertake the journey toward a land of plenty. The march before you might be long; wolves might howl around your campfire; the sun might scorch you by day and the dews chill you by night—and still you would struggle on. We must make a stand right where we are! If they can cut the scanty wages we now receive they can cut them again, and yet again! If to-day we submit to be crushed to the earth, to-morrow we shall be ground in the mire. We have no choice but to strike. Our people shall be impressed with the full significance of the move. As Mr. Westland says, it will be a decisive contest.”

She arose, put on her hat and coat, and they walked silently through the town to the Agency. Those who met them drew to one side with tokens of respect, but no one uttered a word. All the population knew where they were going, and wondered if the result would be to change the dread edict which had already gone out in rumor. As they neared the door they were to enter Hugh uttered just one word of warning.

“Treat him politely, Ellen. He is a gentleman in his manners, after all.”

She did not reply, but raised her shoulders a little. The colored servant showed them into a parlor and presently Mr. Westland entered with Miss Westland by his side.

“My cousin Edna,” he said, completing the introduction. “She also is interested in the subject we are

to speak about, and I hope you do not object to her being present."

"Not in the least," said Ellen, declining the chair which he offered. "I learn that you have voted to-day to make a cut in our wages," she added, coming directly to the point at issue.

"Yes," he answered, somewhat surprised and a little annoyed at her manner. "It has become a case of sheer necessity. I think you will hardly claim that people who have invested their money here should do so without compensation. Or, perhaps you would, though?" he continued.

Ellen nodded to Hugh, for she felt that she could hardly trust herself with speech just then, and he proceeded to answer for her:

"For at least eight years the Great Central Corporation has paid a dividend of twelve per cent. on a capital notoriously watered. In other words, the stockholders have received sixty per cent. annually on the million dollars actually invested here, for which five millions of stock has been issued. To-day, owing to various causes, none of which are any fault of ours, they may be receiving something less. We do not see why we should bear the temporary loss in such circumstances."

Mr. Westland bowed politely.

"Excuse me. It is the duty of the directors to decide that matter. If the employés do not wish to continue at the new scale of wages, there is no law to compel them to do so."

"Nor to prevent them going out in a body and remaining out."

“Certainly. Ten years ago that very thing was done. A strike took place, during which the Corporation lost \$400,000, and the employés nearly twice as much. At the end of the strike the people returned at the wages offered them. As I figure it, the total loss was over a million. Perhaps you can tell me what was the gain, if any?”

As Mayfield kept silence, thinking that Ellen might prefer to speak now, Mr. Westland continued:

“On account of that strike, as you no doubt can guess, the stockholders received no dividend that year, but the evil results went farther yet. The product of other mills usurped the place of ours in the markets. To this day the injury is not wholly repaired. If the people whose reckless folly caused this loss are asked to make up a portion of it, how can they call it unjust?”

“You contend, then,” said Hugh, “that these stockholders must have their sixty per cent., even if it comes out of our sweat and blood!”

Mr. Westland waved away the question with his hand.

“I’ll tell you what my contention is, in a word: That I have the right to purchase labor at the market price. If the owner of a bale of cotton demands more than I consider it worth I will not buy until he comes to my terms; if the owner of a day’s work does the same I will treat him in like manner. Any other course would disrupt the entire fabric of business. I claim the right to do the same in one case as in the other!”

It was Ellen who answered that.

“When you speak of the ‘right,’ I suppose you mean the *power*.”

“I mean both,” answered Westland, without hesitation.

She drew herself up and surveyed him from head to foot.

“You have lived in this world for how long—thirty years?”

“About that,” he answered, opening his eyes wide. Her voice came slow and deep.

“And what have you ever done—to earn the food you have eaten and the clothes you have worn?”

He reddened, but smiled too, at the absurdity of the question.

“Well, for the present I am acting as agent of many people in managing their property, and as trustee for widows and orphans. I hope I may without immodesty add that my employers have never expressed dissatisfaction.”

“No doubt,” she replied, scornfully; “no doubt you have done well for yourself—and for them. But—have you ever *earned* a penny? Have you ever *produced* anything? Is there a single necessity of life that owes its existence to your exertions?”

He grew uneasy under her withering gaze.

“That is a remarkable series of personal questions,” he answered.

She did not seem to realize that he had spoken, for she went on, with half closed eyes:

“You have lived thirty years; is any one the better or the wiser for it? You have the charge of much

property and you make it produce the highest possible interest; yes, I admit that. It is the same to you if some of your employers have more money than they will ever need—double what they spend. If the people from whom the money comes are terribly poor, and draw it out of nearly empty pockets, that does not trouble you in the least. Under the law it is *due*, and you collect it. You are acting legally, and our great, good, paternal government will support you, even if you take a bed from under a child that is dying!”

Westland found it difficult to preserve his nonchalant demeanor in the face of this severe arraignment, but he thought it best not to interrupt. While she did not convince, she interested him.

“What valuable thing have you done for your race, I ask again?” Ellen went on, her voice shaking. “Did you ever place a potato or a grain of corn in the earth; or a seed from which fruit has grown? Have you woven a yard of cloth, put a needle into a shoe, levelled a tree for firewood? Have you taught children to read, given medicine to the sick, dug a grave for the dead? Thousands of persons have labored for you; what have you done for *them*? *Nothing!* You have lived on the product of others’ toil. Take, for example, that suit of clothes you are wearing: somebody tended a flock of sheep on the plains; somebody sheared their fleeces, washed the wool, transported it many miles, carded, spun, wove, colored, cut, sewed and pressed it into its present shape. It is a handsome suit, but I wonder how you can consent to wear what you have *never paid for!*”

Hugh started to interrupt the speaker, but with a motion of his hand Westland counselled him not to do so. Ellen did not offend him, now that he understood her. Edna's attitude, from the sofa where she sat, was one of strained and eager attention.

"I can think of you as a babe," continued Ellen, looking through, rather than at the object of her remarks. "Of course, being the child of parents well-to-do, you had a nurse who devoted to you her entire time. A seamstress sewed on your soft garments. A doctor was summoned if you cried. When you grew older special tutors instilled into your mind what is to be found in certain books. They taught you how to read the iniquitous laws of your country; to reckon the compound interest on four millions of watered stock, at twelve per cent. per annum; to write essays on the unaccountable increase of crime among the poor. Servants attended you still, made your bed, swept your chamber, prepared your meals, brought the horses you rode, gratified your every necessity. And when you reached the age of manhood, did you seek to render equal service to other helpless ones? No! You were a *gentleman*, God save the mark!" She raised her arm and pointed her forefinger at him steadily. "You never did anything, you never *mean* to do anything, to help support the great table at which you have eaten!"

He listened with unchanging countenance and when she paused, he said, with the utmost politeness:

"I wonder if you really think it a disreputable profession to manage the affairs committed to my charge. Fathers and husbands have died with less regret, con-

fidant that a man they believed honest would administer the provision made for loved ones. Would you counsel me to abandon my wards—to prove unfaithful to my trusts?”

Without a moment's hesitation Ellen answered:

“The system under which you are acting is totally wrong—that is where the trouble begins. Because an individual has succeeded in wresting fifty times his share from the earth, the mill or the mine, is no reason his widow should fold her hands in idleness or his children grow up drones. No child should be deprived of education or the innocent enjoyments of youth. By what scale of justice must one set of little ones toil in the mills of the Great Central Corporation in order that another set may live in luxurious ease? The will of a millionaire or the fiat of a judge have placed certain sons and daughters of wealth under your care, but there are other children to whom, more even than these, you owe guardianship. Yes, children young and children old—your brothers and sisters by the same Almighty Father—who will surely hold you to a strict reckoning when your account is rendered.”

The silence that followed deepened the effect of the words.

Mayfield was the first to speak.

“I think Ellen will allow me to say that in her arraignment of Capital she has no intention of being severe personally upon Mr. Westland. She has only alluded to him, I understand, as representative of a class.”

“That is all, certainly,” responded Ellen, with no

trace of animosity. "You are Hugh's friend and I wish you to be mine also. If you carry out your proposal of cutting the wages of my people we may differ for the present, but I hope with perfect good nature. I do you the justice to think you an honest man, acting from an erroneous standpoint. If ever your reason is convinced I feel certain you will come to our aid."

She moved a step toward the door to show that she was about to depart. Westland was very sorry to have her go, but he had to admit that a longer interview was not likely to be productive of a better understanding, their views were so diametrically opposed.

"I admit that there is a fascination in your theories," he said, walking with his visitors toward the hall, "but your ideas seem to me Utopian. Instead of possibilities, we have to face a real problem, and I hope the workmen of Riverfall will consider well before they do anything rash. The mill owners were never so determined as now to run the business on their own models."

Ellen responded, "We also are determined," and as he looked into her resolute eyes he could not doubt that a great contest was at hand.

When the door closed behind her he turned to Edna, who had risen and bowed to the retreating forms.

"Oh, how I wish I could see her!" she cried, taking him nervously by the arm. "Such strength! Such resolution! That woman believes from the bottom of her heart that she is right! And she must be mistaken; must she not, Philip? There can be no question that you have the correct view?"

He caressed her with his hands and she added, softly:

“ If she has the influence they say, and all the people stop work, there will be great suffering. What a terrible responsibility she has chosen to take on her young shoulders! ”

VI.

Trouble was evidently brewing in Riverfall. Mysterious whisperings were going the round of the employés of the Great Central Corporation. Meetings were held, lasting till midnight. Treasurer Baker commented on the incongruity of spinners and weavers who grumbled at "long hours" sitting up so late and still being at work at half-past six in the morning, apparently as fresh as ever. Mr. Baker believed that it was in the nature of mill-hands to grumble, anyway. Years ago, when the wages were much higher than now, they complained with almost equal energy. They always wanted higher pay, or fewer hours, or something else, merely because they were a discontented and dissatisfied race of people.

Even the foreigners, who had been the last to join in these demonstrations, were getting to be as bad as the others. Nobody asked them to come to this country, he often said, and if they didn't like its style, why didn't they go back where they belonged? Did you ever hear of a Pole, or a Swede or Armenian returning to his native land? Never. What was the moral, then? Why, that these folks were treated much better in America than they ever had been before and much better than they should be.

So said Treasurer Baker, as many good and wise men have said before him and are still saying. And he did

more than say it—he believed it from the bottom of his pocket.

There was just one employé among his three thousand that Treasurer Baker considered worth his notice, outside of their value as adjuncts to his machines. This employé was Ellen. Many a morning he came earlier to the mills to see her pass through the gates. He frequented one particular room oftener than the others, because she worked there. He thought it silly to slave her life away at a loom, with such a figure. He marvelled that she was content to bend her handsome neck, year after year, over bobbins and shuttles. There was a much easier position which Ellen might attain, unless Mr. Baker was mistaken.

On a certain day, shortly before our story opens, the treasurer sent for Ellen to come to his office on a pretended errand in connection with her work. When he had finished his reference to the point at issue he asked, in what he meant to be the most winning tones, why a girl of such endowments had chosen a position so far beneath her merits. As she stood there with lowered head and heightened color, astounded at his words, he mistook her silence and alluded directly to her beauty, which he said would adorn a mansion. He had been a widower for ten years, he told her, and if she would become his wife he would take her to New York, where people would never know of her present low associates, or that she had soiled her hands with mill work. As he alluded again to her personal charms, which had, he said, driven all thought of the disparity of their positions from his brain, she lifted her head and bent the

full force of her eyes upon him. The poor mill girl towered above her employer and looked down from her superior height with immeasurable scorn.

“Sir,” she said, coldly and cuttingly, “you are incapable of understanding were I to reply to you in the terms you deserve. I ask you never to address me again. If you send for me under any pretext whatever I shall not come.”

Mr. Baker felt disagreeably uncomfortable when the door closed behind the speaker. A common girl, whom he had offered to take out of the mud and place on velvet! But he was by no means convinced that the last word had been spoken. He would marry her yet and when she was his wife he would lead her a merry dance for the insults she had heaped upon him. A strike was likely to come soon and an empty stomach would plead better than other argument for a home where warmth and food could be had.

“Ellen has been reading novels, I guess,” he said to himself, “and has got a lot of high-flown notions. By-and-by she’ll know better.”

Ellen did not mention this occurrence to any one, not even to Hugh, and though her companions noticed the increased haughtiness with which she treated the treasurer whenever she was in his presence, none suspected its full significance. Mr. Baker had until lately presented to the stockholders the “stiffest” possible attitude in relation to non-compromise, but utterances of Mr. Westland at the recent meeting had gone even farther than his. The assertion that the mills had better be closed “till the grass grew in the streets of

Riverfall ” than have the workmen dictate the slightest thing to their employers had spread like wildfire.

Though much interested in the arguments he had heard from Ellen and Hugh, Westland never wavered from his determination to carry out the wishes of his uncle. It was clear that he must serve those who had put their trust in his hands, to the best of his ability. A Waterloo was preferable, at whatever cost—a final and complete settlement of these questions—than an interminable series of skirmishes.

He had put the question to his directors squarely—would they stand to his back if it became necessary to suspend business for an indefinite time? And without a dissenting voice they had promised.

On the 25th of September placards were posted conspicuously, giving a list of the reduced prices that were to rule after October 1st, and that evening dark-browed men and women read them through to the closing words, “By order of the directors, Philip Westland.” Sad looks were on most of the faces, but here and there a flashing eye or a set mouth betokened the outraged thoughts of the owner. At eight o’clock the employés filled Riverfall Hall to suffocation.

“We shall have your *friend* Westland to fight, it seems,” said William Converse, one of the head spinners, to Hugh, as he entered the room with Ellen.

“True; our friend Westland is with the opposition,” replied Ellen, seeing that stress was given to the word “friend.”

“He’s no real friend to honest workmen!” retorted the man, angrily. “Thank Heaven, I want no such friends as he!”

“We can hardly restrict our personal friendships to those who agree with us on all questions,” replied Ellen, addressing her remarks to as many as chose to hear her. She had had difficulty before now in curbing the impetuous spirit of Converse and she meant he should be in no doubt of her position. “I have had two interviews with Mr. Westland, and he impresses me as a thoroughly well-meaning gentleman. As far as he is a representative of Capital we certainly cannot agree. Carrying out the wishes of men wedded to an odious system he is inclined to be firm, and we must meet him with equal firmness. There is no need, however, of referring to him with discourtesy.”

Converse stamped his foot impatiently. He was a Manchester (Eng.) man, who had been born and reared in the atmosphere of the mills, and the universal regard for Ellen’s opinion rested lighter on him than on most of the others. At times he found it impossible to resist an outbreak of feeling. He was practically an anarchist and thought Ellen’s patient methods ill suited to fight so great a foe.

“‘Discourtesy!’” he echoed. “It is not ‘courtesy’ we want from your fine ‘gentleman,’ but justice! Soft words will buy us no bread! A man who acts as the tool of rich stockholders who would cut the wages of our girls from five dollars to four-fifty a week is a monster of whom the world would well be rid. To you he may seem a friend; to me he is an enemy, and I intend to treat him as one.”

There was a slight ripple of applause in the room. A peculiar collection of faces peered anxiously upon the

disputants. Poverty and long hours had written indelible lines on most of them. With the exception of half a dozen all wore their working clothes. As it was the middle of the week unshaven chins were the rule among the men, Sunday being the only day in which they indulged in the luxury of a razor. In that crowd Ellen's handsome, intelligent face and the strong lineaments of Hugh made a deep contrast.

Taking her place at a table at one end of the hall Ellen rapped for order with a pencil.

"You all know the object of this meeting," she said, when quiet was secured. "You have seen the posters announcing the cut in wages which is proposed for the 1st of October. I think a small committee should be appointed at once to see if we cannot induce the directors to rescind their action."

A growl from the Manchester man was her only audible answer.

"Have you any suggestions?" she asked, turning toward him.

"Much good your committee will do!" he snarled. "Merely a waste of time. I say *strike*, and be done with it!"

A murmur of hoarse voices endorsed the sentiment. "That's it!" "A committee will do no good!" "Let's strike and have it over!" and similar expressions were heard.

"I agree that it will not be likely to have a favorable result," said Ellen calmly, "but the moral effect will be worth much. It will give us a better standing with the public and earn us their sympathy."

Converse gave a defiant snort.

“The ‘public!’” he cried. “What did the ‘public’ ever do for us? We have these rapacious mill owners to meet and we should teach them a lesson they will never forget! They worship but one god—wealth. Let us walk in a body out of their mills and give them three days to restore the old schedule, a schedule shamefully low before this reduction. If they remain dead to reason I want to see every edifice they own in ashes. If a few of the owners are dead among the ruins I won’t cry, either. Public sympathy! Committee of conference! Bah! Fire and blood is what we want—and the sooner the better!”

Not a ripple disturbed the placidity of Ellen’s face during the delivery of this impassioned speech, although she dreaded its effect on the nearly desperate people. She marked the fiery eye of the Englishman, the scowl that distorted his face, the upraised arm, the fist that struck the table almost hard enough to break it. Then, without comment, she named the members of the committee—Hugh, a spinner named McNamara, and Converse himself. But the latter was on his feet again in an instant, refusing positively to serve.

“I will do anything reasonable!” he exclaimed, “but I could neither listen nor talk patiently to these blood-suckers. You will not insist, Ellen, I hope. If any one is to go *you* should be of the party. Put yourself in my place.”

A general endorsement of the last proposition was heard and Ellen reluctantly consented. After an hour of desultory discussion the meeting was dismissed, sub-

ject to the chairman's call. As the crowd filed out she gave Converse a signal to remain.

"When will you learn not to talk as you did just now?" she demanded, sternly, as soon as they were alone. "Shall I be obliged to forbid your entrance to our councils? I tell you for the twentieth time, we have no place for incendiaries and murderers!"

The reply she received was terribly in earnest:

"I cannot argue in favor of killing *them*—but they can kill *me*! They can kill our women and our little children! That is all right—but I must neither speak nor act to save them!"

She did not relax her sternness as she answered:

"You talk like a child—like a very angry child, with no thought higher than revenge on those who have injured you. We must proceed with wisdom, not foolhardiness. Do I not know our wrongs as well as you? They are burned into my very soul! I have devoted my life to studying this problem; and I tell you, rash man, cutting throats and firing buildings will only keep us longer from the end we seek!"

"And so we must continue to bow the knee!" he responded, bitterly. "We must beg as a favor for what is our inherent right! We must listen to stories about 'per cents.' and 'dividends' and 'market prices,' and all that folderol! What improvement in the history of a downtrodden people was ever accomplished by such methods? Had you lived in 1773 you would have spared the tea the Americans threw into Boston Harbor! Twenty years later you would have held up your hands in horror at the sweetest sight

in all the ages—the stream of aristocratic blood in the Place Louis XV! In '59 you would have cried “Fanatic!” to good John Brown, whose glorious folly unshackled the limbs of millions! Ellen, you are wrong. It is my duty to tell you of it here, when we are alone. I tried to curb my tongue in the meeting, but this poison rankles in my blood too deeply. I was born to be a Man, and these mill owners have made me a Thing! For sixty-six hours of hard labor I now receive eight dollars; they mean to reduce that to less than seven! I am single—they have denied me wife and children—and I could support life on that sum; but when I think of the others—the women, and the little ones forced to toil beyond their strength—my endurance gives way, and I could throttle one of these oppressors with as little compunction as I would a wolf!”

Ellen breathed deeply, but with folded arms she still stood erect before him.

“You lack patience——” she began.

“Patience! How long must I be patient? I have worked in mills for twenty years. My father worked in them before me. My mother—I heard it from the other women—hastened home during my first months of life, in the half hour allotted her at noon, to suckle me, hardly having time and strength left to snatch a mouthful of food. She died at twenty, killed by the owners of that factory, who rode in their carriages and lived like princes. ‘Patience!’ A few sharp knives, a keg of powder or a pound of dynamite may influence such men, but patience—never!”

Ellen’s full lips were pressed so tightly together that the color had left them.

“If you have finished,” she said, with unabated severity of manner, “you may go. When you feel it necessary to say these things you will always find me ready to listen, but you shall not sow such seed among my people. If you do it again I will disown you. I have been chosen leader, a position I never asked nor desired, but while I hold it I will be obeyed!”

In turning to go he held out a hand, which she took after some seconds of hesitation.

“I will have none but willing followers,” she said. “If you are determined to work in opposition to me, you must leave the union.”

“Oh, Ellen!” he cried, in tones that indicated the most intense distress. “Why do you misjudge me? When I am only impetuous you treat me like a mutineer. I yield to no one in my devotion, but I should be untrue both to you and myself if I did not seek to keep you from a great mistake.”

They proceeded slowly to the door, Converse extinguishing the solitary light that remained.

“You have little faith in me,” he said, as she did not speak.

“It rests with you to strengthen it,” she answered. “Good-night.”

“Good-night,” he responded sadly.

Hugh was waiting at the corner, as Ellen knew he would be, and together they walked toward her rooms.

“You are unhappy,” said Hugh, after waiting some moments to let her speak first. “Is it on account of Converse?”

She turned her eyes on her companion.

“No, Hugh; it is on account of myself! I have need of strength. He talked of knives and dynamite again.”

“And you argued with him upon his folly.”

“Yes, I argued. I forbade him under penalty of expulsion speaking like that in open meeting. But this is not my worst trouble, dear friend. I not only heard his suggestions—I *listened!*”

The young man started as he perceived her meaning.

“You are nervous,” he said, gravely. “You do not mean that you endorsed such theories. You never could do that.”

She drew closer the arm she had passed through his.

“I *listened* to him—a thing I never did before! His young mother, Hugh, worked in a Manchester mill. In order to nurse him at noon she had to go without her food—and she died when he was an infant. You know how he talks when he is excited. Well, after you left he talked worse than ever, and I—I listened! Oh, Hugh! Pray for me to-night. I need it very much!”

He tried to laugh off her apprehensions, saying he did not intend to pray till he saw some evidence that Heaven took an interest in such as they.

“Don’t!” she said, looking up in a startled way at the murky sky. “God cannot utterly have forgotten us. I know it seems sometimes as if He had, but it cannot be!”

“The capitalists have built a lot of fine churches for Him lately,” said Hugh ironically, “and thus diverted His attention. I saw a statement in the newspaper this

morning that Mr. Million, whose fortune is principally invested in mill stocks, has given a hundred thousand toward an elegant house of worship in New York. 'Generous!' the crowd will exclaim, like a parcel of parrots. I'd like to get the Almighty's ear just one minute, to tell him that you and I, and old McNamara, and the widow Ransome's little invalid Maggie earned that money, and that Mr. Million didn't contribute one cent of it."

Ellen was too wrapped in thought to answer. She knew Mayfield's lack of confidence in an all-wise Creator, and this did not seem the time to strengthen his faith. As she had said, she was weak herself. She had never heard the lines—

"Behind a frowning Providence
He hides a smiling face."

She was not a church-goer. Her belief in a Supreme Power was rather intuitive than acquired; but it sustained her when all else seemed to fail.

"When are you to meet Mr. Westland?" asked Hugh, presently.

"Mr. Westland?" She repeated the name softly.

"Yes. Our committee should waste no time."

"True," she said musingly. "To-morrow evening at eight, then. Will you be kind enough to tell McNamara. It will be at the Agency, as before, I presume."

They had reached her door and he bade her go at once to rest, as she was looking paler than usual.

"You must conserve your strength," he said mean-

ingly. "I fear you will need it all before this thing is over."

She took his hands in hers and smiled into his eyes.

"Fear!" she echoed. "That is not a word for either of *us* to use. I shall be all right in the morning."

VII

The story that Ralph told Philip in relation to his attachment to the young woman was entirely true. He had met her in the most unconventional fashion, in the course of an expedition with several of his chums in a part of New York which was then as unfamiliar to him as Texas. One of the "boys" had drunk enough on that occasion to make him a trifle loud in his demeanor, and as a pretty girl came in sight he staggered up to her and remarked, "Whasher name?" in a way that brought the blood to her cheek and made her heart beat rapidly, between indignation and fear.

The hour was very late and some people might have said pretty girls who did not wish to be spoken to ought to be at home; but Ralph, who had the instincts of a decent lad, entertained no such thought. Taking his chum by the collar he pulled him away and then, with raised hat, courteously asked the girl to overlook the affront. Instead of doing so, however, she administered several sound boxes on the ears of her insulter, which made them ring for a considerable time. At which the others, fearing that the affair might attract the attention of the police, hustled the offender into a carriage and drove off, leaving Ralph alone with the girl.

Nathalie was by this time convinced of the good intentions of her defender and condescended to say, in reply to continued apologies for his friend, that she thought

he had been taught a lesson he would not forget right away. As she grew calmer Ralph's handsome face grew more and more attractive to her, and she consented to allow its owner to accompany her to the vicinity of her lodging, "to prevent any one else annoying her," as he naively expressed it. She did not let him go quite to her door that night, for she lived in a very poor neighborhood, and her pride rebelled against the full exposure of her poverty to this well-dressed youth. On him the girl made an instantaneous impression. Her accent charmed him, for she was born in France, and had not been long enough in America to gain completely the native pronunciation. In appearance she was not of the French "type" at all, being possessed of light hair and dark blue eyes. Her figure was slender though plump, and she wore her plain clothes with a grace that was natural and delightful.

They admitted to each other, months after, when they had become more fully acquainted, that it was a case of "love at first sight."

In passing a restaurant she mentioned that this was generally where she took her dinners, and the next evening Ralph began soon after dusk to haunt the vicinity. She was late, but she came at last, and when he had seen her enter and select a table by herself he made bold to go in and ask if he might dine off the same cloth. A cheap table d'hôte meal was served, eaten and paid for by each in the most matter-of-fact manner. During that hour they gained information about each other, she that he had finished school and was as yet engaged in no employment, and he that she was an orphan without rela-

tions in the country, learning the dressmaker's trade of a Mme. Mèlière, not far from the Bowery. In that section formal presentations are not necessary preliminaries to an acquaintance, even with the best young women, and when Ralph proposed a walk the request was readily granted.

As they strolled through the streets people stared occasionally at the couple, evidently in opposite grades of society and yet apparently such good friends. But queer sights are common in a great city, and the impression was but momentary. It never occurred to Ralph that his clothes were better than hers until she alluded to the subject.

"Aren't you afraid some of your fine friends will see you walking with a working girl?" she asked, shyly.

"Certainly not!" he exclaimed. "I'm proud that you think me good enough to walk with. Besides, nobody would know you were a working girl unless you told them."

He looked admiringly at the eyes she lifted bashfully and delightedly to his.

"I suppose there's no danger any of the young ladies you associate with will be in this part of New York," she ventured. "Probably they live above Madison Square."

"I know mighty few," he retorted, "and if the whole lot were to come along in a procession their opinion would be of no consequence."

She gazed at him earnestly.

"There must be one," she said in a low voice, "who—who thinks you ought to walk with no girl but her."

He laughed brightly, and then shook his head.

“That’s something I never had in my life. I—I don’t think I should quite know what to do with it.”

The figure by his side shrank a little away.

“Hold on!” he said. “I’ve made some kind of mistake. I don’t know any way except just to tell the truth. Forgive me if I’ve gone wrong.”

She looked incredulous and graver.

“You’re not telling the truth when you pretend you’ve never made love to a girl. Why did you say that?”

“I give you my word—my word of honor.”

“And—why—haven’t you?”

“I never saw one I cared enough for, I suppose.”

“N—never?”

“Never—before.”

“Now, that’s not fair,” she protested. “You couldn’t make love to me if you tried. I wouldn’t let you. And if you’re going to make fun of me we may as well part right here. I know my way home.”

He protested that he wanted to have set himself right; that she misunderstood if she thought he would say or do anything to offend her. In the course of his protestations he went so far as to declare that he liked her prodigiously and wanted to continue her friend.

“Oh, yes, that’s very nice,” she answered. “That’s a good word—‘friend.’ But where could I see you, except in the street? You would not wish to present me to your rich acquaintances uptown; and, if they were like the ones I saw the other night I shouldn’t care to have you,” she added, with a smile that the idea forced.

“But you could let me call sometimes,” he suggested, “where you live. And I’d like ever so much to take you to the theatre, and to drive.”

“I have a poor room on the top floor of an old building,” she replied, letting out the whole truth in her distress, and thinking it might as well be now as later. “There is no public parlor, few of these cheap lodgings have any. As to the theatre, it needs better clothes than I own to go there. Oh, dear, dear!—(sob)—it’s so dreadful to be poor!”

There was something in the quivering voice that told the young man much more than Nathalie meant to reveal. He felt that she liked him, that she regretted the social line which, as she thought, separated them, and that she would be sorry if he took her literally and put an end to their acquaintance.

“Let’s not cross all these bridges till we come to them,” he said. “There’s no reason why we can’t be friends, if you’re willing. I can come evenings and dine at your table, and we can talk things over.”

“You don’t mean every evening, do you!” she cried, astonished.

“Not if I shall be in the way of some other fellow,” he answered, coldly. “So that’s the trouble!”

“Don’t be silly! You can ask Monsieur Bélot if any man ever spoke to me in his place, except himself and the garçons. It’s not that, at all. But—you must not think of coming every night. It would make talk!”

He did not in the least see why, but he answered that they need not confine their dinners to a single restaurant. They could go to various places, making the appointment for each succeeding day in the evening.

And this was the way it was finally arranged, for the present.

The friendship so oddly begun thrived exceedingly. Because Ralph had no regular occupation he found it particularly nice to have a pleasant evening to look forward to. It was a fact, as he had stated, that never until now had he been on terms of special intimacy with a young lady and the novelty pleased him. Nathalie was pretty, she was bright, and it did not take long to convince him that she was as happy as he over their acquaintance. They had little "spats," to be sure, according to the proverbial course of love, but they always came out of them fonder of each other than ever.

After a few weeks she let him come to her room, situated in the upper story of a tall house, and very meagrely furnished. Nevertheless he found something charming in the atmosphere of the place, for her French ability to make much of little gave an air of comfort to the poor furnishings. He noticed evidences of her devotion to the Catholic faith, in the crucifix, rosary and prayer book on her table, as well as in pictures of the Virgin and saints that adorned the walls. She was in truth rigidly observant of the forms of her creed. On a Friday she would as soon have swallowed arsenic as meat. Twice a month she went to confession, and on certain saints' days, as well as at the Sunday mass, she never missed attendance at church. One of the most severe of their earlier quarrels was caused by a light remark of his about her religion, and he never thought it wise again to allude to the subject.

She had her way in practically everything from the

start. She would not accept a single article of clothing as a present, when he formed the notion that her wardrobe might as well be replenished from his purse. Sometimes she let him pay for the two dinners they took together, but even that she would not allow to become a custom. He was permitted to come to her room twice a week and stay not later than ten o'clock, in any circumstances. She took a few little excursions with him, on a steamer down the Bay, up the Hudson by train, around the Park in a carriage—and occasionally they went to one of the medium-priced theatres.

Soon after they met she obtained from her employer, at a low price, a dress that had been rejected by a customer, on account of some dissatisfaction, which she made over herself, working far down into the night on the task. She looked much better, she thought, in this gown, and was inclined to be angry when Ralph, with the obtuseness of a man, told her he liked her just as well in the one she had worn before.

“You’ve got taste, I must say!” she cried, “if you think a cotton dress as nice as silk.”

“It’s not the dress,” he smiled, “it’s the owner that attracts me. You would be pretty in the plainest garments imaginable.”

She could not help feeling gratified by the evident sincerity of the compliment and permitted him one of those rare kisses on the cheek in which he was now sometimes permitted to indulge. Certainly they were progressing.

One evening he did not meet her at the restaurant where they were to dine and she walked slowly back to

her room in a very miserable mood. It had never happened before and her imagination took wild flights as she tried to conceive the reason. At last, a little before nine, she heard his familiar step on the stairs and determined to let him see (which wasn't at all the truth) that she had not minded his tardiness. As he entered the room she sat at the window, drumming idly on the pane and apparently absorbed in observing the lighted street below. As he crept softly toward her she did not move nor turn her head, but when he laid his cheek to hers she lifted her arms and, with an impulsive motion, threw them about his neck. The next instant she drew back again and surveyed his face with a pretty frown.

“What excuse have you for not coming to dine with me to-night?”

“I had a letter from my cousin, the manufacturer, whom I told you of, and he asked me to do some things that could not be postponed. I came as soon as possible.”

“You told me you would be there at half past six; and it is almost nine. Three—hours—behind—time! A nice young man you are—you, who always boast of telling the exact truth!”

He smiled into her face, for he saw she was in no very serious rage. It was not disagreeable to know that she had missed him.

“So you always want the ‘exact truth,’ do you?” he asked. “Well, listen, then, and I’ll give it to you. To-morrow I go away for a week, and possibly longer.”

She stared at him with a dazed expression. Presently her eyes filled with tears.

“You do not mean it!” she gasped. “Where could you go for a whole week? Seven days!”

He could hardly contain himself. It is pleasant to be loved very much indeed—when one is twenty-two.

“I’m not going very far, only to Riverfall,” he explained. He tried to explain the situation there and the dangers of the impending strike. All he had in the world, nearly, was at stake, and his cousin Philip thought he ought to be on the ground to render what service he could.

But Nathalie refused to take his view of the matter.

“If you go and stay a week we may as well say good-by,” she exclaimed. “You will not find me here when you return.”

Ralph had heard similar expressions from her lips before and did not put too much value on them. Still, the possibility that she might carry out her threat gave him a distinct alarm. He did not know what he could do without Nathalie. She had come to be almost as much a part of his existence as his eyes or his hands. He tried to caress her but she pushed him away. At last he said, if the proposed trip was really so objectionable to her, he would write Phil that he would not come. To this she made answer that he could do as he liked; that, whichever way he decided, it made no difference; and that, as he had made up his mind without consulting her, he might as well go and have done with it.

She threw herself upon a sofa and buried her face in a pillow. At this Ralph began to lose his temper, too. He spoke sharply several times and, when she would

not answer, cried, dramatically, "Good-by, then; I'm going, Nathalie!" and left the house.

The French girl heard his steps as he went down the staircase. She lifted her head and laughed quietly. It was jolly to make him cross. He often brought a package of candies to make up with. The farce had been enacted twenty times before, with substantially the same ending in each case. She went to the window and peeped out of the corner of a curtain. There he was, walking as if he never meant to return, without one backward look. The dear fellow—how she loved him! When he returned she would be as nice as possible. He ought to know she was only in fun. Live without Ralph! It was inconceivable!

She looked again. He was turning a corner and walking like a man who had made up his mind.

"*Mon Dieu!* If he really thought me in earnest!"

The girl crouched on the floor by the window and began to cry. It was cruel of Ralph to treat her so. If he had gone for good she would move out of that house, for every article of furniture reminded her of him and doubled her pain. She could not write to his address, for he had never given it to her. She only knew that he lived in that aristocratic neighborhood which was vaguely described by the words "Up Town," and meant anywhere above Union Square.

An hour passed and she still sat on the floor by the window, her face bedewed with tears and her hair dishevelled, the latter caused by sundry pulls when she had the acutest spasms of distress. Then a knock was heard at the door and for a second time she hoped against hope.

“Come in,” she said, without rising.

The door opened and a young woman in holiday attire entered—one of Nathalie’s few calling acquaintances. Her name was Annie May and she had come for the express purpose of exhibiting a new costume and eliciting the praises that she felt it deserved.

“Why, Nathalie, what’s the matter?”

The French girl began to weep again.

“He’s left me!” she blubbered.

“Left you!” echoed Annie May. “How many times does that make? Don’t be a baby. Get up and tell me how you like my new dress. Stunning, don’t you think?” She posed before the mirror, turning in every direction to get the best effects. “Cost twenty dollars! Is it too short in front? I don’t think so. Of course I want to show the blue stockings and shoe buckles. How’s that for a trail! I’m going up to Forty-fourth Street and walk all the way down to the Hoffman. I don’t get a new dress every day. And the hat! I had four ostrich plumes made into this one.” She pressed her skirt closely to her form. “I believe it is a little too short, even for the street.”

Nathalie rose to her knees and took a critical observation.

“No, Annie. I wouldn’t alter it at all. It’s just right.”

“I’m awfully glad!” replied Annie May, much relieved. “You’re a dressmaker, you know, and your judgment must be good. I never can tell anything about a gown. If it was the hat, now, I would know all about it, for I’ve been two years in the millinery department.”

Nathalie had risen to her feet. In her friend's flow of conversation she had for a moment forgotten her troubles, but a glance at the mantel, on which stood a photograph of the lost one, brought the tears afresh.

"I know he'll never come back!" she sobbed. "It was not like the other times. I pretended to be cross and wouldn't speak to him and he just said 'Good-by!' and went. And he's been so good!"

Annie May tried to soothe her. She insisted that Ralph would return on the following day and said that even if he didn't a note sent to his address would bring him.

"You must give up a little," she said, wisely. "You can take it out of him when you get solid again. But, aren't you engaged to be married?"

The big blue eyes opened wide.

"Why, no! What makes you ask such a question?"

"I'm sure it's the most natural one in the world. He's been going around with you for more than three months. You don't mean to say he's never talked business! If that's true I guess he'd best stay away."

Nathalie walked to the door and opened it. "You can go, Annie," she said.

"Well, I never!" was the astonished answer, as the speaker gave no intention of acting upon the abrupt suggestion.

"If you think I'm the kind of girl that wants to trap a gentleman into marriage, you can't care to keep me on your list of friends."

"I didn't say 'trap,' I didn't mean 'trap,' said Annie. "Come, now. When a fellow leaves his natural

acquaintances and spends week after week in the society of a girl of our class—a poor girl, I mean—he either should talk marriage or be given his walking papers. We've got to protect ourselves."

"Close the door after you, Annie," was the decided reply. "It is cold in the hallway."

When several minutes of argument failed to elicit another word, Annie May switched out of the room with a few energetic remarks, and Nathalie was left alone with her tears. In ten minutes she regretted having driven away her friend, who had undoubtedly meant kindly by her suggestions. She finally went to bed and sobbed herself into an uneasy slumber and in the morning rose in hopes that the lost one would pay an early call and express his regret for the occurrence of yesterday. Finally, not having eaten a mouthful of breakfast, she had to go to her work unsolaced, and spent the most miserable day of her life.

VIII.

What had happened to Ralph?

On reaching his apartments he had found a second message from Westland, urging him to come to Riverfall on the very first train.

“You may possibly be useful, for once in your life,” said the letter, “and I hope you won’t miss the opportunity. There’s going to be a great upheaval here, unless all signs fail. I think the biggest struggle of the century, in the cotton business, is just ahead. The operatives are led by that young woman Ellen, whom it is said they obey like a regiment of soldiers. Uncle John has written me to fight to the death and I mean to justify his confidence. As you are the only masculine relation of the family interested in the outcome you ought to get down here as soon as the train will bring you.”

Glancing at his watch, Ralph saw that he must decide quickly. He had barely half an hour. Had he had twice as long he might have decided to postpone the trip, for he had never intended to leave the city without making it up with Nathalie. The shortness of the time decided him and when the train drew out of the station he was on board. The next morning, before Westland descended to breakfast, his young cousin presented himself in his bedroom.

“So you came right away!” said Philip in a pleased

tone. "Edna and I made a wager of a pair of gloves on the result and I've lost."

"Certainly I came," replied Ralph. "If there's going to be a row I want to be in it. A row with a woman leading the opposition ought to be interesting. But—if these people are so thoroughly under her control, isn't there an easier plan than a shutdown? Wouldn't it be cheaper, and wiser, to pay her a few hundreds to give her followers some sensible advice? It has been worked successfully elsewhere, I understand."

Westland shook his head soberly.

"You haven't seen Ellen, or you wouldn't suggest that. I'd as soon think of trying to bribe St. Peter to let me through the gate of Heaven. Mistaken as she undoubtedly is, her sincerity admits of no question. You must see her. She is to meet me here with a committee of mill-hands this evening."

"Delighted. By the way, how is Uncle's health now?"

"Worse. The handwriting was that of his servant, and only the signature his own. Isn't it a shame his last days should be clouded by such a wicked, senseless affair! Riverfall is his idol. He made it what it is out of a barren waste, and the people have no more sense of gratitude than to try to wreck the ship on which he has carried them so long in safety."

Ralph looked suitably impressed and finally inquired if the strike fever had got so far it was not possible to avert it.

"I think so—I think so," was the regretful answer.

“Ellen says she will not retreat an inch, and I’m sure my directors won’t. There’s the breakfast bell. Don’t talk of the matter at the table any more than you can help; it frets Edna.”

The blind girl was already in the room and stood extending her arms to give Ralph a cousinly welcome.

“How did you manage to leave the idol of your soul?” she asked, laughingly, when they were seated at the board.

Ralph glanced angrily at Philip.

“So Phil had to tell you, did he?” he snapped.

“I tell Edna everything,” was Westland’s quiet response. “I am her Morning and Evening News. Besides, if one of our little group is contemplating such a serious thing as matrimony the others ought to know it without delay and accustom themselves to the situation.”

The younger man cracked the shell of an egg and began slowly to pick his way to the interior.

“I don’t know but it’s all off,” he said, after a pause. “We had a quarrel just before I came away.”

“Oh, tell me about it!” cried Edna, with animation. “I’ve heard so little about love affairs, except what Mollie reads me from books. A quarrel! That sounds romantic! Who began it—she, of course?”

“No. I think it began itself. She’s so dreadfully set on having her way—and I never know exactly how to take her,” said Ralph, soberly.

Westland, relieved at any variation in the monotony of the everlasting strike question that had filled his head for days, joined in Edna’s mood and urged Ralph to make a clean breast of the affair.

“I’m almost as ignorant on love matters as Edna is,” he protested. “I’ve heard their course never runs smooth, and my impression is that’s generally the case. We two are an unprejudiced jury and will decide your affair impartially as soon as we hear the evidence.”

“Go on, go on!” cried Edna. “I’m dying to hear!”

Thus urged the young fellow gradually unfolded the situation.

“Is she very pretty?” asked Edna, when he came to the end.

“Pretty? You never saw anything like it—I mean nobody ever did. She’s the handsomest, the sweetest, the dearest——”

“And that’s why you’ve left her!” said Westland. “Well, there are nice fish still in the sea and bait is plenty. For my part, though, I think you were just a bit unreasonable.”

“No, he wasn’t!” said Edna. “He couldn’t help being late, and he did all he could to explain his absence. She’s a little minx to treat him as she did.”

Ralph rose to his feet, highly incensed, but a glance from Westland brought him to his senses before he found utterance. No matter what the blind girl might do or say it was an unwritten law that her feelings must not be injured.

“I don’t agree with you,” he said, resuming his seat. “I’m going to write her a long letter this morning and set myself right. It only proves she’s fond of me when a delay of an hour or two affects her like that.”

“Oh, you men!” cried Edna. “What vain things

you are! More than likely she's got another beau by this time."

Ralph started so violently that he spilled some of the coffee he was in the act of drinking.

"I don't think that's a kind remark," he retorted, in spite of Philip's warning finger. "I couldn't live without Nathalie."

Edna, who sat near her young cousin, reached out a hand and found him.

"And you really have serious thoughts of—of—never living without her?" she asked, with eager curiosity. "I thought you were merely amusing yourself and it would soon be over. Tell me more. From Phil I got only the merest outline. I can't understand it yet, how a girl without station, or connections——"

"You'd understand, if you knew her," replied Ralph, impetuously. "So pretty, so lovable, so pure, so fascinating! The little quarrel we had yesterday doesn't amount to anything. When I return she'll laugh it off and be as charming as ever. I wish I'd waited till we made up, though, before I came away. She's sure to wake this morning with a fit of the blues; and she has hardly any intimate acquaintances to drive them away."

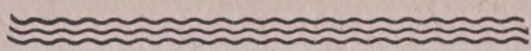
The blind girl understood now that the subject was really serious to her cousin, and she kept him talking for some time after Philip had left the table and gone to his office. She had not as much prejudice on the score of wealth and family as she might have had but for her misfortune, but she wanted Ralph to make no mistake in such an important matter as a life connec-

tion—if his affair with the little French girl should go so far.

She exacted a promise that he would not marry at least until his only remaining cousins—herself and Philip—had met his sweetheart. And she was relieved when he admitted that a formal engagement had not yet been entered into.

It came out that Ralph had never made a definite proposal from fear it might be rejected, which struck Edna as very odd when she thought of Nathalie as he described her, and of Ralph as at least sufficiently well off to give her a much better home than she then had. Edna wished she was sure Nathalie was not a designing creature, imposing on the credulity of her admirer. Ralph was so young and, with women, so inexperienced. In romance these chance acquaintances sometimes turned out happily, but she was not sure they always did so in real life.

That evening the committee of work-people came, according to appointment, to the Agency and held a conference with Mr. Westland, at which both Edna and Ralph were present. Nothing was accomplished, however; Westland stating at the outset that he was acting under orders from his uncle in Florida, which he could not disregard. His suggestion that the operatives accept the new schedule for the present and await the change in the market which he confidently hoped would come with the new year was politely but firmly declined by Ellen, after a few minutes' whispered conference with her committee. They had decided that such a course would give too great an advantage to their employers.



Ellen's appearance impressed Ralph greatly and he listened attentively to every word she uttered. He was not, however, convinced in the least that the price paid for labor should be settled by persons receiving wages. She seemed as if speaking in a strange tongue which, though it thrilled him, did not carry conviction. That there would be a strike seemed certain, and the thought that his already insufficient income was to be reduced to zero point was the one uppermost in his mind. At moments he wondered Phil did not open the door and order them out of the house. At others the picture of their leader, as she plead for her losing cause, held him like a vice.

"An actress! That is what she should be," he decided. "Frohman would put her on his list of stars and Clyde Fitch would write her a play, if they could see her. Such a voice, such eyes, such a figure, such a pose!"

"I understand, then, that you speak with full authority?" said Ellen to Westland.

"That is true."

"I also have full authority to order my people to leave the mills till the old schedule is restored. This committee was appointed to try once more to avoid that, but I assure you this will be our last week at the looms if you and your directors do not change your minds. We are a unit on that point."

He bowed courteously and intimated with a movement that he could do nothing more. The committee filed out, slowly. When Westland took Ellen's extended hand as she bade him good-night, there was

something in the touch that disturbed him. Her calm, steady gaze was on his face, but he avoided meeting it and was relieved when she had vanished.

The three cousins had a long talk after they were alone and agreed that the situation left no choice. If the people were bound to put their fingers in the flames there was no way to stop them. Such things had to happen once in a while, like other epidemics, in the unfathomable processes of nature.

“But what a wonderful creature Ellen is!” said Edna. “If her influence were only on the right side what a power for good she might be!”

“It is on the right side—as she sees it,” responded Philip, quickly. “She’s got to suffer with the rest of them.”

“Has she no relations to whom she can go, if worse comes to worst?”

“Not a soul; an orphan, without brother or sister. But you may be sure she would not leave Riverfall if she had. She believes it her mission to lead these people into the promised land. She’s as much convinced of her duty as was ever any prophet of old, and it’s mere folly to argue with a person in that frame of mind.”

Edna’s pale face took on a new worry. She could understand little about this matter except that her father’s directions must be right and that it was troubling Phil. Her helplessness to aid made it harder for her to bear. When Westland went to his room she turned again for relief to the theme of Nathalie, and Ralph told her he was going to run up to New York and untangle the skein.

“I can do nothing here for a day or two,” he said, “and there’ll be no better chance. I don’t like that little girl to fret about me and perhaps think some accident has happened. I’ll be back at the latest by Friday and then I’ll stay as long as I can be of use, though I’m blest if I know what good I can accomplish here. I’ll take the earliest train, before Phil is up, so you can say I left word for him.”

Nathalie had in truth been so troubled by the complete mystery of her lover’s disappearance that she was nearly ill. Her work at the dressmaker’s was badly done the next morning and brought several sharp reproofs. Finally the garment on which she worked was taken away, and she was told to go home and not return till she brought her wits with her. Mme. Mèlière was accustomed to deal rather harshly with these girls, under the influence of bad temper, but she generally got over it in time to take them back as soon as they were ready to return. The others whispered to Nathalie not to mind, but to take a good rest and come again on the morrow. They did not know, of course, what caused the terrific pains in her head that made her nearly blind. She went out, little dreaming it was the last day she would ever spend among those companions, with most of whom she had worked for over two years, and who, with the exception of Ralph and Annie May, were the only persons she could call friends anywhere on earth.

But when she reached her room she found her situation little better. If he never was to return, she could

not endure the scenes where they had been so happy together. She must find another chamber, in which each object would not remind her of the lost one. It was a relief to find occupation for her hands, and she set about packing her trunk to pass the time away.

Tears continued to fall as she proceeded. There were so many things that he had given her, generally after a pretty struggle, in which she had insisted that she would accept nothing more and he had persisted till he won the victory. She paused the longest over some embroidered slippers, recalling their purchase. He had bought her a pair that pleased his eyes in a shop window not far from where she lived and the dealer's boy had come with him to see if the size was right. They were much too large and the boy had to go twice before he got them small enough. How Ralph had laughed over the incident and, when the right ones were left at last, how he had taken them in his hands and caressed them!

“Such a baby foot!” was his exclamation, as he held up the slippers, lost in admiration of their minuteness. And now the baby feet were going from him!

Many little articles had their history, many could have told an interesting tale had they had tongues. And when all were packed, Nathalie took them out of the trunk again, and put them back in the bureau and closet, to wait a little longer. Perhaps he would return, after all. Indeed, he must, if only to scold her. Doubtless he was at Riverfall, where he had said he was going. If he did not come in a few days she could address a letter to him, at the postoffice. Yes, and if

he did not answer it, she could take the train and follow him there. She had a little money and could pawn some of her things.

The long day passed and the next night. In the morning she was no better able to work than on the previous day. She went for a walk—away up town, in the vain hope that she might see his familiar figure. It was noon when she reached home again and she resumed the occupation of yesterday, sorting over her trinkets and living on the memories connected with them. Finally she sat down near the window and began to compose the letter that must be sent to Riverfall, if all else failed. Her English education had been neglected, and it was with difficulty that she spelled out the words. Her orthography was original and of the phonetic order. At last she evolved the following:

Deer Ralf:—I never thort yu was gowing that time yu went out. Yu no I am all ways foolin an thats what I was doin then. I have bin so Lon sum I cant work and Madame sent me hom. Pleas rite that yu still luv me an cum soon as yu can.

Ures till deth

NATHALIE.

She read the note over carefully, placed it in an envelope and addressed it. Then she took Ralph's photograph from the shelf and kissed it over and over, as she sat at the window, with her back to the door. So absorbed was she that she heard not the stealthy step on the carpet nor realized Ralph's presence in the room till she felt his arms tightly clasped around her.

"Oh, how you frightened me!" she cried, springing up and trying to hide the letter she had written. But his hand was on it and he held it out of her reach.

“What! You were going away!” he exclaimed, as he saw the nearly filled trunk. “You were going to leave, so I should not know where to find you! This is the girl I’ve been breaking my heart over!”

Nathalie caught his coat in her hands and clung to him hysterically.

“No, no! I thought you meant to leave me for good. I couldn’t bear to stay here after that.”

He did not look satisfied. A suspicion had entered his mind that she was playing a part. His jealousy was aroused and his hand clutched the letter more tightly.

“Oh, please don’t read that!” she cried, trying frantically to take it from him.

For the first time he pushed her roughly aside. If he had a rival he might as well know it now as later. But, as he read the letter, the corners of his mouth relaxed.

“You really love me!” he shouted. “And you thought I could live without you!”

“You said ‘Good-by,’” she whispered.

“You were awfully provoking.”

Declaring that he was starving, he made her put on her hat and accompany him to a restaurant, where they spent the next hour. She told him of her discharge by Mme. Mèlière and he said he was glad of it—that he had been evolving a plan where she could be much more useful.

As she opened her eyes widely he asked, “How would you like to go to Riverfall with me?”

“With you?” she repeated, shrinking back a little. “I don’t understand.”

“Listen, then.” He told her all about the impending strike, talked of Ellen, railed against the employés of his uncle’s mills and praised the magnanimity of the directors and Phil.

“Now, here’s where you come in,” he explained: “I want you to go down there and get into the mills at some sort of occupation—anything will do—so you can go out on strike with the rest. If possible you must hire a room in the same house with Ellen and get into her confidence. It’ll be like private detective work, and what you learn may be of the greatest value to my family. You understand; you’re to be a real mill girl, like the others, for a few weeks; and I’ll arrange some way to meet you and talk things over.”

Nathalie was in a mood to consent to anything that would bring her near to her sweetheart and she saw nothing wrong in the task he outlined. To be of use to Ralph was delightful to think of. She said her things were nearly packed and she could be ready to start at any hour. When it was time for him to go he had it all arranged. She was not even to take the same train, from cautious motives, but to come on the following day. She accepted a small sum of money for expenses, as the journey was to be made in a business way, and he told her Treasurer Baker would certainly reimburse him. When they parted it was with many expressions of endearment and happy smiles on both their faces.

“If you see me in Riverfall don’t forget yourself or we are lost!” was his final adjuration. “Not a sign of recognition, or the whole thing is ruined.”

IX

Men and women with discontented faces thronged the streets of Riverfall. The mills were deserted. Not a wheel revolved, not a spindle whirled. On the great gate of each mill was a legend, in big, black type:

CLOSED BY ORDER OF THE DIRECTORS.

and some wag had added, on one of them—

After all the Hands had Gone out!

It might have been Sunday, it was so quiet, though the holiday attire was missing. Conversation took on a lower tone than usual. Little groups discussed the all-important question, but so subdued was the talk it could not be overheard many feet away.

In the Agency Philip, Ralph and Edna sat together. The men were silent, and Miss Westland tried to brighten their spirits by frequent expressions of belief that the affair could not last long. She realized that the difficulty was preying on Philip's spirits, and that Ralph was thinking mournfully of the reduction in his income which the loss of dividends would entail.

When Westland had heard Edna refer to the "strike" for the twentieth time, he broke silence.

"This is not a strike," he said, nervously, "it is a

lock-out. We did not care to let them take the initiative, when we saw how things were going. In a strike the workmen stand ready to resume labor as soon as their demands are granted. In a lock-out the question is settled by their employers. The attitude we have taken puzzles the malcontents. A corporation usually attempts to continue work with new hands, who are subjected to all sorts of humiliation, if not to direct assault, and are denominated 'scabs' and 'knobsticks.' This brings on a conflict. In a lock-out nothing of the kind can occur. The Corporation, having decided to lock its doors, has no need to employ anybody. The people locked out, having no incentive to acts of violence, tire sooner of their amusement. When we are ready to open the mills they will jam the entrances in their desire to get to the looms. But we shall be in no haste. A long vacation will have an effect they will be apt to remember."

Ralph heard his cousin attentively, and thought he spoke from his heart. Edna listened also and took quite a different view.

Several days had passed since Ralph parted from Nathalie in New York, after arranging with her to act the part of a spy upon the troublesome people at Riverfall. She arrived too late to secure work, but by professing sympathy with the others she found no difficulty in being accepted as one of them, her plain clothing and the pricks of needles in her hands bearing out her statement that she was a working girl.

Her first meeting with Ralph was in one of the silent mills, to which he had obtained the key of a rear en-

trance. When the slight figure, cloaked and hooded, made its appearance the young man was at its side. But Nathalie drew back.

“*Are you a capitalist?*” she asked in deep tones, holding up both hands to ward him off.

He thought it not a bad joke, and laughed merrily. She drew back farther yet.

“You must answer, Ralph. I am in earnest. *Are you a capitalist?*”

“Well, no, I don’t believe I am,” he said, puzzled. “If I ever was, your new friends have disposed of the peril.”

“Oh, I’m so glad!” She threw up her veil. “I couldn’t bear to think of giving you up; but I heard one of the men say you were a capitalist, and I wouldn’t stand that, you know.”

He tried to help her remove her hood, but tumbled her hair down in his eagerness. When she had accepted a seat he began to ply her with questions:

“What villain told you I was a capitalist?”

“One of the men named Converse said so,” she replied, twisting her hair back into shape, and speaking with her mouth full of pins. “I think he would like to kill every capitalist in the world. Ellen has a lot of trouble with him.”

“Tell me about Ellen,” he said, growing still more interested. “What luck you had to get into the very house where she lives!”

“You ought to know her,” replied Nathalie, warmly. “She’s a wonderful woman. She makes every one do exactly as she says. Why, the night before last I was

taken to a hall and made to promise—but I was not to tell! Oh, I forgot!”

Nathalie’s eyes opened wide as she realized how near she had come to breaking her obligation.

“Pshaw! It will be all right to tell *me*,” he answered; “of course I will let it go no farther. That’s what you came for, you know. I want to hear every word.”

The girl was unconvinced.

“But, Ralph, I promised not to tell—and a promise is—a promise.”

It was evidently useless to pursue this tack, and he changed the subject.

“How do you like your lodging?”

“Splendid. I sleep with a girl named Flaherty, and sometimes when I dream in the night I bump my head against the ceiling that comes down on my side of the bed. It’s awful jolly.”

He made a grimace and repeated with a shrug the word “*jolly!*”

“Well, it is,” she persisted. “Miss Flaherty’s got a brother, too, named Mike, the nicest kind of fellow.”

“Horrible!” he ejaculated, striking a pose. “Well, the next thing, I suppose, you’ll be Mrs. Mike Flaherty.”

“He’s asked me,” she replied, thoughtfully.

Ralph grasped her wrists so tightly that she uttered a cry of pain. “You shall not speak like that,” he shouted.

She pulled her hands away and moved her chair from him. “I shall do as I please,” she said, sulkily. “If a good fellow asks me to be his wife I sha’n’t ask *your* consent.”

Her manner struck him with a deathly chill.

“You know,” he said, in an injured tone, “that I love you above everything.”

“Love? Yes, ‘love!’ Love, love, love!” she mocked. And that’s all there is to it!”

He tried to explain the difficulties of his situation, the uncertainty of his means of subsistence, while the mills were doing nothing. He said he had always intended to ask her when the right time came.

“Is it really true that this Flaherty wants you to marry him, after knowing you only two or three days?” he inquired, with a scowl.

She bowed firmly.

“A rough mill laborer!”

“He is a Christian,” she answered, simply.

“By which you mean a Roman Catholic.”

“It is the only true Church. He wouldn’t make fun of religion, as you do.”

Ralph was growing very uneasy.

“But, Nathalie!” he cried, “you do not *love* him!”
Tell me you do not *love* him!”

“I do not love him,” she repeated, smiling.

“And you *do* love *me*!”

“And I do love *you*.”

He could hardly contain himself for joy.

“But why did you say such disagreeable things!” he inquired, pinching her cheeks.

“It is you who were cross. You looked as if you were going to bite me. As for Mike I didn’t encourage him at all. I couldn’t help his proposing; though it *was* rather sudden.” She reddened like a peony.

Then he brought her back to the subject of Ellen, and she spoke of Hugh also; but she liked best to talk of Converse, the Manchester fire-eater.

“He said the capitalists had got all their wealth by robbing the poor, and I couldn’t bear to think you were one of them.”

“But what about the row? Will the people hold out long?”

“Of course they will! They’ll never give up, if they die of starvation—I’ve heard them say so, over and over. The directors will either pay the old wages or keep the mills closed. What makes your cousin, Mr. Westland, do the dirty work? They say he is in other ways a decent man. Ellen won’t let them say much against him, when she’s around, and some of the men make a fuss about that. Converse was talking about it when he used your name.”

“What did he say?”

“He had a big crowd, in the street, and he was saying something like this: ‘I ain’t going to see this thing ruined by a woman’s soft heart. Let them leave their love affairs till we have bread in our mouths.’ Some whispered ‘Hush!’ and looked frightened. ‘I mean it,’ he went on. ‘He’s got a young capitalist cub with him, too’ (that’s you, Ralph), ‘a whelp who’s got a fortune made out of poor folks like us. But, of course, Westland can do as he likes, because he’s her sweetheart!’ Some of the men offered to strike him, but Hugh (do you know him?) came just in time. He looked awful black at first, but finally told us to disperse and say nothing about it. We promised and—*there!* I’ve told you another secret!”

Ralph's countenance, which had grown rather lengthy at the uncomplimentary allusions to himself, grew brighter as he saw the disconsolate expression on hers.

"No matter," she said, after a moment's pause. "Even if you do live with your wicked cousin I know you will be with us against these awful capitalists. I wish you'd join our society—they couldn't say anything against you, after that."

"What society?" he inquired, with astonishment.

"The Sons and Daughters of Toil," she replied, with perfect sincerity.

A laugh broke from the listener.

"I fear I'm hardly eligible," he said, with a broad grin.

"They took *me*. I know they'd be glad to have you. Let me carry your name in!"

She was so sweet and unconscious of the humor of the idea, it was happiness just to watch her.

"Not quite yet," he replied. "I want to look into the matter a little. So Ellen has admitted you to her inner circle, has she? That's good. What would she say, I wonder, if she knew you came here on false pretences?"

The girl colored deeply.

"If I did come that way," she replied, with a long sigh, "it's over now. She is right, and not one of her followers will stand by her more faithfully than I."

Ralph's face lengthened.

"And where does this leave me?" he asked, with a long face.

"Oh, Ralph," she cried, impetuously, "I wish you

were very, very poor, like me and these other people—there wouldn't seem such an awful distance between us. I'm glad you're not a *capitalist* (she spoke the word with bated breath), but you are nearly as bad. The work-people are your slaves, too. Ellen says no person who doesn't produce something has a right to live."

The drops that glittered in the girl's eyes only added to her charm in the sight of her admirer. It was a new revelation to him, this depth of feeling and greatness of conviction. When he answered he was serious, too.

"It isn't nice to be dreadfully poor, Nathalie. A few weeks of it may seem endurable, but in the long run absolute want must be very painful. The man who enjoys camping out during the bright summer months would find it quite different in the chilly blasts of winter. Don't let Ellen fill your pretty head with silly ideas."

She was not pleased at this.

"I don't understand everything Ellen says, but her ideas are not silly," she retorted. "I'm sure if you were really poor, I'd like you all the better."

He regarded her with a tender expression.

"If we have a long lock-out I may have to seek work in earnest," he said. "What little I have is invested here, and it may be lost."

"Oh," she exclaimed, joyfully, "I'm so glad!"

She could not understand, and he thought it as well to change the subject.

"You've heard me talk of my cousin Edna, the blind girl," said he. "She wants to know you, and I hope soon to bring about an interview. I sha'n't tell Phil you're in Riverfall, but I could trust Edna with anything."

“Why does she want to meet me?” asked Nathalie, opening her blue eyes wider.

“Because—because I told her I hoped—you would some day be—my wife.”

She searched his face earnestly.

“Ralph, do you mean that?”

“How can you ask?”

“You never said it to me before.”

“Haven’t I? I thought you understood. I’ve told you I loved you a thousand times.”

“Y-e-s.”

He took both her hands.

“So you were waiting for something formal? Well, Nathalie, as soon as the Riverfall troubles are ended I want you to be my wife. Will you?”

She was so long in answering that he put the question again, growing uneasy at the delay.

“When they are ended—*how*?” she asked, finally.

“By the people resuming work, of course.”

“At what terms?”

“*Our* terms, to be sure; *Phil’s* terms. You don’t suppose they’ll ever get back on any other terms, do you?”

She looked him full in the face, calmly.

“That means I’m not to marry you,” she said. “The people will never enter the mills at the reduced wages, and I’d never vote to have them do so. Ralph, when I came here I didn’t understand the situation. Ellen has the right of this contest. Not even to gain you will I break the vow I made in the council. If your proposal depends on the defeat of the operatives we may as well consider it ended now.”

His temper began to assert himself.

“All right, he said, sharply. “So that’s your idea, is it?”

“That’s my idea, M-r.—R-a-l-p-h.”

“It’s the old story! You must have your way in everything! Then it’s good-by—and for the last time.”

Her bosom heaved rapidly, but she stood to her colors.

“Good-by.” She moved toward the door.

“We—might part friends, at least,” he stammered. “You could give me a last kiss, Nathalie.”

“Yes,” she answered, coldly. “I—could.”

Before he was aware of it she had opened the door and vanished into the night.

He ran up and down the street, and peered in all directions through the darkness. She might be pretending again, and perhaps would spring laughing from some corner.

“Nathalie!” he called, in a piercing whisper. “N-a-t-h-a-l-i-e!”

A form came out of the gloom and approached him. But it was not the French girl; it was Ezra Baker, treasurer of the Corporation, who met Ralph’s gaze with a provoking smile, which showed that he was not a total stranger to the cause of the young man’s anxiety. He stopped as if he wanted to talk about it, but Ralph turned on his heel and left him with an abruptness that savored of the discourteous.

X

For several days after the lock-out matters in Riverfall were quiet. Neither side in the controversy made any overt move to disturb the other. Some metropolitan newspaper men who had been sent to write up the "trouble" found their task a sinecure, and wired to their editors that the affair could be covered through the usual channels. They did, however, devote a column or two each to the remarkable condition of three thousand operatives standing completely at the orders of a woman, whose portrait one of them managed to sketch with a fair degree of accuracy; they told of the rise of this manufacturing town, and the history of its growth, with allusions to the long strike of a previous day. And then they yawned on the veranda of the Riverfall House, played billiards on its rickety old table, and tried to flirt with the prettier of the female residents.

Philip Westland found the situation as galling as can be imagined. Time was passing with no apparent gain to his side. He reasoned and argued, in his talks with Ralph and Edna, and in frequent letters to his uncle, that each day must lessen the ability of the workpeople to maintain their ground, as they had practically no funds to draw on, either in the treasury or their private pockets. He learned that contributions were being voted them from the workers in other places, but not sufficient, he thought, to greatly alter the prospects.

Partly to fill up the time and partly because he

thought it well to keep in touch with the people he had to fight (partly, too, because he liked the young fellow's society—and perhaps a little because the most frequent subject of their talk was Ellen), Philip had several meetings with Hugh Mayfield. No third person would have imagined from the manner of either that they were acting in behalf of sworn foes, engaged in a battle that was to be to the death. The utmost politeness prevailed on both sides. The representative of the mill owners put on no airs; the workingman uttered no threats. They discussed the grave questions in which both were interested with the dignity and courtesy of gentlemen, who had a common interest in the matter and wanted it settled right.

“I wish Ellen would come with you again some evening,” Westland remarked, on one occasion, as Hugh was taking his departure.

“She would be glad to have you call, I'm sure,” replied Hugh. “Just at present her home is the headquarters for our organization, and she would not like, I think, to absent herself from it.”

“It is quite the same,” responded Westland, without hesitation. “I will go there to-morrow evening or the next, or whenever best suits her convenience. Only there must be no misunderstanding on one point: I have no proposals to offer except those I have already given. I would like a good-natured discussion, however, hoping that good may come of it. I esteem Ellen highly, and mean to act in such a way that I shall earn her regard.”

Hugh weighed these words carefully.

“I think you have that already, Mr. Westland. You

certainly have mine. I will see her before I sleep, and send you word what reply she makes to your suggestion. Good-night."

"Good-night."

The mill-hand's extended hand was clasped warmly, and Hugh went directly to Ellen's chambers. She looked at him interrogatively as he entered, but he shook his head. He knew the question that was in her gaze.

"No, Mr. Westland has said nothing to indicate a change of sentiment," he remarked. "He would like, however, to discuss the matter with you. He proposed the meeting himself and wanted it at the Agency, but when I told him you would probably prefer it here he assented."

"Good!" she replied. "To-morrow, at eight, I will be at his service."

Then the conversation turned at once to business matters concerning the idle operatives and their needs. At midnight Hugh departed and the next morning sent a note to the Agency in accordance with the understanding that had been reached.

"Instead of beginning this interview with a discussion of the relations between capital and labor, will you allow me to tell you a story?"

This was the way Ellen began, when Westland had taken a seat in her sitting-room. No one else had been invited to be present—not even Hugh—for she felt she could talk better thus.

Philip nodded gravely. He could feel the magnetism of her personality from where he sat. It was happiness enough to hear the rich, mellow tones of her wonderful voice.

“This is my story,” she said:

ELLEN'S PARABLE.

Once there was a large island, owned by a great and beneficent proprietor. Its surface was covered with ample fields, forests and vineyards. Beneath its soil was hidden every mineral known to man. Countless herds of cattle fed in its broad pastures. Innumerable fish clove the waters of its pellucid treams. Nature had left nothing wanting to make it a terrestrial paradise.

A traveller, weak and helpless, moored his frail bark in one of the magnificent harbors which dotted this island's shores. He was faint with hunger and his form was destitute of all but the merest apology for raiment. As his eyes rested upon the goodly land a glad smile illuminated his wan features. “Here,” he thought, as he stepped upon the shore, “is warmth, sustenance and comfort.” As he left the craft in which he had made the voyage, the waves carried it out of his reach. Like himself it was of slender workmanship, and soon the waters engulfed it.

Toiling slowly up the street of the town where he had landed, the traveller came to a lordly dwelling. Everything about the place betokened wealth, and the grounds had been laid out under the direction of a true artist. The lofty portal of the mansion stood invitingly open,

and a glance into the spacious hallway showed that the occupant was a man of taste as well as ample means.

The stranger ascended the marble steps and lifted the heavy knocker. A well-kept servant answered the summons, but drew back with unconcealed aversion when he saw the appearance of the caller. "How dare you, a miserable tramp, invade these grounds?" he cried. "Begone, or I will call the dogs and set them on you!"

The lip of the stranger trembled, but he did not budge. In a dignified way he asked the servant to inform his master that he wished to speak to him. Muttering his displeasure the servant consented reluctantly, and disappeared through one of the numerous doorways.

But when the owner of the house appeared he assumed a mien no more cordial than his lackey had shown. This the stranger noticed, but, relying on the superior quality of mind so wealthy a gentleman should possess, he bowed politely and proceeded with his tale:

"Sir," he said, "I have come to this island from a country far distant. Only an hour ago I landed upon your shore. The frail craft in which I arrived has foundered in your harbor, and even had it not done so I could not return whence I came, neither knowing the way thither across the waters nor having the means of subsistence on the journey. Fearing that this place might be a desert I am rejoiced to find it the abode of plenty, where you can easily supply my few wants out of your great abundance. As it is evident I must remain here I pray you to receive me for the present as your guest. When I have eaten and drunk and you have

supplied me with suitable clothing, of which you will observe I stand in sore need, I shall be glad to labor for myself, and if you will assign me a small piece of land in your vast meadows I can easily secure my livelihood."

On hearing these words the master of the house turned to his servant in great alarm. "This is certainly a dangerous person," he cried, "who should be apprehended without delay! Send immediately for the police that they may convey him to a safe place."

When the servant had departed the traveller told the master that he was at a loss how to account for his reception.

"I am not of unsound mind," he replied, pointedly, "as my quiet demeanor and sensible discourse should show you. I have committed no crime and know of no pretence under which I can be imprisoned. My sole misfortune is my poverty, for which I surely may not be blamed.

Then the master of the house shrank from the stranger as if he had been afflicted with some loathsome disease. "Poverty!" he repeated, with horror. "Know you not that under our code that is the chief of crimes? If you plead guilty to it, the judges will make short work of you."

At this juncture the police arrived, and the traveller was soon haled before a magistrate. On hearing the statement of his accuser the judge was about to impose sentence when the unhappy man inquired if he might say a few words in his own defence, being without the means to engage counsel. To this it was at first answered that he had already confessed his guilt, and as his

appearance fully bore out his statement, it was idle to take up the time of the court with a useless harangue. As he still begged for only a few moments he was told to proceed, but warned that he must be brief and that, whatever he might say, it could have no effect on the magistrate's decision.

Thus permitted to open his mouth the stranger began by inquiring the name of the Lord Proprietor of the island on which he had trespassed. When he heard the Name his countenance brightened.

"In what manner do those who are tenants hold possession?" he asked.

"By kinship to the Proprietor," replied the judge, haughtily.

"Then I also have a right to be here," cried the stranger, "for I too am of His family!"

But to this the magistrate responded sharply that kinship to the Proprietor was not the only requisite to the use of the island lands. "The immigrants who first landed," he said, testily, "took all the ground and divided it among themselves, as was sensible and proper. To-day it is held, either by their descendants or by others who have accumulated wealth and purchased titles from the first owners."

"Then the island was, before the time you mention, wholly uninhabited?" said the traveller, sadly.

"Not precisely," answered the judge, frowning. "Our ancestors found here a wild people, who lived mainly by hunting and fishing. These they either exterminated or drove into the interior where the facilities for existing were much reduced, and long ago all but a remnant of them disappeared."

“One other question, I pray,” persisted the prisoner. “These wild people—were they not, also, of kin to our great Proprietor?”

With some confusion the magistrate answered that they claimed to be distantly related.

“I knew they were!” cried the stranger, passionately; “and in the name of those defrauded people I protest, here in this court, against your titles, written with human blood! I have as good a right to a part of this land as any leaseholder, and demand that my share be assigned me!”

The magistrate hesitated for some moments before replying, for he saw that the crowd which filled the court-room was impressed by the suggestion. Most of them were, like this stranger, landless and with no prospect of improving their condition. They were not, however, as liable to starvation, being employed by their more fortunate neighbors and paid small sums for their labor. Finally, the judge said the point raised had been decided adversely by the Supreme Court of the island in a case which arose some years previously, on the contention of a native-born resident. It ill became a newcomer, he added, severely, who brought neither gold nor goods, to question established customs.

Upon which he sentenced the prisoner to become for an indefinite period the bond-servant of the man at whose instance he had been apprehended, at the same time warning him that an attempt to escape would be severely punished.

Oppressed by what he considered the injustice of this decision, but at a loss how to evade his doom, the slave,

with what grace he could summon, entered the service of his master. Being apt and intelligent he soon found favor in the eyes of the landowner, without seeking it, and gradually his tasks were limited to those of the more agreeable sort. One day the master interrupted him at his work, and in a most winning voice discoursed unto him in this fashion :

“ Why, O slave ! dost thou repine at thy lot ? How easy it will be for thee to rise above it, if only thou wilt take advantage of thine opportunities ! Thou esteemest those whose ancestors were the first comers to this island greatly favored, and yet I, thy master, am not one of them. My grandfather came like thee, naked and hungry, and was in like manner sentenced to servitude in the interest of the public weal ; but instead of remaining cast down in spirit he sought the means of lawful deliverance, as thou mayst do if thou wilt. He obtained leave to work beyond the hours assigned him and to retain as his own what he gained in this manner. That he might put aside a few pennies daily, he lived on the coarsest food and wore only the plainest raiment. At night he lay on a pallet of straw. If his fellow slaves made merry he refused all invitations to join them. When they had their feastings and dances he retired to his garret to count his gold. Little by little, through such thrift as this, his savings increased until he could lend to others on good security, charging the very highest rates of interest. At last he became the richest slave that ever lived on this island ; and then he purchased his freedom !

“Being now a citizen, did he sit down and idle his time in frivolous amusements? Not he. He obtained possession of a tract of land on which he had loaned but a tithe of its value, the previous owner having a large family, the care and education of which compelled him to relinquish his claim. On this land, as my grandfather had surreptitiously discovered, there were coal deposits of immense extent. No other coal existed for a great distance, and, most luckily, a long and unusually severe winter followed the opening of the mine, causing much distress among the indigent. Four times the ordinary price was thus obtained for all the anthracite he could get to market. When the spring arrived no one could longer question my grandfather’s right, as the wealthiest man in his neighborhood, to hold up his head in any company. He was speedily elected to positions of honor, and the most aristocratic of his fellow-townsmen gave him his daughter’s hand in marriage. It is from such as these that I am descended and such thou mayst be, O bondman, if thy will and industry be not lacking.”

But the slave’s lip curled disdainfully.

“Rather will I remain a serf to the end of my life than follow such an example!” he cried, with scorn. “Thy grandfather was the greatest villain of whom I have ever heard. It is inconceivable that one who had himself known the sting of poverty could become an oppressor of his neighbors. Having grown rich it should have been his delight in the time of scarcity to give freely to all who asked it the coal that cost him nothing. I wonder he could sleep for thinking how grudgingly the poor must use that costly fuel, when with

a word he might have heaped their firesides high with warmth and gladness. Was it nothing to him that shivering women sat at vacant hearths within sight of his monster coal heaps—that aged men’s days were cut short and that little children died of cold? It is incredible that such a wretch could be elevated to office, or that any decent family would have its blood polluted by his!”

The master winced as he listened, but preserved his patience a little longer.

“Indeed,” he answered, “it is all true, as I have related it to thee. My grandfather was not the sordid wretch you try to conceive him. When he had become many times a millionaire through his coal mine (and afterwards by buying up all the wheat in the island, and thus doubling the price of bread), he built at his own expense the beautiful church you see yonder, besides contributing largely to the fund for sending missionaries to benighted people in heathen lands. When he died seven clergymen assisted at the obsequies, and much money was spent in adorning the interior of the church with inscriptions regarding his munificence and piety. To all his riches and honors his son (my father) succeeded, and I succeeded to him. Thus, as thou canst discern, through the business ability and foresight of one man, his descendants are raised above the need of toil, and may so continue, if they are wise, to the end of time; for, merely by the natural course of accumulation, our estate will increase vastly with each generation. I have added many acres to those owned by my father, and my son will, I trust, add as many more. To thee

I offer our example for emulation. Thou hast unusual abilities, O slave! Thou, too, canst easily rise, if thou wilt take the means, above thy serfdom."

Then the slave rent his garments and spat upon the ground in his wrath.

"May my right arm fall lifeless at my side and my nether limbs refuse their office," he cried with vigor, "if ever I climb to ease upon the necks of my brothers! Every man on this island is a kinsman of the Lord Proprietor. What think you He will do when He comes again and finds how you have used His benefits? You see around you an ample supply of all things men need; wherefore, then, should one man spread himself over miles of territory, to the exclusion of others more needy? You counsel me to habits of severe industry, and dwell upon the merits of long hours of labor; but it is apparent that if each did his proper share a few hours daily would suffice to gather the products of nature and weave every fabric of commerce. You urge me to be frugal—but the prodigal soil, hardly yet touched by the husbandman, scoffs at your niggardliness. You say to me, 'If you would prosper remain celibate'—but no creature that God has made deigns to set me that example. Is it right that all the lower animals shall have their breakfasts provided while man—their proud superior—perishes from hunger? Not always shall this be so, O my master! The day is coming when Equity shall rule—when Justice shall sit on the throne long usurped by Fraud—when the Privileges of the few shall give way to the Rights of the many! Prepare for that day, lest you perish in the upheaval that will come!"

At this the master grew white with rage and said,

“Dost thou threaten me, O slave? thou, whose body and soul are my possession! Severely shalt thine insolence be requited!”

Saying which he summoned certain other slaves—fellows whose good will he had secured by feeding and clothing them better than the rest—and they at his command cast the presumptuous man into a dungeon. But his words had been overheard. Presently they were spread and accepted by many persons, and the prison in which he lay was soon filled with other slaves who held like opinions with him.

At last, one night, a thousand of them rent their chains, overpowered the servile guard and took possession of the castle. On every hand the oppressed rallied to their standard, and finally the doctrines of the despised slave became the law of the land.

To-day that fair island is a paradise indeed, for it is the free and equal possession of all the inhabitants. Even the stranger cast upon its shores is welcomed like a brother. If he is weak and poor he is allotted a piece of land and cared for tenderly till he is able to support himself. In return he renders only what labor is his proper share. Everything is different from the old time. Masters, with their leagues of woods and fields, have disappeared. Slaves have disappeared likewise. Committees, chosen by popular vote, distribute the abundance of the land. No one is naked; no one is hungry; no man hoards food and fuel while others starve and freeze. And the Great Proprietor, when He comes, will find His kinsmen with their arms about each others' necks in friendly union, where once the lash and gyves enforced an iron rule!

XI

It was a strange picture. Philip Westland, representative of capital, dressed irreproachably, "clean cut," as the saying is, sitting in that mill-girl's room, listening to her allegory with most respectful attention, interest showing in every lineament of his intellectual face. Ellen, in her print gown with a beauty of countenance seldom excelled in the drawing rooms of the rich, motherless by death and fatherless by the law, pierced her auditor with eyes that flashed a hundred fires. The floor of her sitting room was bare, with the exception of a few old mats, and the scanty furniture was of antiquated pattern. The cages of her canaries were covered with newspapers, that the kerosene light might not disturb the slumbering inmates. A few boxes filled with flowers and some prints tacked to the walls constituted the only ornaments of the apartment.

Westland felt a charm in that odd place for which he could find no satisfactory reason. He loved to hear those clear tones, to feel the magnetism of that presence, to bask in the radiance of those magnificent orbs. And, though they could hardly have been farther apart in social station, Ellen experienced to a certain degree the pleasure in his company that he felt in hers.

When she had finished her story neither spoke for several minutes. Philip hated to break the stillness that succeeded to the reverberations of her voice. Ellen

leaned back in her chair and let her eyes rest on the floor, making no attempt to apply the moral of the tale. She had learned in the school she attended that it is sometimes well to wait.

“Has this wonderful island a geographical location?” was his first question.

“Yes. On the maps it is called AMERICA.”

“And the date of the overturn—”

“Already it has begun. Within twenty years it will be substantially complete.”

“Indeed!” he exclaimed, with a start. “And the strangers who arrive—”

“Are from the vast unknown,” she responded, solemnly. “One of them floated into Riverfall only last night. The roof that shelters it, the food it will eat, must be earned in slavery, first by its parents and next by itself. Poor little thing! It did not elect to be brought here, and it cannot return whence it came. As it becomes older it will have the dismal choice, either to toil on till the grave receives its exhausted frame, or to rise by crushing in the mire hundreds of its fellows. Little wonder, with such an awful alternative, that so many choose the latter road. Human nature is weak and under hard conditions fine sentiments are blotted out. In our Southern States, before the Civil War, slaves who were manumitted sometimes bought other negroes and became tyrannical masters. The most severe superintendents in our mills are men who passed through great hardships in their youth. Disabled wolves make a speedy banquet for the pack, and men are very much like them.”

He heard her with grave attention.

“Learned men,” he said, when she paused, “tell us that a sharp struggle for the rewards of wealth is what has brought mankind out of barbarism. They say the disagreeableness of poverty induces us to seek its escape by inventions and improvements. There is a law of nature that is called ‘The survival of the fittest.’”

She bent her eyes upon him till it seemed as if they would scorch his face.

“Out of barbarism!” she repeated, with the utmost accent of scorn. “How many has the present division of wealth brought out of barbarism? While it has given ease and refinement to the few—the very few—the masses are fighting for the means of bare existence—fighting their self-constituted masters and their fellow sufferers, in the madness that necessity engenders. Cast your glance over the habitations of Riverfall. You will see a dozen palaces and a thousand huts. Where one person knows comfort and luxury, hundreds are familiar with want. Everywhere the same picture is presented—non-producers fed by producers, idleness supported by industry. ‘Survival of the fittest!’ Who do you consider the ‘fittest’ to survive? Dare any one say, for instance, that *I* am inferior in natural endowments to the ‘ladies’ who cover me with the dust of their carriages as I go to and from my work?”

He almost rose from his chair in his anxiety to reassure her.

“No, Ellen,” he answered, vehemently, “*you* are not. I say this in all honesty. *You* were never intended for the sphere of life in which you live, and in the

natural course of evolution you would not remain there. There is no need of your doing so. A hundred better opportunities are open if only you would seek them. I say the same of Hugh, too, and I mean it. But of the masses this is not true. Any one who observes them must see they are fit for manual labor and nothing else."

She had not taken her eyes from him, and now they blazed again.

"And who *made* them so? Who *keeps* them so?" she inquired, impressively. "Do you pretend that they are of a different breed from their employers? Why, the workman of to-day is often the employer of to-morrow. The son of the employer of yesterday is the laborer of to-day. Equitable laws would abolish these intolerable differences. As for myself and Hugh, if we possess the superior qualities with which you credit us, shall we therefore league ourselves with the oppressors of our less fortunate brothers and sisters? Shall we not rather remain by their side, encouraging and helping their upward march toward better things? Yes. If we are to rise, we will rise together; if we are to fall, you will find us with the weaker ones."

Just for the delight of hearing her voice he inquired absently what changes she would like to bring about.

"First, public control of all staples. I would not let a coterie of irresponsible men—for the sake of increasing fortunes already beyond their needs—raise the price of meats or cereals. All minerals belong to the whole people; I would forbid any combination to corner them, compelling each user to pay an exorbitant tribute. I would not allow the greed of a railroad company to stand

between the Kansas farmer who burns the corn he cannot sell and the Massachusetts artisan pinched with hunger. I would declare transportation over national highways the duty and prerogative of the general government. Beef that sells at two cents a pound in Texas should no longer cost ten in New York. In short, I would uproot the present business 'system,' which drains the life-blood of the poor to increase the number of millionaires. No man has a moral right to more of this world's goods than he can use. He should not be allowed to cover a superfluous rod of earth with his parchments merely to gratify the desire of possession. I would provide every child with a home and sustenance as good as that of any other. Each should receive the best possible education, at the public expense, and in no circumstances should it leave its books to earn its bread."

"A beautiful dream!" murmured Westland. "And how would you bring it about?"

In her enthusiasm the young woman moved her chair closer to his till she almost touched his garments with her own.

"How?" she repeated. "Nothing is wanting but the consent of the majority, which under our republican forms is supreme. To-day the working masses are undoubtedly struggling in ignorance, but they are groping toward the light that shines outside their prison house. The system of wage slavery has not quite crushed out their God-given aspirations. There are those who will lead them away from Egypt—still a few who will reject offers to link themselves with the 'upper classes,' where,

behind the jasper walls of paradise, they may forget the souls in Purgatory. We will gradually shape the laws to the end we seek. Knowing that with a just apportionment there is enough in this world for all, we will aim at an equitable distribution. The workingman is thinking. Soon he will realize the strength of the wonderful weapon that is ready to his hand—the ballot.”

The manufacturer contemplated the mill-girl for some seconds before he said anything in reply. He would have been glad to prolong the silence indefinitely, but a guilty consciousness stole over him. He knew well that it was the woman herself, and not her arguments, that enthralled him, and he felt it wrong to take more of her time for his selfish pleasure. Her answer to his suggestion that she was fitted for higher things did not entirely explain why she devoted her life to people so far beneath her. Fanatics seemed to have a marvellous tenacity of purpose. This beautiful creature, mistaken and misled, was no exception to the rule.

“You have read much,” he ventured at last, feeling that he must say something.

“Not very much,” she answered. “A few books that Hugh brought me did more to solidify opinions I already held than to form new ones. It must be evident to you how much I lack education. At twelve years of age I began to work regularly in your uncle’s mills. My wages have hardly enabled me to save enough to attend a seminary,” she added, with a faint smile, “and I do not spend all I earn on myself, either.” (She blushed at what she feared might seem a boast.) “There are so many others in greater want than I, the pennies go as fast as they come.”

He hated to take his departure, though the oil lamp was growing dim. He knew it must be nearly eleven o'clock, and that Ellen needed her rest. And still he lingered.

"It is very late," he said, looking at his chronometer. "I beg your pardon for trespassing so long on your patience."

There was an honest, straightforward ring in Ellen's voice as she replied:

"There is no need of haste, so far as I am concerned. An hour more or less of rest means nothing to me."

"But," he questioned slowly, "does the hour at which your visitor leaves mean nothing? Is Riverfall as free from gossip as that would imply?"

He was immediately sorry, when he saw the look that came into her face.

"No person in Riverfall, I think, has ever yet questioned my conduct or my motives," she said with rising color. "At least, none of my own class, and I care little—perhaps too little—for the opinions of the other. You know now to what my life is dedicated, as absolutely as that of a nun to her order. I come and go as I choose, at all hours, and my doors are open to whoever finds need to enter. I have too high a mission to think of trifles. As long as I breathe my every effort will be devoted to these poor souls who have chosen me their leader."

Why did he ask the next question? It was clearly impertinent.

"You intend, then, never to marry?"

"Marry?" There was a depth of sadness in her

tone. “If marriage only meant to marry, I might hope some day to be a wife, that state to which I fully believe God intended every woman of physical and mental vigor should aspire. But marriage may mean motherhood! It may mean the calling into life of little children, to suffer like these I see about me. I have much courage, but I could not bear the responsibility of parentage in these dark days. Frequently one of my girls comes with a happy light in her eyes and a secret for Ellen on her lips. Some young man has asked her to be his wife, and she seeks my advice—really my consent—to wed him. What can I say? I know the probabilities of the future in store for her, for him, for the unborn they may summon into a world which man’s inhumanity has changed to a hell! I look into her face. Love has electrified it, making the desert of her cheerless life to blossom as the rose. Her God-given passion is perhaps the greatest and best among His innumerable gifts. She has a right to a husband’s embrace, a right to press her own babe to her bosom. Who shall deny her? Surely not I.

“But the years pass on. Though they practise every economy the husband’s wages make a scanty living for two. Then the baby comes—oh, how soon he seems to come!—and the expense is increased. Before long I find the feeble mother at the mill gate in the morning with the rest of us—‘just to help out for a little,’ she says—but she keeps on. Two years more and there’s another child. The period during which, by all that is sacred, a woman should have rest, she passes, almost to the latest moment, amid the rattle and jar of the ma-

chinery. For a few weeks we miss her. With two children and with her house to keep she will surely be needed at home now. But here she is again at her loom, pale and thin, only half recovered from her trial. More mouths to feed make the necessity for labor greater than ever. Poor girl! An endless chain has entangled her limbs, and she will never escape its coils! I have seen it so often. And yet—what can I do?—when the next girl comes with the same happy story, I give her my blessing and see her swallowed in the same maelstrom!

“I fear there are immoral girls in Riverfall; girls who might have been, under other conditions, true and honored wives. The young men do not marry as freely as they should. They dare not undertake the risks that matrimony brings, and illegal relations are formed. You cannot dam up a stream so high that its waters will not find their way to the ocean. Cases are frequently brought to my attention that almost break my heart. I am full of sympathy for the sinful ones, though I set my teeth together when I think of the system that is responsible for their fall. The crimes that follow these moral lapses are too dreadful to relate. Little souls are stilled on the very threshold of existence. Young girls are sent into the presence of their Maker guilty of awful crime. ‘What cruel mothers!’ do you say? ‘What a cruel system!’ I answer you, ‘that stifles the holiest feelings of our nature and nourishes only the baser ones.’”

Westland rose slowly. Ellen rose also and for a second they looked full into each other's eyes.

“ You believe me an honest man,” he said. “ Otherwise you would not talk to me in this manner.”

“ I believe you intend to be,” she corrected.

“ I shall do my duty as I understand it,” he continued, earnestly. “ Ellen, I honor and esteem you highly. What I am compelled to do as representative of those who have delegated their trust to me may strain our friendship, but I hope we shall not let it break. The tension is likely to be severe.”

She waited, silent, for him to proceed.

“ We who own these mills,” he proceeded, “ believe we are right and shall act accordingly. A theory is one thing, but facts must be considered, too. When the universal brotherhood of man arrives we shall be glad to welcome it, I have no doubt. At present I see only one situation: at the price I must pay for cotton, and the price which the woven fabric will bring a certain scale of wages is all I can pay and earn dividends. That scale has been adopted. If the spinners and weavers will indicate to me their wish to return to work at those rates I will open the mills at once. More; I will promise that the first increase in the market prices of our goods, or the first drop in the price of cotton, shall be followed by a corresponding increase in the wages we pay. If, in the face of this, the people leave the mills idle the rest of this month, the swallows may build their nests undisturbed beneath the eaves when spring returns.”

Ellen listened gravely, but made no demonstration whatever.

“ You are speaking now as manufacturer and trustee,” she remarked, quietly.

“As manufacturer and trustee. I can speak in no other capacity.”

She bade him a pleasant “Good-night,” and he slowly descended the stairs, groping his way in the darkness. His homeward walk was lonely, no one being met in the streets.

When he reached his chamber he threw himself into a chair, and sat for a long time absorbed in thought. All she had said came back to him, the tones of her voice rang again in his ears, her accusing eyes pierced him as before. Starting up after an hour of absorption he spoke aloud:

“She would do the same if she had to carry out the orders of a Board of Directors! If there be blame it is theirs as well as mine!”

Shivering, he disrobed and crept beneath the bed-clothes, where after some time he fell into a disturbed slumber. The next morning, at a later hour than usual, he rose with a dull head and a heavy heart.

XII

“Bill” Converse was out of sorts. The lock-out had lasted more than two weeks and there was no sign that the end was near at hand. In spite of all he could say—and he grew more and more pronounced in his utterances—the ex-employés of the Great Central Corporation still pinned their faith blindly to Ellen. The situation galled him. He had been in labor differences before, where suffering and privation were the rule, but never in one like this. A whole community thrown out of their livelihood and not a hand raised to resent the injury; people already beginning to feel the pangs of hunger taking their orders from a woman—and such orders—was more than he could tacitly endure. Converse was in a dangerous mood that day when he made the allusion to Ellen that Nathalie repeated to Ralph, and the knowledge that his associates were only prevented by Hugh from administering rough treatment to him did not improve his temper.

Going home one afternoon from an aimless stroll he found a man engaged in nailing a notice to the door of the room he occupied. It was a brief warning, couched in legal terms, that he must vacate the premises one week from that date. The weaver caught the chap by the shoulder and threw him to the floor, at the same time lifting his foot as if to crush him.

“You devil’s cur!” he cried, in a towering passion,

“meaner than the hounds who employ you! Who sent you with this paper? Speak, or I will spoil your face so your master won’t recognize it!”

“It was the constable,” whimpered the fellow, thoroughly scared. “I didn’t see any harm in it. I have a wife and five children and must do something to get them food.”

Converse eyes glared like those of a tiger.

“*You* have a wife and children!” he retorted. “What about the wives and children you are dispossessing? To cover your brats you are willing a thousand others shall sleep out of doors! If you can feed them, the rest may starve for all you care! Give me those notices—give them to me, I say—or I’ll force them down your throat! There! Tell your employer they’re in the river and that if he sends more they’ll go the same road!”

The documents floated down stream, and the tool of capital made his escape, thankful that he had not been served in a similar manner. Within half an hour all Riverfall was discussing the occurrence, and one of the results was the calling of the workpeople to a general meeting, at which Ellen demanded of the Englishman an explanation of his conduct.

Having fully made up his mind to endure restraint no longer, Converse met the question with a bold defiance. He found the yoke of this woman insupportable. If the others were to continue under it the sooner he left her ranks the better.”

“I have no explanation to make,” he said, throwing back his head and looking unflinchingly at Ellen. “I

took the papers that ordered myself and comrades out of our homes and threw them in the river. My only regret is that I didn't throw Westland's man after them."

Ellen spoke with calm firmness.

"There is but one course for me to pursue," she said. "Your name will be struck from our roll. After this your acts cannot be charged against the organization."

Without a word the man took his hat and left the hall. Hugh put in a few remarks, to the effect that he hoped no one would treat Converse harshly on account of what had happened. "If we are to place ourselves under certain leaders we must, of course, obey them," he said, "and it is right that those who are not willing to do so shall be expelled; but Converse is our fellow-sufferer and we must use him kindly."

When the meeting had dissolved he remarked to Ellen that the lost member was a man who meant well and might yet see the error of his course.

"I fear he will make us much trouble," she replied, gloomily. "A few such acts as he committed to-day might bring on a general conflict with the authorities. You look more troubled than usual to-night, Hugh. What is the matter?"

"You, too, look troubled and tired," he said. "Let us put off further discussion till the morning, when you will have the strength that comes from a night's repose."

"I am stronger than you think," she answered, "and shall sleep better when I know you have kept nothing from me."

Her superior force of will won the victory, and he proceeded:

“ We have expelled Converse from our membership; that was right. Any other course would have been fatal to discipline. But the condition that caused his outbreak is still to be met. The notices ordering us to vacate the Corporation houses will be served. They are legal documents, either to be obeyed or resisted. Which shall it be ? ”

“ They will be obeyed, ” was the prompt answer. “ We cannot resist the law. ”

“ And what is to come next ? It is not warm enough these nights to sleep out of doors. Women and children may perish, if the sky is their only covering. They must be provided with shelter. Where ? ”

Her anxiety at this plain statement of the important fact that troubled her showed in her set eyes.

“ There are the public buildings, ” she suggested. “ The authorities who are charged with the evictions are also compelled, I presume, to provide for those who have neither food nor shelter. It is no disgrace to accept aid at a time like this. The stockholders who ordered us to cease work are by far the largest taxpayers in Riverfall. Under the State laws I do not believe the Town Committee can refuse us the bare necessities of life, and the men who have covered this valley with their deeds will have the bills to pay, as they ought. When our people understand this—and you must see that it is fully explained—they will not longer stand in dread of being called ‘ paupers. ’ The State has kept us in childhood. When its policy renders us hungry and homeless, let us go to it like children. ”

Hugh listened with the quiet air of one who, while he intends obedience, still retains the right to suggest ideas.

“Let me remind you,” he said, “that the town buildings will not hold half of us should the evictions be carried out in full. Even if the authorities were disposed in our favor—which they are not—there would be a limit to what they could do in that direction.”

“The families will not be turned out all at once,” said Ellen. “It will take several days to serve the notices. The problem will thus be forced gradually on the officials and they will have to meet it. I have thought of another source of shelter, too, if we come to absolute need. We can apply to the churches.”

In spite of all he could do, Hugh’s lip curled at this suggestion.

“The churches!” he exclaimed. “When was the church on the side of a workman who wished his condition bettered? Who ever heard a minister plead our cause against our oppressors? The churches will lock their doors, Ellen. Place no faith in them.”

She was not disconcerted.

“There have sometimes been reasons,” she replied, with calmness, “for that action of the Church in labor troubles. Violent men have encouraged acts of lawlessness, and the Church is the great conservator of the peace. Surely my consistent adherence to the policy of non-resistance will arouse sympathy in this immense force. We shall present a new phase of the question—peaceable workpeople ordered out of their homes. No, Hugh. The churches cannot refuse us shelter in edi-

fices dedicated to the Saviour of Men—to Him who said the giving of a cup of cold water to a thirsty soul would be remembered in heaven!”

The young man listened with reverent mien, but his regard was toward the speaker, not for the institution she championed. But when she paused his feelings overcame him again, and he burst out impulsively:

“Oh, Ellen! I wish I had your faith! Your heart is so guileless you look for too much good in others. How can you forget history? The Church has invariably linked itself with the rich, against the poor. It has poured its holy oil upon the heads of kings and damned the subject who refused to place his neck beneath the despot’s heel. The European landlord has more than once invoked its aid to quiet his ragged and starving tenants! Cortes and Pizarro destroyed better nations than their own, with the Cross uplifted above their bloody swords! Here in Riverfall the rich rule every religious body. The most luxurious seats in the houses of worship are owned by men who have cornered the necessaries of life, and draw dividends from watered stocks that compel us to take starvation wages. Neither priest nor parson will risk his comfortable living by going contrary to the ideas of his chief patrons. However, I am glad you are going to test your theory. It will be worth a little suffering to demonstrate what Nineteenth Century Christianity will do for homeless American citizens. If we were Zulus or Fiji Islanders I should have less fear; we are unfortunate in our race and color.”

Ellen grew paler as she listened.

“ We will try them,” she replied, simply. “ If they fail us we will discuss our next move then. Have you heard of any new cases of extreme destitution? ”

“ Yes, there are several.” He took a list from his pocket and gave it to her. “ I have received only two of the contributions that were promised us by the other textile workers, but more are coming. Don’t try to do too much yourself, with what you have saved from your hard earnings. You will need it for personal use, I fear, before this affair is ended.”

She smiled at his anxious face.

“ You are hardly the one, Hugh, to lecture me on that score. I know how generous you are with your own money. The little I have was meant for just such an emergency, and if I keep back any it is for a possibly greater need to come. Did you meet Mr. Westland to-day? ”

Her voice lost a little of its steadiness as she pronounced the name, and its tremor was not unnoticed by the listener.

“ I sought him out,” was the reply, “ to say you entirely repudiated the act of Converse in assaulting his messenger. He said he was glad to hear that, and unless a second assault took place he would take no action in reference to this one. The Corporation, he went on to say, wish possession of all their property at the earliest possible date. Unless within a short time the employés undergo a radical change of view the entire plant will probably be sold to a company who will run it with new labor. ‘ You ought to see there is no possibility of winning,’ he ended. ‘ No law compels us

to reopen the mills to you, and my uncle writes that he will sacrifice all he has rather than retreat one inch. If the spinners and weavers wish work it is best they try other towns, as by remaining they seem to set me at defiance. I assure you, unless the wheels begin to revolve before the first of November, the last ounce of cotton has been spun in Riverfall. The machinery will be sent to Georgia, and the offer we have for the real estate will be accepted.' ”

As Ellen heard the closing statements the color mounted to her cheek.

“ And this is free America ! ” she exclaimed, holding her clasped hands toward heaven. “ This is the land where the all-powerful ballot secures to the humblest citizen the right to enact laws which shall control the highest ! What hinders the son of labor from taking peaceable control of his own ? He outnumbered the capitalists as the leaves of the forest outnumber the trees. He has only to alter State laws and the Federal Constitution—and yet, like another Samson, he lets Delilah shear his tresses ! He labors a willing slave for masters that rest at ease. He wears coarse garments that they may be clad in velvet. He sleeps in a hovel—or, if they please to order it, in the open air—that they may press couches of down in frescoed chambers. He gnaws his crust, or, it may be, goes hungry, while they taste the richest products of the earth. And this he does by deliberate choice, with the weapon of deliverance always within reach of his hand ! ”

Hugh was carried away, as he had often been before,

by the exuberance of her expression. He waited for her to proceed.

“Not by violence shall the change come,” she continued, when her panting bosom was somewhat stilled. “There is no need to inflict a single bruise nor to shed one drop of blood. We will employ neither the torch of the incendiary nor the bullet of the assassin. Let us, who would invoke the law, show our respect for it. We must send our true friends to the State Capitol. As a woman, I have no vote, but you and such as you must work. The spectacle of three thousand people and their dependents, though willing to toil at half decent wages, thrown upon the public aid, ought to have a powerful effect. With our friends in the higher offices our masters will be obliged to treat us like human beings.”

As she seemed to have finished Hugh indicated his intention to take his departure, but before going he believed it wise to say something he had felt for some days must be said sometime :

“The men came near handling Converse roughly. When I asked what was the matter not one of them would tell me. I found that the little French girl across the hall from your rooms had heard him, but she only said he had spoken disrespectfully of you ; she would not repeat his words. The matter was so serious that I kept at it and finally ran it down.”

“And what did you learn ?” she inquired, looking wonderingly in his face.

“Are you sure you wish to know ?”

“Certainly.”

“He said you were not a fit leader for your people *against a man with whom you were in love !*”

Drawing herself up Ellen waved adieu to her chief lieutenant, who took his departure with a grave countenance. He had done what he thought his duty.

And she stood there, without moving, for a long time, wondering how his statement could have hurt her so terribly and whether the pain would ever cease.

XIII

Mr. Westland, Ralph and Edna were taking their breakfast in the cozily appointed dining-room of the Agency. Philip was dividing his time impartially between the edibles, his companions and the Riverfall "Times," which he had folded and placed by his plate in a position convenient for reading. Edna was all attention, while Ralph was decidedly uneasy. The young fellow's interest in Nathalie had brought him to see matters in a somewhat different light from formerly, and he was uncomfortable to be, as one might say, in the camp of her enemies.

"Here are several paragraphs I want you both to hear," said Philip, as he put down his napkin:

Yesterday the last of the eviction notices were served by Mr. Carlson, the constable. Next Monday those first notified will be expected to vacate, and by the following Saturday all the corporation houses will probably be tenantless. We do not learn of any interference with the constable's man after the first day, though his ears may have tingled if he listened to the remarks intended for them.

The town authorities have been appealed to by a committee of the ex-employés to provide shelter for the families as fast as they are turned out of doors, but so far no action has been taken. The officials naturally do not like to offend the corporation and are in a quandary. If the town causes a fatality through failure to do its duty, some one will have a heavy responsibility. A corporation may have the legal right to

close its doors to those who have helped amass its millions, but the public officials have no excuse to evade their responsibilities.

A *Times* reporter interviewed Acting President Westland yesterday, but found that gentleman in a rather uncommunicative mood. All he would say was that he was proceeding with the entire approval of his board of directors ; that, as his late employés had refused for several weeks to accept the wages he was ready to pay, he deemed himself justified in obtaining possession of all his property; if the said employés desired advice in the emergency that had arisen, they would doubtless seek it of those who had counselled them hitherto. Mr. Westland seemed to speak without the least temper, and to believe he was acting as any business man would in the circumstances.

“That writer has succeeded very well in stating my position,” said Philip, when he finished; “much better than I reason to hope, for the owner of the sheet has tried to force me to lend him five thousand dollars under threats of making it hot if I refused. The poor devil is on his last legs financially, and if Riverfall goes to pieces he will naturally go with it. Now, as the reporter quotes me, there’s nothing but business in this thing. The houses are owned by the Corporation. They were built for the use of the Corporation’s employés. When the people cease to work for the Corporation they ought not even to wait for legal proceedings before getting out of the buildings. How can any one dispute such a self-evident truth?”

He put the last inquiry directly to Ralph, who fidgeted a moment in his chair before replying.

“I suppose the legal side is just as you state,” he answered, “but there’s something confoundedly un-

pleasant—something un-American—in an eviction. Here are hundreds of families given seven days' notice to get out of houses they have been accustomed to consider their homes; families who can't have much of anything in their pockets, and don't know where to go at such short notice. It's legal, very likely, I don't know anything about that, but—hang it!—it's not agreeable to contemplate, when the property they're asked to vacate is held principally in a fellow's own family!"

Mr. Westland frowned.

"Every one of these people," he said, "owes more than a month's rent. All could have had steady employment and avoided this rumpus if they had listened to reason instead of to——"

"Ellen?" It was Edna who interjected that word.

"—to labor agitators," said Westland, supplying the missing syllables. "They have brought upon themselves in the most reckless manner all the inconveniences they endure. They have even yet time to send me word that they are willing to resume work at the revised schedule—but they won't do it! They have lost their reason and seem to follow blindly every ridiculous suggestion of——"

"Ellen?" put in Edna, softly.

"—of their leaders. For me to surrender now would be to admit that henceforth the operatives of this country are to rule the manufacturers. Their arrogance would soon become unbearable. It is the old question—begging your pardon—whether the dog shall wag the tail or the tail wag the dog. Now," he raised his voice, "I will see every shuttle and bobbin in Riverfall buried

a thousand feet under the soil before this shall be under *my* administration!" He turned to the blind girl. "What do you think, Edna? Am I not right in assuming this position?"

She seemed agitated at the unexpected question, coming so directly.

"It seems hard, as Ralph says," she answered, "to turn people into the street; but if it were not necessary, of course you wouldn't do it. Oh, yes, it's right! I'm sure it must be!"

Westland pushed back his chair and spoke with great earnestness.

"Here, in a nutshell, is my situation: I represent your father, who has over \$1,000,000 invested in these mills. I am trustee for a number of other persons, who look to me to protect their property, and I have a large part of my own means (though that is a minor consideration) in the same securities. I have been given full power to crush this spirit of insubordination, which attempts to dictate what wages we shall pay, regardless of the state of the market, or whether we who furnish the capital get a penny of dividend. If we could meet these operatives as individuals there would be no trouble. Then, if one asked for more wages and was refused, he could go elsewhere and our business would suffer no disturbance. But the foolish people have combined to resist us at every point. Unless we take orders from them out will go the entire parcel, and until they take a notion to return our mills must shut down. Doctrines like these are spreading over the country. Not only is the manufacturing business becoming precarious,

but on similar pretexts railroads are tied up and the production of great staples like coal and iron is suspended. The time has come for some one to make a stand. Either the capitalists must resist these innovations or be ruined. At the rate we have been going we are liable, in a few years, to have our throats cut and the roofs burned over our heads, as was done in the servile insurrection at Hayti.

“There is literally no limit to the demands of these so-called reformers,” he proceeded hotly. “In the trades which they are trying to control their method is to get an inch this year and demand an ell next. The bricklayers on our last extension would work but eight hours a day—though we were in a great hurry for the building—and the contractors told me they paid more for eight hours than they formerly gave for ten. The carpenters, too, quit at five every afternoon, even where the property suffered because of it, and so down the entire list. Why, they say that in New York even the bootblacks have their ‘union,’ with a ritual fit for a Scottish Rite chapter. Not long ago, as you know, Ralph, people walked downtown because the transportation employés were on strike, and a carriage could hardly be had for love or money. It is no dream to say the cooks and chambermaids will organize next. What shall I do, then? Why, show the world that there is one place where, even at some pecuniary loss, capitalists refuse to be trodden under foot. Proceeding to such extremes as an eviction is not pleasant, but it must be done. While they are comfortable in houses for which they pay nothing the people may defy us for months. With

their home in the street they will listen to reason. Suppose that my coachman refused to drive my horses, should I continue to employ him? And if not him, why these exasperating operatives?"

Amos, the old negro, entered at this juncture and announced that Mr. Mayfield had come. Edna and Ralph arose to leave the room, but Philip begged both to remain.

"I want you to hear what he says," he told them. "There will be no secrets as far as I am concerned."

The "mill-hand" showed some light surprise as he saw Mr. Westland's companions, but responded graciously to Edna's greetings, and bowed politely to Ralph when presented. Then he proceeded without circumlocution to business.

"Mr. Westland, I have been asked by a committee of your late employés to put a question to you, which they trust you will find yourself willing to answer. They desire to know if it is certain your contemplated evictions will take place on the dates specified in the notices."

"There will not be an hour's grace," was the firm reply.

"That was my opinion," said Hugh, unmoved, "though to please them I was willing to take it from your lips. Now, there are not a dozen houses in town that can be hired, were we ever so able to pay the rent, which—as you may guess—we are not. We have applied to the authorities for leave to use the public buildings, but they have not yet answered, and you know they move slowly. We think they fear that you will be offended if their attitude toward us seems too friendly.

To remain out of doors even one night, in this weather, would be uncomfortable, not to say dangerous to the weaker ones among our number. What I wish to ask is this: should we find ourselves in the street in severely inclement weather, would the doors of the Corporation houses be barred?"

When he ceased it seemed for some seconds as if a feather falling on the heavy carpet would have jarred the building. Ralph leaned forward in his chair with strained attention. Edna seemed scarcely to breathe. Westland's answer when he made it came with that distinctness of tone that one notices in the clear, frosty mornings of winter.

"Hugh, for I will still call you by that name, the people of Riverfall are not children. All they have done has been deliberate, with the facts staring them in the face. They need not have announced their intention to leave work. There was no necessity of treating the corporation whose bread they have eaten for years so that the evictions had to follow. It is not I who am turning them out of doors—it is themselves. Late as it is they can secure a reversal of the orders, not by sending committees here to argue, but by returning to their looms. I have been ready, ever since the dispute originated, to forget that it ever occurred and go on with the business of the company. You and your companions have willed it otherwise. The friendly relations that would exist between employer and employés have now given place to those which govern belligerents."

Mayfield bowed gravely.

“I will convey your reply to my associates, he said. “It is not different from what I expected.”

“I should be glad,” continued Westland, hesitating for suitable words to express the idea he had in mind, “to except Ellen and yourself personally from these rigors. My home is cordially open to both of you.”

Hugh’s resolve to suppress all evidence of impatience received a severe test, but he replied, politely, “What I have advised my comrades to endure will be good enough for me. As to Ellen, I will tell her of your offer.”

Westland flushed.

“As her decision will doubtless be influenced by yours, you may as well say nothing to her on the subject,” he said. “It is one of the unpleasant consequences of my position that I cannot dissociate sentiment from duty.”

“I might say—” Hugh began, and then paused.

“Well?”

“That I cannot understand how true sentiments can conflict with duty; or how an honorable gentleman can retain a position that he feels is opposed to either.”

Hugh arose, bade each of the party adieu in turn, and was gone. Westland waited in vain for one of the others to speak first. He made a poor assumption of indifference, left his chair, lit a cigar and strolled out on the lawn.

When he had been gone a little while Edna spoke:

“I suppose I am wrong, Ralph, but my sympathies are strongly excited for Mr. Mayfield’s friends. No doubt Philip is right, as the law goes, but the result may be terrible. It is a case with two arguments, certainly,

but of one thing there is little doubt—there will be much suffering before it is over.” She took out her purse. “Would you take a trifle of money to Ellen, and ask her to use it for those who have most need. Philip must not know of it, for I don’t wish to seem in opposition to him, but there can be nothing wrong in trying to avert pain.”

Ralph received the purse and opened it doubtfully.

“How much shall I take?” he asked.

“Oh, a hundred dollars to begin with, and tell her she can have more if it is wanted. Yes,” she added, growing more earnest, “say if she needs as much again, or ten times as much, she has only to let me know. How long will it take to find her, do you think?”

Her cousin started at the question.

“Why, is there any need of haste?”

“It may soften Hugh’s feelings toward us.”

“But I thought he seemed very gentle.”

The blind girl sighed deeply.

“Ah, you people who *see*, how little you understand!” she exclaimed. “I never heard a person speak whose heart ached like his. His words were polite enough on the surface, but I could detect the biting irony beneath. He considers us wretches who are crushing him and his fellow for our brutal pleasure. What he feels toward us made me tremble.”

An hour later Ralph found Hugh, to whom he gave the money and message. Hugh said he could only receive it subject to the committee’s decision. He could not guarantee that it would be accepted, and if not he would bring or send it back immediately.

“Not—be—accepted!” repeated Ralph, in astonishment.

“Possibly. They may not feel like receiving aid from those who are responsible for their present condition. If the decision were left to me I know that would be my verdict. However, I shall leave it to the others, uninfluenced by my own ideas.”

Much moved, Ralph took another hundred from his own pocket and placed it with Edna’s in Hugh’s hands. It was nearly all he had.

“I hope you will keep them both,” he said, and moved hastily away. He wanted to see Nathalie about the matter, for he thought what he had done would please her, but he could not arrange a meeting at such short notice.

That evening Hugh called at the Agency and requested to see Ralph. As the young man happened to be out he asked for Miss Edna. He was shown into one of the parlors, and soon she came toward him, groping her way after the manner of the sightless.

“Mr. Mayfield,” she said, “I am glad you have come again. Pray be seated.”

Her voice was unsteady and his no less so, as he replied:

“You were kind enough to send some money, this morning, for the use of our committee——”

“Only a very little,” she interrupted.

“Which they have directed me to return to you.”

Edna was a woman, and her disappointment was great. Tears began to course down her cheeks, much to the embarrassment of Hugh.

“Here is your gift and also that of your messenger, with which he supplemented it,” Hugh went on, as well as he could, laying the money on a table. “You will pardon me, I trust, if I cannot give the reasons that actuated us. These are times when ordinary rules do not prevail.”

She was quite crushed, but managed to stammer that she was sure he and his friends had done what they thought right; that she had only meant to show the state of her heart; and that he and Ellen would still receive the full measure of her sympathy, which they could not reject. He bade her a kind good-by, but his eyes were moist when he left the house.

When Ralph came home Edna told him, and he was not, on the whole, greatly surprised. As her gift had been refused she thought it no harm to tell Mr. Westland also of what she had done, but he only listened with wide opened eyes and said nothing.

XIV

Nathalie LaVerre awoke in her little chamber in the Corporation tenement, and saw the sun peeping in at the window. Miss Flaherty, her roommate, was still wrapped in slumber, and her honest Irish face lay, with the rosy hue of youth and health upon it, on the pillow. It was the day when this building must be vacated, according to the notice on the door: "You will render up the said premises before twelve of the clock at mid-day." And after that, what? After the girls' meagre furniture, and the trunks containing their clothing—and the girls themselves—had been placed in the public street, what then?

Nathalie had pondered a good deal over this problem, but she felt no uneasiness. She had the fullest confidence in the ability of Ellen to arrange everything.

A slight tap came on the door and the French girl found the object of her thoughts at the threshold. Ellen glanced in, saw that Miss Flaherty was still asleep, and whispered to Nathalie to come, as soon as she was dressed, to her room across the entry.

When Nathalie responded a more earnest look even than usual was apparent on Ellen's face.

"By noon," she began, "more than two hundred of our families will be homeless. The authorities have not yet given us leave to enter the public buildings, but I have no doubt they will do so. We must, however, be

prepared for the worst. I want you at hand to carry out my directions during the entire day. I know I can trust you entirely."

The girl felt that these expressions were complimentary to her honesty, and her eyes brightened.

"There is a teamster named Donovan," Ellen proceeded, "who will allow us to store goods in some sheds belonging to him. We must retain, however, such things as mattresses and other bedding, which we shall need wherever we sleep. Here are a quantity of tags to be marked with names, so that the owners can distinguish their property when night comes. If we find ourselves short of enough to go round, we who are young and strong will yield to the weaker ones."

Nathalie showed that she agreed heartily with this.

"We shall have to cook in the street and the kitchen utensils must also be marked. All must give up whatever food they have on hand, to be distributed by the committees. What money we have, or may receive, will be made to last as long as possible. When it is gone the town must aid us; it cannot let us starve."

By noon the last article in the houses on that day's list had been peaceably removed without the intervention of the law. The constable who came to lock the doors witnessed a strange sight. Household goods were piled along the curb for many rods, and the dispossessed were partaking of frugal meals served in the most primitive manner. Several little ones were crying dismally, as if from conviction that doleful consequences were impending and an aged grandam was complaining in a high key that she had been "taken from a dacint

room and t'rown like a bushel of coal into the gutter." But most of the party were strangely—almost suspiciously—passive. And so the constable reported, later, to Mr. Westland.

The acting-president did not go down to the village that day at all. He stayed at his office, constantly hoping that signs of surrender would arrive, and not wishing to be away from his post. He started with pleasure when, about four o'clock, the servant came to report that a delegation of his ex-employés was outside. *At last!*

"Ask them to come in," he said, bracing himself for the ordeal.

But the servant soon returned with a request from the visitors that he would come to the door. The sun was low and it was rather chilly, so Mr. Westland stopped to don a light overcoat, which gave him time also to crush down the indignation that followed the refusal of his invitation. A faint suspicion that they meant him bodily harm was also met and disposed of. Such things had accompanied labor troubles before now, but Ellen had this one in hand on the employés' side, and nothing of that sort could occur. As he stepped upon the veranda he saw that a group of about a dozen persons awaited him, among whom his first glance included Ellen and Hugh.

"My friends," he said, in a firm voice, "I am told that you wish to see me, and in the next breath that you decline to enter my house. I presume you come to make some proposal in reference to your controversy with the Great Central Corporation. If so, why do you not come in, where we can talk at our ease."

All the other members of the committee looked at Ellen. When she raised her eyes and directed their gaze at Westland she spoke in deep earnestness, but with all courtesy :

“ Having been consigned, sir, to the streets of Riverfall, by your order, we would not presume to intrude upon the floor of your home. If the outdoor air is not too inclement for our abode it will suffice for the brief interview we desire. By your direction some five hundred persons have to-day been rendered houseless. Many of them are infirm old men, some are weak women and helpless children. A night in the open will be injurious to all, perhaps fatal to some. The town authorities decline to give us shelter, and we have heard that their hesitation is largely based on fear of offending you. We have come to inquire, therefore, if President Westland has intimated a wish that his late employés should find not only their recent lodgings but the public edifices closed against them.”

During this statement Philip had time to collect himself, and when he opened his mouth he spoke like a man of iron :

“ President Westland does not understand by what right your committee assumes to question him. A month after your people had announced their disinclination to continue in his employ at the wages he was willing to pay, long after most of them were in arrears for rent, he asked possession of his tenements. Not one of those for whom you speak cared enough about retaining his home to announce a desire to resume work. To-day a part of the buildings have been given up, and, I am

glad to say, in a peaceable manner. Before the end of the week the others will also, I trust, be vacated. As to your query, I am not an officer of the town, but only of the Corporation, and my interest ceases when its orders are obeyed."

Ellen listened without taking her eyes from his face.

"May we say to the town officers that President Westland does *not* object to their giving shelter to his employés and their helpless families?"

He answered her without moving a muscle of his rigid frame:

"I shall continue to remain here, as I have done for the past four weeks, ready to transact any business that requires my attention. The directors have given me full authority to act for them. If your committee has any question to ask in reference to the mills it will find me always at its service; but if the authorities of Riverfall are in ignorance of their duty, which I hesitate to believe, they must apply elsewhere than to me—either in person or by proxy—for information."

As he closed there came, borne on the evening air, the faint sound of shouting in the distance, mingled with the just discernible beating of drums. It came from the direction of the railway station, and in the curiosity it excited the conference was suspended. It was soon evident that some unusual occurrence was exciting the population, for the sounds grew louder and the streets were seen to be filled with moving throngs, while orderly ranks of marching men came like a wave behind them. Filled with wonder Mr. Westland followed his visitors to the principal "square," from which they saw—first,

a number of boys, running backwards and forwards; next a retreating throng of people of all ages; and then a drum corps and body of militia, marching in their direction. A few moments later the soldiers, numbering three companies, were halted by their commander, who immediately approached Mr. Westland, saluted and asked to see him in private.

The crowd, now numbering nearly the entire population, pressed forward, eager to know what was to be done. Mr. Westland spoke loud enough to be heard by all.

“Pardon me, Colonel Caswell, we can have no private conversation at this time. If you have anything to tell me, in the discharge of your duty, I wish every person present to hear it.”

A murmur of approval went through the assemblage. President Westland was not a popular man in Riverfall that day, but the militia colonel was still less so. Many a peaceably disposed crowd has been exasperated by the sight of bayonets.

“Very well,” replied Colonel Caswell. “I have been sent here by order of the Governor upon representations that the local police may be insufficient to protect property and preserve the peace. I called my men together hastily and chartered a special train. My orders were to consult with you, as representing the largest interests here, in relation to the best points to place my guards.”

All eyes were turned again upon Westland, who responded with dignity:

“I have no advice or suggestion to offer you, Colonel, as the presence of your force was neither re-

quested nor desired by me. I know of no emergency that is likely to require your aid. The inhabitants of Riverfall seem perfectly quiet and orderly. If they have been otherwise the fact has escaped my observation."

Colonel Caswell bowed politely.

"My only mission," he said, "is to assist the town authorities; if there is no call for my services I shall be all the better satisfied. Now, will you kindly direct me to the house of the chairman that I may present myself to him and explain my errand?"

The required direction was given, the command to march was obeyed, and with drums again rolling the soldiers filed through the village. As Mr. Westland met Ellen he lifted his hat and paused.

"Allow me to say, sir, that I am glad you had no part in the perpetration of this outrage," she said, impressively.

But he answered imperturbably and clearly enough to be heard by all:

"While I had nothing to do with asking for these soldiers, I cannot agree in the term you use. It is no outrage on a law-abiding people to send a body of citizen soldiery into their midst with no other object than to see that the peace is preserved. It is only to those who intend to break the law that the military is a menace. Now, before you go, let me say one thing more. There is yet time for the late employés of the Great Central Corporation to make overtures looking to resumption of work in its mills. Within three days—if you say the word—the hum of industry can be heard in yonder

walls, and the Corporation buildings again be filled with their tenants. The time in which this may be done is, I assure you solemnly, very brief indeed. In a fortnight, if things go on as now, the machinery will begin to be removed and the buildings will be let for other uses. If you are determined to destroy this place as a cotton manufacturing centre you have only to pursue your course a very little longer. If, on the contrary, we are ever to bring Riverfall to its old prosperity, you must move without further delay."

And Ellen's voice was as firm as his when she responded:

"We left those mills because a rate of wages that barely served to support life was to be cut still lower. If the Corporation could endorse such a reduction it could make another. The crisis must come sometime."

"Permit me to ask in what respect you have improved your condition?" was his quiet comment. "You say you had low wages; admitted, for argument's sake. But what have you now? Five weeks ago you had money coming to you each payday, roofs over your heads, food in your larders. You have exchanged these—for what?"

It was a terrific strain upon him to talk thus to her. Delicate phrases that seemed suited to the ear of woman could have no place in a contest such as this. She was worthy of his best steel, and he saw she would meet him at every point with a blade as quick and sharp as his own. The war was not one he fancied, but he saw no escape from carrying it on to the bitter end. Bitter indeed, it might be, too, he knew full well!

“For what, do you ask, have we exchanged your food and shelter?” she repeated, scathingly. “*For manhood and womanhood!* We were never created for slavery—we sons and daughters of the white races of Europe! The blood in our veins is as good as that of the men who chose to think themselves our masters. Our bonds became unendurable and we have elected to suffer death, if need be, rather than chattelhood! It is a time for another Arnold Winkelreid. If we must die to arouse the American conscience, so let it be. Mark me, President Westland! The spectacle of these poor people driven out of doors by a Corporation whose wealth they have quintupled will have an effect throughout the land. The slow brain of the giant Labor is awakening! Not much longer will he allow himself to be led in chains by the dwarf Capital. When he does turn let us pray that he will not crush the life out of his oppressors—let us hope that he will show a magnanimity that has never been shown to him. He has the power to be free; all he lacks is the intelligence, and that he is gaining hourly. Those who have bowed the knee will soon stand erect; those who have begged for terms will dictate them. It may be that all here will not see the day, but it is coming! Already the dawn can be discerned in the East. You think the Brotherhood of Man a dream of enthusiasts. Soon it will be an accomplished fact!”

Feeling it useless to prolong the discussion Ellen turned, and, followed by several hundred people, returned to her home, or at least the little heap of household goods that represented it. It was nearly dark. Many of the houseless ones had already prepared to

sleep out of doors and make themselves as comfortable as they could with blankets. Others had accepted the hospitality of friends, and crowded into the already too well filled tenements in which the notices to vacate gave a day or two longer grace. The weather had been unusually mild for the season, but a deep chill was in the air and some predicted snow. After a light repast Ellen asked Hugh to accompany her on one more errand to Mr. Hunt, chairman of the town officers, to make a final plea for shelter for the weakest. They were stopped, however, at his gate, by a soldier, who barred the way with his rifle.

“Halt!” he said, abruptly.

Somewhat astonished Hugh stated their desire to speak to Chairman Hunt. The soldier called his corporal, who after a parley undertook to deliver the message. In a short time the official appeared in his doorway, looking much disturbed.

“How do you do?” he said, in a shaking voice. “I’m sorry I can’t ask you in, but—er—what do you wish?”

“It is past sundown,” responded Hugh, who by Ellen’s desire had agreed to act as spokesman, “and several hundred of your fellow townspeople are out of doors. If they are to be sheltered for the night, which seems likely to be a severe one, no time should be lost. We appeal to you again, as the legal custodian, to open one of the public buildings and allow us to enter.”

Something seemed to stick in Chairman Hunt’s throat. He cleared it several times before he managed to answer.

“My associates, at our meeting this afternoon, decided that we had no—no right—to use the town build-

ings for such a purpose. They—the buildings, I mean—have recently been painted and repaired at much expense. We think—they—are not suited exactly to the purposes—of—lodging-houses.”

Hugh turned on him savagely.

“Do you mean to let women and children freeze on such a flimsy pretext as that!” he cried.

“It is not necessary,” faltered the chairman. “There is yet time, I think, to see Mr. Westland and get back into the houses you have vacated—”

“At his terms!” interrupted Hugh, with set teeth.

“At his terms,” assented the chairman, eagerly. “I am sure——”

Hugh’s voice sounded like the roar of a lion.

“You refuse to shelter our women and children, even if they die of cold? Is that your final decision?”

“We—we think best not.”

The pair turned on their heels without another word.

“You must not lose your temper,” whispered Ellen, gently, taking her companion by the arm. “It is exasperating, I admit, but we must bear such things with external calmness, at least.”

Before they had gone far a militia sergeant came running toward them and touched his hat to Ellen.

“I beg your pardon, he said, hurriedly. “Though you may think us your enemies the truth is, I believe, quite the opposite in most cases. I wish they had set me about some other duty than protecting the heartless old fool you have just left, but I must obey orders. I advise you to see Colonel Caswell. He is a thorough gentleman, and will help you in any way he can.”

Ellen thanked the man, but did not act on his advice.

She told Hugh instead that her next step would be an appeal to the churches. A sneer was on his lip, but she took pains not to look at him, and it passed unobserved.

During the next hour they visited several clergymen, who told substantially the same story. While sympathizing with all in distress, they had no power to open their houses of worship for such a peculiar purpose. The standing committee, perhaps, or the wardens—or someone else—might have such right, but a regularly called meeting would be necessary, which would take some time. How long? Well, perhaps a week or more.”

Returning to the temporary camp on the sidewalk they met Colonel Caswell, who was evidently looking for them. One of the men introduced him, and he proceeded to say what he had in mind.

“My position is a delicate one. My orders practically place me under the direction of Mr. Hunt till I hear further from the Governor or Adjutant-General. At his request I have placed a guard around each of the town buildings to prevent any one entering them, as well as at his house. But I have several tents which are at my own disposal, and seeing the unpleasant condition of your people I wish to offer them for those most in need.”

It was the first ray of sunshine Ellen had seen, and it came from a most unexpected source. She grasped the hand of the officer.

“You are a true man, sir!” she said. “But I fear that by accepting your offer I shall incommode you more than I ought.”

“Have no fear on our account,” answered the Colonel,

smiling. "I and my commissioned officers have secured accommodation at the hotel, and it is our own tents I offer you. Though the hotel is owned by the Corporation, the landlord did not refuse our application, as I understand he did yours. I will show you which tents you can have, and you may occupy them at your convenience."

The party went over to inspect the tents and Ellen, after a little talk with Hugh, accepted them with many expressions of gratitude. The work of separating the more delicate from the houseless groups was at once begun. Aged women, nursing mothers and little babes were taken first. Occasional exhibitions of selfishness cropped out, but a word from Ellen always settled the matter.

A murmur went through the camp as the militiamen noticed the strange sight—their officers' quarters given over to the operatives they had come to Riverfall to suppress. Then, when the soldiers began to realize that nothing but these canvas walls stood between the people and a frosty night, the best side of the men came out. Consultations were held here and there, and soon the colonel was begged to permit his men to crowd closer so that several more tents could be used for the sufferers. To this request he gave consent without delay. The entire number would now serve to house the women and children, by packing them like sardines, and a few of the aged men were also provided for.

"Don't worry about the rest, Ellen," said Hugh. "Most of us have overcoats and there are a good many blankets. We are tough and hearty. I would be quite at ease if I knew what we are to do with the eight hun-

dred women and children who are to be turned out of doors to-morrow."

Her gentle glance reproved him.

"May we not leave that to God?" she asked. "He who has done so much will still protect us, if we trust Him. I shall pray for every soul in Riverfall to-night, that He will have them in His holy keeping!"

"Every soul!" he echoed, meaningly. "Shall you pray for Philip Westland?"

"For him above all," she replied, devoutly. "I do not know a man more in need of Heaven's grace. Good-night, my friend."

When she was in her crowded tent, Ellen lifted to her Maker a long and earnest supplication. She prayed for the homeless poor, for the sick and infirm, for the young and for the old; she asked strength of body and wisdom of judgment; she prayed for patience, for power to submit to the Divine will, whatever it might be. And especially, as she had promised Hugh, did she pray for the acting-president of the Corporation, that honest and misguided man, who would only have, she conceived, to comprehend his error to abandon it.

"Bless him, dear God," she cried in her heart, "burdened with heavy responsibility and blinded to his true duty. Oh, lift the veil from his eyes, I pray thee!"

She also commended to Heaven by name Edna Westland and Ralph Melbourg, and finally, though she had not expected to sleep so soon, exhaustion overcame her. The last sound she heard was the sharp voice of a sentry as he challenged some late passer in that armed camp which had been so lately the peaceful village of Riverfall.

XV

The latest tiff which Ralph had had with Mlle. La Verre troubled him not a little. He had seen her in so many different moods that he did not believe this one would last, and yet the situation was far from agreeable. In the old days, in the city, no matter how angry she might be when he left her, it was easy to arrange a new *modus vivendi*. Here in Riverfall they could not meet without an elaborate arrangement, and there was always danger that some one would discover them and misconstrue the occurrence. He reflected also that it was as easy for her to seek a meeting as for him, and he tried to arouse his pride. Why should he be the only one to ask a renewal of friendship? But the more he tried to blot Nathalie's image from his heart the stronger it grew there. Absence ever makes the lover fonder.

One day, in the course of a long talk with Edna in relation to the evictions, he decided to tell her that Nathalie was in Riverfall, and see if she could not find some way to aid him. He knew while technically she stood on Phil's side, her tender heart was grieved at the sufferings of the operatives. So he revealed the story, concealing nothing.

"Well you *are* a conspirator! she cried. "To introduce a spy into the camp of the opposition was a master thought. The fact that it has worked so poorly is your misfortune. And in the meantime—my poor boy—you

are deprived, not only of information but of your informant."

"That's the meanest part of it," he assented, dolefully. "I'd let the whole confounded row go to blazes, if I could get her to New York, and myself with her. You can't imagine how awfully dull it is without her, these long evenings! Whether I'll ever get her back now is a question. Likely as not she'll marry one of those mill-hands in a fit of pique. She told me the other evening one had proposed to her already."

Edna was immensely interested in this drama from real life, and wanted the fullest details.

"Whatever did you manage to quarrel about?" she asked. "When two young people are very much in love it seems as if they could overlook small things. You should have more good sense, cousin."

He sighed deeply.

"I wish you could get acquainted with Nathalie," he said, with a long breath. "She's the most obstinate—the dearest, sweetest—most exasperating child that ever wore petticoats. I can't tell, myself, what we do quarrel about—it seems like nothing at all, when I look back at it. This time she told me of a fellow named Flaherty who wanted to marry her—and then she admitted she didn't care a rap for him, and loved me as much as I love her."

"I don't see any chance for a quarrel there."

"No. It seemed all right again; but we got to talking about the mill trouble. She said she should stand by Ellen, whatever happened, and that Phil would have to give in. That nettled me, of course, and—in a minute—it was all off again."

The blind girl laughed.

“After which you made up, as usual?”

“No. She was gone, the next thing I knew. Gone out into the dark night; and I’ve never seen her since. I mustered up courage to go to the house where she lives, this evening, for I knew she roomed across the hall from Ellen. But—just my luck—that happened to be one of the buildings emptied to-day. The front door was locked and sealed by the constable.”

The listener uttered a little cry.

“Then she—Ellen—has no roof over her head to-night?”

“I suppose not; nor Nathalie, either. One is about as stubborn as the other, and Phil is as bad as both put together. Why couldn’t he have made some sort of compromise, and kept them at work? He was so high and mighty it set them off at half-cock. Yes, those two women and hundreds of other people are trying the open air cure, because neither side had wisdom enough to act reasonably.”

Edna drew her chair closer to the grate, in which a pleasant fire of sea-coal was burning. She was thinking deeply. For the first time the real horror of what the Corporation was doing began to impress itself upon her mind. Occasionally the wind shook one of the window sashes, proving that the air was not of summer mildness. The girl tried to imagine the scene occurring within half a mile of the cozy corner where she sat; and it made her shiver.

“Where is Philip?” she asked, finally.

“In the office, I presume. He says he shall stay

there every one of his waking hours to let the work-people seek him if they wish. Lord! They'll freeze and starve before they'll give in. Ellen is supreme, Nathalie says, and she has the stuff in her that martyrs are made of. I expect the soldiers will fire on somebody before the night is over. They always do, and it's generally an innocent person that gets hit. What good it all does is more than I can tell. Phil says after the first of the month I'll have to go to work somewhere. There'll be no dividends while this goes on."

She leaned toward him and rested her hands on her knees.

"And knowing this, you gave a hundred dollars to help those unfortunates! Ralph, I think you're the dearest, noblest boy in the whole world!"

"Pshaw!" he retorted, blushing. "I couldn't see them die, with money in my pocket, could I—and perhaps Nathalie among them?"

"How much have you left?"

"Very little. Let's talk of something else. It makes me blue to think of it. Work! What can I do? If the mills were running Phil might give me a place in the office, but now—"

She stood up and began to stroke his hair softly.

"You're not going to make me believe you're anything but a generous, whole-souled boy, and I'm proud of you," she murmured. "As for what money you want you have only to borrow of me till your income begins to come again. Now, don't refuse too soon. You are sure to need some, and luckily I have a pretty fair balance in the bank, while my wants are few. As for

that little girl of yours I'm just dying to meet her, and I beg you to arrange it as soon as you can. The way she has fallen under Ellen's influence is not at all to her discredit, in my eyes. It shows that she has an impressionable heart, and is full of sympathy, which is one of the most lovable attributes a woman can have. Phil has a tender side, too—I know by the beautiful way he has treated me all these years. I can tell by the tones of his voice he is distressed at what I'm sure he means for the best. The whole weight of this trouble is on his shoulders. I wonder why Mr. Baker could not relieve him from part of the strain. He used to be papa's right-hand man before Phil came."

Ralph sniffed at the mention of that name. When Edna inquired the reason he hinted more than he wished to say openly about the treasurer's character. The insults that Ellen had borne were no secret in Riverfall, though she had never breathed a word of them. His own meeting with the treasurer—that night with Nathalie—had not left a pleasant impression. He knew also that Phil disliked the man and had as little as possible to do with him.

"You had best go to bed," said Ralph at last. "Nothing will happen after this hour. It's past ten now."

"Will you go, too?" she inquired.

"No. I couldn't sleep if I did. I wonder if Nathalie is comfortably fixed. It's particularly senseless in her to go through these hardships when she could just as well take the train back to the city. She wouldn't let me lend her a penny, if she were starving, and she won't leave here, for she believes she can be of use to Ellen, who has hypnotized her, I really believe."

Meantime Mr. Westland paced the floor of his office. Sleep had of late been a stranger to his eyes. He began to look haggard, and found, to his astonishment, that he had nerves which could be painfully jarred. A life-long habit of early hours and undisturbed rest was broken up. His appetite had left him.

He hoped that continuous walking would induce sleep, but its only effect was to make him more wakeful than ever. He tried it for a long time, knowing how much he needed the rest that persistently evaded him. At last, at nearly one o'clock, he donned his hat and overcoat and sallied out.

It was undoubtedly chilly. The coat was necessary for comfort even, as he walked along. He strolled aimlessly toward the village. The Town Hall loomed upon his vision and, as he was wondering if any of the people had found shelter there, he heard a sharp command to halt. A sentry disputed his passage.

It is a peculiar sensation, when you find yourself challenged for the first time by an armed man in uniform, who places the point of a bayonet within a few inches of your breast and bids you pause. As the order rang out Westland felt a distinct shock. In his pre-occupied state of mind he had quite forgotten for the moment Colonel Caswell's men.

The wanderer retreated without replying. It did not occur to him to say, "I am Philip Westland, acting-president of the Corporation which owns everything in Riverfall, even the ground on which you stand." He had come in contact with a force before which stouter minds have quailed. Besides, he had no desire to excite

controversy, and one direction was as agreeable as another. He wandered on. Twice more he was stopped by the words, "You cannot pass." Once the reason was given that people were asleep on the sidewalk and must not be disturbed. Again, "Only women and children can enter here. These are the officers' quarters."

Westland followed the last man's finger curiously, and saw in the gloom the canvas houses on the common, looking weird and out of place.

"You would do well to get away from the lines," added the soldier, kindly. "In this section you are in constant danger."

"Only women and children!"

He understood now. The militia sent to protect the interests of the mill owners had housed some of their enemies in its own tents! He had heard the efficacy of citizen troops doubted in case of civil outbreak. Already these were fraternizing with the populace. Truly, he reflected, a nice state of affairs! Then his heart gave a great throb.

"Ellen!"

Undoubtedly she was sleeping—if indeed she slept at all—in one of these tents on the common. She had been among the first to be evicted from her tenement—he had, in fact, ordered it so. Since she controlled these foolish people she should be the earliest to know what her obstinacy meant. And she was there—within a hundred yards of him—the proud, unbending queen, who defied him to his teeth and who had a power greater than his own! She rested there at the head of her unyielding forces, while he, the captain of the opposing

army, could rest nowhere. The first skirmish was over and she held her ground.

“But to-morrow,” he mused, biting his lips, “she will be put to a severer test. When eight hundred of her followers are dispossessed of their tenements, where will she put them? The next day eight hundred others will follow, and the next eight hundred more. By Saturday night nearly all the inhabitants will be out of doors.” He drew his overcoat closer and shivered.

“Heavens! how cold it is!” he muttered.

He strolled slowly back toward the Agency, not with any intention of going in, for the open air suited his mood better than the silence of the house. It was past two. His only object now was to keep away from the challenging soldiers. As he neared the house he saw two female figures at an upper window, and presently one of them opened the sash and spoke.

“Mr. Westland?”

“Yes, Mollie.”

“Are you coming in?”

It was Miss Westland’s maid, and Edna stood by her side.

“Not for a little while. I’m not sleepy. Don’t mind me.”

“I want to come out with you,” said Edna. “I also am wakeful, and I think a walk would do me good.”

Mr. Westland replied, “Certainly; but wrap up well. Take all the time you need.”

It seemed odd that his fragile cousin should be dressed at that hour, with such a request on her lips. But he had ceased to think anything too remarkable for Riverfall

in its present topsy-turvy condition. In a town where a representative of the owners could be stopped by a soldier nothing could surprise him much.

Presently Edna appeared, warmly dressed, and took his arm. Mollie followed at a respectful distance, just out of earshot.

“Where shall we go?” he asked.

“Down to the village.”

“The soldiers have guards at every point. I have been challenged several times.”

“Let us go as near as we can.”

They walked on in silence for several minutes, and the girl asked—

“Why are the soldiers here?”

“Apparently to furnish lodgings for people who are driving me to distraction,” he answered, with a sneer. “Half of those evicted to-day are now sleeping in tents these fellows lent them, I understand.”

“Half, Philip? Which half?”

“The women and children,” he repeated, lowering his voice.

He knew by the clasp she gave his arm that she was glad and it did not astonish him. It was only another instance of the queer upsettings that were taking place.

“Are you sorry they are under cover, Philip?” Edna asked, after a pause.

“Sorry? I? Why should I be sorry? They are out of the company’s houses. What does it matter to me where they go?”

She waited a little.

“It is a cold night,” she said, clinging closer to him.

“Yes.”

“ And are some of the people really trying to sleep out of doors ? ”

“ All of the men, I suppose. And the women would be but for the meddlesomeness of that militia colonel.”

She stopped suddenly, releasing her arm.

“ Do you mean you would prefer they endured this cold unprotected ? You need go no further. I will call Mollie.”

He took her arm and replaced it within his own.

“ I shall escort you home,” he answered, sternly. “ Two women cannot wander about after nightfall in a town filled with ruffians and soldiers ! ”

She submitted passively. For several seconds she had difficulty in keeping pace with him, and then his walk grew even slower than ordinary.

“ You know all about this,” he began to say, querulously. “ You know the whole story—how these foolish people have deprived themselves of their houses and occupation. And yet you talk as if it were *my* fault ! ”

“ No, Philip,” she corrected, very gently, “ I do not know whose fault it is. I will leave that for wiser heads to determine. I only know it is too cold to stop out of doors to-night.”

“ Why didn't they stay *indoors*, then ? ” he snapped. “ I have told that woman that at the first indication of intention to resume work every eviction notice will be taken down. But no ! They are determined to break me and they reckon with the wrong man ! I have ordered them out and out every soul of them shall go, unless they come and ask clemency in the proper spirit.”

She waited a little while again, anxious to say the right thing, and uncertain how to shape her thoughts.

“If”—she began, and paused again. “If—I was thinking; if—any of them should die—from the exposure?”

She could feel, though she could not see, the glare of his eyes as he turned them upon her.

“Well! I wonder if you would lay that on me! If there are fatalities the blame will be on those who led them to this extreme. They cannot ascribe it to a man who has persistently and consistently held out the olive branch!”

Edna answered quietly——

“Then you think the entire fault is Ellen’s?”

He started at that name. She felt how it thrilled him, for to her acute senses his very heartbeats were distinguishable.

Philip’s voice shook as he answered, “It is the fault of any one who led them into this terrible error.”

“Ralph tells me they obey Ellen like an army. Then, if a death results from these evictions, she will be a murderess. And yet they say you love her!”

She used the term deliberately, prepared to take the consequences, whatever they might be. She wanted to stir the deepest depths in his nature. To her surprise Westland retained the composure into which he had fallen.

“Who says that?” he asked, calmly.

“It is a common belief among the people.”

“Who told you?”

“Ralph. He has been in a position to hear much within the past two or three days. One of the men coupled your name with Ellen’s in a public harangue, and was that night expelled from the union.”

Edna was puzzled when Philip made no response to this statement. It was as if his brain had grown dull.

“You will remember, she continued, “when we first spoke of her, I told you it was a case of love on your part.”

He slackened his already snail-like pace and spoke with great earnestness.

“My dear girl, even if what you say were true, would it make less plain my duty to protect the interests of my employers and wards? Could I give way to sentiments that imperilled my obligations? You never knew me troubled as I have been for the past month. My heart is naturally tender, but I have had to steel it. It is my nature to say pleasant things, and I have been compelled to use harsh words. Do you think I find it agreeable to contemplate the spectacle of homeless, shivering men and women? You know me too well. A great question has been given me to solve and until it is settled I must sink all else, no matter at what pain to myself. The suffering caused by such disturbances as this is incalculable. I intend to make such an example here that labor troubles in America will come to a permanent end. Hitherto the people have been treated like children, who get whatever they want if they only cry loud enough. If I prove that a strike cannot be successful they never will strike again. On the other hand, if I let them win, all the capital in the country will be at their mercy. The market will fall into a state of chaos; shut-downs will no longer be a matter of choice but necessity; and the laborer himself will find a precarious livelihood, instead of the regular wages that have ex-

isted. I must even forget friendships that are very dear to me. If there is a man in Riverfall whom I esteem it is Hugh Mayfield. No woman I ever met has a more noble and unselfish mind than Ellen. On the one hand is the regard I feel for these people and my sympathy for those they have led wrongly; on the other is my clear duty. No, Edna, my feet shall never be seduced from the plain path, though it be planted thick with thorns and overhung with brambles!"

The blind girl listened with strained attention. For a moment she wavered.

"Mistaken sentiment would injure both our people and our stockholders," added Philip, after a pause. "But if things are allowed to take their course the mills will be in operation within a fortnight."

"And in the meantime," put in Edna, returning to the previous point, "the nights will probably continue cold. Could not the same results be reached without so much hardship? It seems dreadful to be homeless at this time of the year."

"It is necessary," was his firm reply.

They had reached the Agency and paused at the steps. Mollie came up and was told by her mistress that she would excuse her from further attendance.

"Is Ellen very beautiful?" asked Edna, when she and Philip were alone again.

"Very," he answered, without hesitation. "Nature has done everything for her. Had she education she would be among the greatest. It is a marvel that with such attributes she chooses the life of the mills."

"Probably no other has been offered her," Edna sug-

gested. "Now, Mr. Mayfield—describe his appearance as well as you can?"

"Hugh? He is of my height, with light hair and blue eyes. A fine, sturdy, intelligent, honest fellow."

She dropped her voice at the next question.

"They will marry sometime, of course?"

"Hugh and Ellen? I think not. They are deeply interested in theories which they hold in common, but that is all. No, I am quite sure."

Surprised that Philip spoke so calmly on the subject, and more in doubt than ever as to his real feelings toward Ellen, Edna left him and went into the house. He promised to follow soon, but before he had done so Ralph Melbourg came with quick step from the direction of the town and paused in front of him with distorted features.

"Why, what's the matter?" inquired Westland, anxiously.

"Matter? Matter enough. You are going too far, Phil! Do you know what is occurring yonder? Men wrapped in bedclothes shivering on the sidewalks, and women only saved from the same fate by soldiers who let them use their tents! Do you know what you've got to do—have the rest of your notices torn down and issue orders to let the people back into the houses! Confound it! We've almost had a frost!"

While Westland did not relish his young friend's remarks he could not repress a smile at his impetuosity.

"Must I, indeed!" he retorted, drawing himself up. "I shall do nothing of the kind. The people can go back to their tenements and their work if they sign the new schedule, and on no other terms."

Ralph's anger grew more furious.

"Do you tell me you won't have the notices pulled down?" he demanded, threateningly. "You will persist in throwing the rest of the people into the streets?"

"Undoubtedly. It seems to me some one has been changing his mind! Not so long ago he was lamenting the loss of his income these silly people had caused; now they have his sympathy in their idiotic performance. Why this remarkable reversal of attitude?"

The young man's indignation was so great that he could hardly speak with distinctness.

"Hang my income!" he cried. "I have seen too much to-night ever to want an income from these mills again. I have seen families separated; wives, sisters and mothers thankful to accept a canvas roof offered by charity; husbands and fathers left like dogs outside the doors your men locked on them! I have seen their miserable belongings, hardly fit for tramps, only kept from destruction by a good-natured truckman who carted them to sheds! I have seen children crying for want of a drop of milk. One of the poor little chaps was so ill he couldn't hold up his head, and Ellen took him to the tent she occupies. The night air is dangerous in his weak condition and it is doubtful if he lives till daylight. By——"

But Westland was shaking him sharply by the shoulder.

"Where is that child—in which tent?" he asked, white as a sheet. "It shall be brought to my house—at once—and a nurse and doctor called to attend it. Why did no one tell me? You might have let me know instead of idling over yonder."

Ralph gave an impatient snarl.

“What good would it do to let *you* know—you who have said within a minute that you will turn the rest of them out as fast as you can!”

“But not the babies! I didn’t realize that there were any babies,” stammered Westland. “Show me which tent he’s in.”

“We couldn’t pass. The sentries are everywhere.”

“I can at least get a doctor. They will not refuse him, when they know his errand. Come, Ralph!”

But the young man was firm.

“I will not!” he shouted. “I’ll have nothing more to do with you while you represent a miserable corporation that is turning its old servants into the street. I’m going in now to pack my things, and in the morning I’ll have them taken out of your house.”

Westland turned on his heel. He did not care to prolong the argument. He feared that his patience might collapse if the strain continued. Without delay he sought the chief physician of the town, Dr. McNally, and awoke that gentleman from a sound sleep.

The doctor was surprised when he heard his caller’s errand, but as his customer was undoubtedly able to settle all bills, he prepared without delay to accompany him. Together they proceeded to the common, where a sentry, after some parley, admitted them to the lines, and pointed out the tent in which Ellen was to be found.

When the visitors were announced, Mrs. Mulligan, the child’s mother, was wringing her hands and mourning audibly. Some medicine had already been procured, which Dr. McNally approved of, nodding his head with

satisfaction. The most important thing now, he said, was to remove the little one to a warmer shelter and he thought his own residence best adapted to that purpose.

“Shure, an’ the b’y’s kilt already, widout movin’ him!” cried Mrs. Mulligan. “May God forgive the crool man that turrened us out av doors on this freezin’ night! Poor little Patsy! It’s an angel ye’ll be befure the sun rises, an’ all the docthers in Ameriky can’t save ye!”

Westland winced at the allusion to himself, and was painfully aware that the speaker’s sentiments were those of nearly everybody present. Ellen came to the doctor’s aid and finally, by promising to accompany her, and to send a messenger to inform her husband where she had gone, persuaded Mrs. Mulligan to go to the doctor’s house. Nathalie wrapped the baby in a blanket and carried it along. After the party had passed the military line Mr. Westland and Ellen fell a little behind the others.

“You were very kind to bring the doctor,” she said feelingly.

“Not at all,” he replied. “I wish I had known of the case earlier. I went as soon as I heard.” He looked at his companion narrowly. “Let me say another thing, Ellen, while we are alone. I am inexpressibly rejoiced that, notwithstanding all that has passed, you still treat me as a friend.”

She looked up at him brightly. Through the dim light he could distinguish her features, none the less lovely for a nearly sleepless night.

“Why should we not be friends,” she asked, in her

most musical tone, "when each is doing what he believes right?"

"And yet one must be wrong," he returned sadly.

"True," she replied; "one must be wrong; but if, using the best conscience he has, he falls into error, God will surely forgive him. There must come a time, though, when he would give much to undo the evil he has mistakenly caused."

He seemed lost in thought for some moments, and then spoke again:

"Something has been long on my mind, Ellen, and I want you to hear it now. Forgive me for bringing up the subject at such an inauspicious moment. I do not ask—do not wish—an immediate reply. These troublous times are sure to draw us further apart. I cannot tell how long it may be before we meet again alone, and I want you to know——"

She laid a heavy hand upon his arm and turned toward him such a startled, pleading face that he stopped short in the path.

"I beg you—do not say it!" she gasped.

"But—you understand?"

She took several steps before she realized that he was not following. Then she turned half toward him, but did not raise her eyes.

"Yes; I understand," she answered, faintly, and they went into the doctor's house together.

XVI

The sun rose and tried in vain to dispel the mist that hung over Riverfall. The air still continued very chilly, the sort of chilliness that penetrates to the marrow, and is harder to bear than even a cooler temperature with dry air. Some hundreds of people whose bed covering had been the black sky of night, and their breakfast more meagre than usual were distinctly miserable. Several hundred who were preparing to obey the notices of eviction tacked to their doors were glancing anxiously at the clouds and predicting rain before the day was over. And some thousands of others still, whose turn to join these was not far away, wore gloomy faces in keeping with the threatening aspect of the heavens.

Some of Colonel Caswell's men, carrying on the farce of "protecting" the property of the Corporation, as well as "guarding" the residences of town officials, made a show of patrolling the village, while those who had been on duty earlier slept the sleep of tired men in their tents. Others strolled about, discussing the situation. Though they were in truth "holiday soldiers," and not too much in love with the task assigned them, their commander could find no fault with their obedience of orders. That extraordinary thing called discipline, under which a thousand men execute the will of one like automatons, was easily enforced. As the colonel said afterwards in his report, "My men reflected

credit on themselves, on their regiment and on the Commonwealth.”

The colonel slept at the Riverfall House, and slept well. Entirely refreshed he rose early and took a stroll through the village. His engaging manners, as well as his kindness to the women and children, made him popular in spite of the disagreeable nature of his business, which the operatives interpreted as opposed to their side in the issue that was being fought out. Many affable “Good-mornings” were showered upon him by poor fellows whose bed had been the soft side of a brick, along with questions much more plentiful than he could answer. He was compelled to say over and over that he could do nothing but act in conjunction with the town authorities, and that he could express no opinions. The trouble was to make his hearers understand how a colonel in gorgeous uniform, with a sword hanging at his side, could take directions from a little dried-up civilian like Chairman Hunt, whom everybody seemed to despise.

Hugh Mayfield slept but a short time, lying on the sidewalk with a bed-quilt over him and a piece of plank for a pillow, but he arose soon after daybreak, fresh as a lark. On an occasion like the present his superb physique and good habits stood him in excellent stead. Summoning his most trusted assistants he saw that provisions were distributed to the hungry crowds, and then went hither and thither, giving assistance and advice wherever needed. He had a great deal to do. He was trusted by all, and none ventured to question his decisions. While thus engaged he heard, to his surprise, that Ralph Melbourg was waiting to speak to him.

“May I have a word with you?” asked Ralph, anxiously.

“If you will make it very brief. I am, as you see, extremely busy.”

“You refused my money,” explained the young man, speaking in a quick, nervous way. “I come to tender it again, and this time to offer myself with it. I have thrown up my cousin forever, and my entire sympathies are on your side. I have taken my belongings from the Agency and told Phil I will have no more to do with a man who does such cruel things.”

“Cruel!” interrupted a pleasant voice, just behind him. “Are you not mistaken?”

Ralph turned and saw Ellen, who had silently approached. The three were quite alone. No others would have dreamed of interrupting when Ellen and Hugh were in consultation. The trio were as safe from listeners as if bolts and bars held back the world.

“Cruel!” repeated the pleasant voice, before Ralph could reply. “Philip Westland cruel! You would not say so if you had seen him in my tent last night with Dr. McNally, whom he summoned to attend Mrs. Mulligan’s sick baby.”

“It was I who told him about the child!” exclaimed Ralph, eagerly. “I met him at the door. I had just come from down this way, and the things I saw put me in a rage. We had words over the matter and I announced my intention to leave him. I have moved my things to the hotel, as I was telling Hugh.”

Mayfield left it to Ellen to reply. When she was by he never assumed to direct a conversation unless by her expressed wish.

“There are two Philip Westlands,” said Ellen, looking Ralph full in the eyes. “One of them is a generous, noble, whole-souled gentleman; the other is acting-president of the Great Central Corporation. To which do you refer?”

“I know but one Philip Westland in Riverfall,” answered Ralph, surprised.

“Oh, excuse me—there are surely two. One ordered the Mulligan family out of their tenement on a freezing day, when he had reason to believe they could find no shelter; the other sent a doctor to the Mulligan baby, engaged a nurse and personally brought medicines from the apothecary. You see, they are very different men.”

He began to understand.

“Now,” continued Ellen, “let me hear again what you wish to do.”

Upon this Ralph reiterated, though at greater length, what he had told Mayfield. His sympathies were with the locked-out people, and he wanted to serve them. He was not rich, his income had been suspended on account of the troubles, but he had some money, and a relation, whom he did not wish to name, had offered to advance him more. His greatest wish was to thoroughly identify himself with those who were struggling against the greedy Corporation.”

“You are acting under excitement,” said Ellen, when he paused for breath. “All who enter my ranks are required to use calmness and discretion, obeying their chosen leaders without debate or delay. I fear you could not bring yourself to serve in that manner.”

“I can,” was the emphatic reply. “I will make any

promise you ask. Put me where I can aid you. The first thing, it seems to me, is to go to New York for a carload of things. I can get the money. Please try me!"

Ellen motioned to Hugh and they retired several steps away for a whispered conversation. When they returned she said—

"We have found it necessary to admit persons to our counsels only after a most thorough test. Though we have no reason to doubt your honesty in this proposal, we cannot break our rules. You may go to New York and send us anything you desire. When you return, if you wish to talk further, I shall be at your service. The main thing I must urge upon you is discretion. Our cause is more likely, at the present moment, to suffer from thoughtless friends than from its most inveterate enemies."

Ralph accepted the terms joyfully, declaring that he would prove his fealty in such a way that she could not long doubt him. He hastened to send a note telling Edna what had happened, and the messenger who carried it returned with a cheque quite large enough for what he had in view. Hastening to the city he ordered some large tents, a miscellaneous lot of flour, canned meats, groceries and blankets. But in his excitement he forgot all about the time-tables and missed the train he meant to take for Riverfall by only five minutes.

There was nothing for it but to stay over night, and as his goods could not possibly arrive before the next afternoon it made little difference. Going to his old rooms Ralph pondered on the best way to dispose of his

spare time, and finally concluded, though it was rather late, to dress and go to one of the theatres.

In the foyer, as it was between the acts, many people were promenading, and to Ralph's disgust a familiar face and form revealed itself, in the person of Mr. Ezra Baker, Treasurer of the Great Central mills.

"How d'ye do," he said, affably. "Just come, eh? Of course you've not been able to get a seat at this hour. I've got plenty of room in my box and you're welcome."

The call bell rang, and before he was aware of it Ralph had been pushed into Mr. Baker's box. His indecision was to blame. He would have gladly escaped recognizing Baker at all, could he have done so without a scene; and his comfort was not increased when he saw that a young woman was also seated there, whom he recognized as a former mill-girl of Riverfall, whose reputation had been questioned.

"Miss Thursten—Mr. Melbourg," said Baker, in an off-hand way.

The boldness of the thing nearly deprived Ralph of his breath. Baker leaned over and whispered, "You understand, this isn't to be talked about down yonder. A fellow has to take a little fling once in a while, when his business keeps him half the year in such a hole as Riverfall. I left over a week ago. So your cousin is actually firing the people out? I never thought he had the nerve. Well, a few nights in this weather will do more to teach them sense than a month of talk. If they make any fuss the militia will be handy. I hope they've loaded their rifles with ball cartridges."

Ralph's perplexity increased. He did not like to start

an argument. He did not want anything, in fact, but to get out of the place as soon as he could; and he waited anxiously for the curtain to fall, that he might make an exit without explanations. His glance wandered to Miss Thursten, and Mr. Baker was quick to notice.

“Not bad, eh?” he whispered, with a leer.

The younger man could no longer conceal his feelings; to see this fellow, past middle age, occupying a high and trustworthy position, exhibiting with actual glee the shameless side of his nature, was more than could be patiently endured. Rising hastily, Ralph left the box without saying good-by to either of the occupants. He was making his way with quick strides to the street door when Mr. Baker caught up with him.

“Wait a minute,” he said. “What’s the matter?”

“I’m going to my rooms,” said Ralph, flushing. “I don’t care to stay any longer.”

“You’re mad because I introduced you to Hazel, eh? I don’t see how I could help it. You didn’t have a seat and I thought it a kindness to give you one. Come back and see the play out.”

“No, thank you!”

“I’d like to know what you’re mad at,” persisted Baker, uneasily. “If it’s on account of that girl, there’s nothing wrong. She’s learned typewriting and helps me in my city office. I took her to see the play just out of kindness. She’s poor and can’t afford such luxuries.”

Ralph looked at him so contemptuously that Baker added, “I know—I know they used to talk about her—but it wasn’t true. Anyway, she’s reformed. It’s our duty to help the fallen.”

He had gone so far out of the truth that he couldn't help smiling. Indeed, he thought it such a good joke that he wanted Ralph to join in the merriment.

"You're something of a sly dog yourself," he proceeded, essaying to poke his companion in the ribs. "Maybe I don't know of the little French girl you've got in Riverfall. You young scamp!"

It was a question for half a second whether or not Ralph would slap the man's face, but he controlled himself. In another instant he was on the street, where the cool air blew gratefully upon his hot cheeks. He understood now why a verdict of uncontrollable homicide is sometimes a righteous one.

"To allude to my Nathalie like that!" he repeated, under his breath. "My Nathalie!"

But was she "his" Nathalie? He had never had speech with her since the unhappy parting of which treasurer Baker had been the spying witness. Not a letter had passed between them and he had seen her only once, at a distance. When she knew that he had come out fully on the side of her new friends, however—when he appeared as the dispenser of his newly-purchased bounties—she would forgive and restore him to his old place; he felt sure of it. Love for Nathalie had been a much stronger factor in his change of base than even the sense of outrage at Philip's conduct. He could hardly wait until the morrow to present himself to her in his new light.

As soon as he reached Riverfall the next day Ralph dispatched a note to Edna, asking her to meet him, with Mollie for her companion, at a place he designated, as

soon as it was dusk. His purchases did not arrive, owing to delays in transit, but he took pains to show Ellen the bills from the dealers, that she might know he was telling the truth. To his joy Nathalie came into her tent just as she was hearing his story and Ellen repeated the tidings.

“Here is a good friend, dear, who has come to our aid—a friend whom we had no reason to expect would help us, as he is a relation of the family that owns the largest share in the mills. You must talk with him about what he has purchased and make arrangements for distributing it when it arrives. Excuse me now, sir, I have so much to do.”

Ralph was very glad to excuse her, since it left him quite alone with the idol of his heart.

“Nathalie!” he murmured, ecstatically.

She stole a sidelong glance at him, and then, as he showed signs of intending to embrace her, made a quick sign of warning.

“Ellen may return at any moment!”

“And you have nothing to say to me?”

“Yes. If you’ve bought goods we need I say ‘Thank you!’ with all my soul. Things are getting pretty bad. I don’t see how Ellen expects to feed her people three days longer. I asked her and she only said something about ‘young ravens,’ whatever that means. But I’ve no right to talk so. We’ve promised to leave it to her and she’s so much wiser than we!”

His disappointment showed in every lineament of his drawn face.

“Nathalie!” he whispered, holding open his arms.

She yielded to the sudden temptation and allowed him to clasp her closely. It was a delicious moment, much too soon over. She sprang lightly away again.

“Ellen might come,” she explained in a low tone.

“What if she did? I would tell her we’re engaged to be married.”

“Oh, would you?”

“Why, aren’t we? You said, after the troubles here were settled——”

“In favor of the working people——”

He looked still more distressed.

“I can’t do everything,” he protested. “I’ve left Phil for good—and given nearly my last cent to help Ellen. And now, after that, you talk as if——”

He could not continue and she made it unnecessary by coming to him again and giving him a hug.

“What a goose!” she exclaimed.

“But you don’t know how I love you, Nathalie!”

“Don’t I? You’ll have to show me, then. Not by kisses,” she added, to forestall his evident purpose; “but by helping on the lot of work I’ve got laid out. Maggie Flaherty’s brother Mike promised to come, but I can’t wait for him. Are you willing to work hard, all day long?”

“With *you*? All my *life*!” But, you’re not going to wait for our marriage till the Corporation gets a new soul in its body, I hope! I can’t do impossibilities. If I’m true to these people, and to you, what more can you ask?”

She had not the least intention of refusing him, but the feminine instinct of flirtation was strong in her pretty head.

“What shall I say to Mike?” she asked, pouting.
“He wants his answer.”

“I’ll give it to him if he comes around here!” he retorted, savagely. “Leave him out of the discussion, please. You don’t want two husbands, do you?”

“I don’t know as I want even one.”

“You’ve got to have one, just the same,” he said. “By the way, my cousin Edna made me promise to bring you to see her. She has given a lot of money to help Ellen—though she wouldn’t let Phil know it for the world—and her feelings are all on our side now.”

“If that is true she can do a great deal,” said Nathalie, her eyes flashing. “She can have some one write and tell her father what she thinks. It might move his hard heart.”

“Poor Uncle John! I fear his death is too near to expect him to attend to business,” was the sad response.

XVII

“How is your patient this morning?”

It was Philip Westland's question to Ellen, as he met her at Dr. McNally's gate. Even in the multiplicity of her cares she found time to ascertain the condition of the sick child.

“Patsy is alive, and we hope for the best,” she answered, “though his recovery is still a matter of uncertainty. His exposure was a little too much for his delicate constitution, I fear. Last night more than a thousand people in this village were exposed to the same danger; but that you know already,” she added in a lower tone.

Mr. Westland, tired, worn, mentally distressed, looked as squarely at the woman as she looked at him. There was as yet no giving way on either side.

“Remember one thing; not a soul has slept out of doors except by deliberate choice,” he said, pointedly. “Is it reasonable that a corporation should furnish houses for those who would destroy it? Ellen, we should be too honest to evade that issue.”

They had begun to walk away from the doctor's, toward the town.

“Isn't turning them into the street in this kind of weather rough usage, though?” she asked. “Even in war there are certain cruelties that the customs of nations prevent. Old men who have labored for your

company more than half their lives had last night only the sky for covering. A kind friend—your cousin Ralph—brought us a few tents which will keep some of them from freezing. It was most kind of him, but, I believe, no more than you would do, were you not a director in the Corporation.”

He would not allow her to suppose for an instant that he endorsed this statement.

“I would not!” he replied, quickly. “I should consider it mistaken charity. The sooner the people are reduced to extremity the sooner they will betake themselves to some place where they can earn a living. If Ralph’s object was to benefit them he has taken a wrong method.”

At a turn in the road they met Hugh Mayfield, walking rapidly. He paused, bowed in his usual manner to Westland and lifted his hat to Ellen. She saw that he brought tidings and judged from his face that they were not pleasant ones.

“What is it, Hugh?” she inquired, imperturbably. “We need have no secrets from our friend.”

“Merely this,” said Hugh. “We have been refused leave by the town officials to erect our tents on the common. They say it is an unwarranted use of the public domain.”

Ellen hesitated for a moment before speaking. She wanted to keep as calm as she could before Mr. Westland.

“They allowed cows to be pastured on it last summer,” she said at last. “Of course we cannot claim equal importance. You must try to find some other place. We can have no conflict with the law.”

Westland tried once more to reason with them.

“I earnestly wish the people would go to work again,” said he, earnestly. “I will do anything in reason except alter the schedule, to bring that about, though my directors have declared for a fight to the finish. I say this, Ellen, from the sincere regard which I have for you and Hugh. Your courage is admirable, but your case is hopeless. You ought to see that it is only a question of days before cold and hunger will overcome your resistance. Do not let obstinacy carry you too far. How can we do anything when your attitude is one of open defiance?”

Before she could answer, the constable who had charge of the evictions came along the street, evidently in search of Mr. Westland.

“May I have a private word?” he asked.

But following Ellen’s example, Philip responded, “That is not necessary, Mr. Carlson. If you come on business, speak where you are.”

“In the list of those ordered out to-day,” explained the constable, “is a man named Converse, who refuses to move. He has fortified himself and dares us to cross his threshold.”

Mr. Westland’s voice was hard and cold.

“Did you come to make any inquiry?”

“Why, yes, sir. I want to know what to do?”

Mr. Westland drew himself up and folded his arms.

“I am surprised,” he answered, “that a man who can call all the power of the Commonwealth to aid him if he needs it should ask such a thing.”

The constable looked nonplussed.

“Do I understand that he is to be moved at any cost?” he inquired.

“I positively decline to instruct you.”

After reflecting a moment Mr. Carlson walked away in a brown study. When he was out of hearing Westland turned to his companions.

“The statute is as plain as the nose on that man’s face,” he said. “In a government of laws we must take things as they are.”

“Converse is a man who means well,” said Ellen, “but he became too uncontrollable and was expelled from my ranks. I hope no one will get injured through his mistaken stand. You are witness that none of *my* people (she laid great stress on the word “my”) have offered the least resistance.”

As they parted at the corner of the road that led toward the Agency, Westland felt more than ever the hopelessness of debating with either of these determined people. They would not retreat an inch, and he could not. His uncle and all the directors were of one mind. So far as he could see, he was the only individual connected with the management of the Corporation who considered in the least the humanitarian side of the matter. The suffering caused was, all felt, the fault of those who endured it. When they came to their senses things would go on as before; unless, indeed, they waited so long that the offer which had been received to purchase the plant and devote it to other uses was accepted.

Arriving at his office he found Colonel Caswell there, merely to make a friendly call. Neither re-

ferred during the half hour he remained to the local disturbances. Talk in relation to affairs of the outside world and general politics filled up the time. Each understood the reasons why the conversation had best be kept within these limits.

Meanwhile Treasurer Baker had come to town on the morning train, and sent word that he would lunch with Mr. Westland. It had been a frequent habit of his when John Westland was there, and he considered it one of the prerogatives of his office. Philip went to tell Edna of the expected visit, and to suggest that she had best not be one of the party at table, as the talk would necessarily be confined to business matters. She agreed, and then showed a letter she had just received from her father's nurse.

"I trust it wasn't wrong," she said, "but I got Mollie to write to papa that I sympathized strongly with the poor people of Riverfall in their distresses, and hoped he could think of some way to end the present conditions. It was just a woman's plea for the suffering, Philip, and not an attempt to argue the questions at issue. But Nathan writes that papa is unable to bear excitement, and that by his doctor's orders he has refrained from giving him my note. Are you angry with me, dear?"

He put his arm around the trembling figure and pressed a kiss on the white forehead.

"Angry! Certainly not," he said.

Angry at this poor child, so nearly an orphan! Angry because she had permitted the best impulses of her pure heart to control her conduct! How sincerely

he wished he could find some way to achieve the result she sought!

Westland had never liked Mr. Baker, but their relations had been affable enough till now. At table, however, the treasurer used expressions that grated beyond endurance on the overwrought nerves of his host, who replied in monosyllables to his remarks. One of the first things Baker did was to relate meeting Ralph at the theater, telling the story in his own way, and evidently supposing that the young man had already given his version of it. Baker talked of "things that men understood were not to be spread abroad," and asked Mr. Westland to "put a flea in the ear" of his cousin to that effect. Next he alluded to the ex-employés of the Corporation as if they were the off-scouring of the earth, for whom the roughest treatment was the only proper one. But the culminating point came when he turned his attention to Ellen, declaring that a thousand dollars put into her hands would end the difficulty in fifteen minutes.

"I wouldn't suggest it except as a last resort," he explained. "We can't afford to lose too much just for the name of the thing. They tell me you have met this woman and talked with her. It would be easy to fix the thing up, if she hangs out too long."

"You do not know her," responded Westland icily. "A thousand dollars, or a million, would have no effect except to make her despise the person who offered it."

"Bah! Who is she, anyway?" replied Baker. "Her mother was only a——"

“Stop!” cried Westland, rising to his feet. “I have listened to you, sir, as long as I possibly can. Will you do me the kindness to leave the house?”

His excessive paleness formed a sharp contrast with the very red visage of the treasurer as the two men confronted each other.

“Leave the house?” repeated Baker. “I will do that at my own convenience. I believe it is owned by the Corporation, of which I am a director, and that the table is supplied by the company. If it comes to that, the books will show more shares in my name than in yours.”

Westland walked to the door of the dining-room and through the hall to the street entrance. Leaving each of the portals wide open, he returned.

“This house is at present under my control,” he said to Baker, between his teeth. “You can either go out or be kicked out!”

The treasurer chose the former alternative, but as he descended the steps of the mansion his threats of vengeance could be heard for some distance.

When Westland had time to reflect, he was disgusted with himself. He could not recall another time in his entire life when he had lost his head so completely. He trembled to think what he might have done had the man resisted.

Edna could not help overhearing the loud voices, and realized that something unpleasant had occurred. When Baker was gone she sought Philip, and asked him what it was.

“A dog,” he said, sharply, “tried to bite one of

my acquaintances, and I turned him out. Don't question me further. It nauseates me to talk of it."

"I'm glad I did not lunch with you," she said, after a moment's pause. "What do you hear of Ralph?"

"That he has joined our opponents, and is spending what little money he has in helping them fight the company."

"Ralph is a boy of the best intentions," she said.

"Yes," he responded grimly; "but do not forget that a very warm place is paved with that material."

That night nearly five thousand persons were roofless in Riverfall. The militia officers still loaned Ellen what tents they could spare, though "prominent citizens," all over the State, wrote to Colonel Caswell remonstrating against his action. (These eminent gentlemen, it happened curiously enough, were all owners in stocks of cotton corporations.) In acknowledging the receipt of their communications, the colonel mentioned that he did not admit the right of any person to dictate his course, except his legal superiors, who had sent him no directions in regard to the matter.

The tents that Ralph purchased were finally erected in a private lot in a low district, a very unhealthy place by all accounts, but better than none. Still, when the darkness fell a vast number of persons were out of doors, including many women and children. And, to add to the discomfort, the rain which had been threatening for several days at last set in, beginning with a slow drizzle.

Ellen made one more attempt to soften the hearts of the town officials and secure permission for at least the weakest and most helpless to use the public buildings. Her answer was a reiteration of the old reasons for refusing. She also tried some of the churches again, but without success. The rain began to increase in volume and she was seriously alarmed at the prospect that ice would form before morning. As she reached headquarters she found Nathalie awaiting her, with eager face.

“I’ve had a long talk with the French priest, Père Laroche,” she said. “His heart has always been with us, but he feared the bishop. The tendency of the Church, he told me, is to discourage contests between employers and employed. ‘I wish I could do something, my child; this rain is very distressing,’ said he. ‘There is one thing you can do, Father,’ I suggested. ‘You can announce an extra vesper service and we can attend. Then if the rain continues, surely you need not force the people out of doors.’ The good Father was delighted at the idea. ‘I’ll do that!’ he cried. ‘Tell all to come that can get inside.’ ‘They’ll have to bring their bedding,’ I said, ‘to keep it from being ruined.’ He hesitated, but finally consented that they might put it in the vestry. So all we need now is to bid every one to prayers!”

Ellen kissed the girl on the forehead, which amply repaid her for her shrewd and successful move; and after a brief consultation with Hugh, the necessary proclamation was issued.

Then followed a scene probably unprecedented in

American history. The people, by hundreds, laden with their goods, betook themselves to the sacred edifice, so unexpectedly opened to receive them. When every seat in the grand auditorium was occupied many crowded the aisles, and not a few threw themselves on the mattresses below stairs and remained there.

When Père Laroche ascended the altar he saw a spectacle that gratified his pious soul, while at the same time it filled him with profound pity. The service was given with all possible impressiveness. At the close the priest went into the pulpit and alluded to the peculiarities of the occasion in remarks which, if circumspect and guarded, left no doubt of the depth of his feelings. A large part of the audience were unable to understand the language in which he spoke, and some were Protestants who inwardly questioned whether they ought to enter a "Popish" church, even to secure shelter from a storm. But the comfortable atmosphere of the edifice soon eased their fears, and the benignant countenance of the good père quieted their suspicions.

Most uneasy in his mind, Philip Westland watched the rainfall from his windows until he could bear it no longer. Then he donned a rain-coat and glazed hat and walked toward the village. He carried a pass which Colonel Caswell had thoughtfully given him, containing permission to penetrate the lines at his pleasure. His walk was aimless and taken merely to ward off nervousness. The deserted appearance of the streets where the people had camped soon attracted his notice, and he suspected that the town buildings had at last

been opened for their use. A stroll in that direction, however, showed no lights in the windows, and the sentries still paced monotonously to and fro. He was too proud to ask what had become of the people, but a soldier who recognized him volunteered the information.

Mr. Westland was not a communicant of the French church—nor of any other—but ten minutes later he softly ascended the granite steps of l’Eglise de Sainte Marie. With noiseless tread, and with face muffled in the collar of his coat, he made his way to the interior and gazed upon the remarkable scene. The priest was speaking, and the listener understood French perfectly. As he regarded the throng his sentiments of pity almost overcame him. Could those people have read what was passing in his brain they might have felt pity for him also. He was becoming sore distressed, and was as nearly ill as it was possible for a man to be and keep his feet.

In a few minutes he left the church, and, for want of something else to do, went home. Sitting there he resolved to send an urgent telegram to his uncle at Tampa, begging John Westland to say that the lock-out might be declared off and the old wages restored.

When the despatch was written and sent Philip felt easier. If Ellen could be told! But he must await the answer. How happy she would be if he could go to her and bring the great news!

He did not expect the reply before the following day, and he went to bed. Completely exhausted he slept for nearly nine hours. Awakened then by a messenger

boy, he tore open the envelope feverishly and stared at these brief words :

I have sent my reply to Mr. Baker. John Westland.

To Mr. Baker! His uncle, almost a father to him, had sent an answer to a subordinate official of the company, and dismissed *him* with these curt words! It was truly a crushing blow. While he was trying to decide what next to do a long envelope was brought, which contained these lines:

To Philip Westland, Acting President of the Great Central Corporation of Riverfall:

The undersigned hereby gives notice of his intention to make, at a meeting of the directors to-morrow afternoon, the following charges against you:

1. That you have wantonly insulted at the Agency a director of this company.

2. That you have acted contrary to the interests of the Corporation in these respects, namely: By being unduly intimate with several of the leading instigators of the present difficulties; assisting ex-employés by sending them a physician and supplying medicines; refusing aid to a constable when one of the tenants resisted possession of his room; telling the commander of the militia that you knew no need for his services here, thus encouraging the lawbreakers.

3. That at least one person, if not more, whose funds are under your control, has been contributing in cash to the aid of your ex-employés.

4. That you have in general shown an entire inability to cope with the situation and ought to be removed forthwith.

EZRA BAKER.

Mr. Westland read the document through twice, thinking Mr. Baker had been very busy to collect so

much information in the short time since he returned. He declined the breakfast served for him, donned his outer garments and wandered forth.

Why had he ever undertaken the thankless task of managing the mills in this emergency? He possessed enough to live in comfort among pleasanter scenes far away. He had, to be sure, clients and wards who were interested, but others had them as well as he. Why had he assumed this terrible burden?

He strolled toward Dr. McNally's, thinking he would inquire about the baby, but before he reached there he met Ellen. As she paused the eyes she raised to his were so blinded she could hardly see.

A chill passed over his frame; a chill like that which comes from a newly-opened tomb!

"Do not speak!" he cried hoarsely. "I know! The child is dead!"

She put a hand upon his shoulder, bearing a little of her weight upon him.

"Don't—grieve—too much," she responded, speaking with difficulty. "Perhaps—we cannot tell—I am not sure—he might have died—anyway. He has never been well."

"No," he responded, like one who talks in his sleep, "you cannot lessen my guilt, Ellen. *I am a murderer!*"

She cried out at that and tried to detain him, but he staggered home in a daze. In his bedroom he gazed long at the face that confronted him in his mirror, thin, haggard, wrinkled, unshorn, weary-eyed; not the face

he used to know, the face of the healthy, prosperous, satisfied man of affairs.

They came to him many times that day and begged him to take nourishment, but he refused. He had a battle to fight out with himself, and material food was not the sort he needed in that emergency.

XVIII

No resident of Riverfall will be likely to forget the day which followed the events narrated in the preceding chapter. To Philip Westland especially it will always stand alone among the days of that remarkable week.

It was cloudy and the rain had not entirely ceased. The people in the French church were rather sorry that the weather was clearing. There would soon be less excuse for good Father Laroche to turn the sacred edifice into an inn.

Colonel Caswell and his commissioned officers had slept well at the Riverfall House. Their men, whether in the tents or on picket duty were, naturally, not as comfortable. They were getting tired of playing soldier in a town where nothing at all had occurred in the way of disturbance. Still no orders to evacuate were given, and the apparently useless garrison was kept up.

One of the sergeants, a man named Michael O'Toole, had formerly worked in the mills and was now, in his civil capacity, a porter at the Parker House in Boston. He was very much in love with a pretty girl named Flynn, who with her family was among the locked-out people, and had taken pains to see that "Mamie" was provided with shelter in the military tents among the earliest ones. The number that could be accommodated, however, was filled before Mrs. Flynn's name

was reached, and that excellent lady, enraged when she discovered this fact, immediately presented herself at the picket line and demanded entrance. As luck would have it, Sergeant O'Toole himself was called to settle the controversy which took place, and on his unhappy head the torrent of Mrs. Flynn's anger was let loose.

"Good-mornin' to ye, Mrs. Flynn," he began. "Is it Mamie ye do be wantin'?"

"Arrah, go on!" she retorted, her arms akimbo. "Is it the likes o' ye I'd be spindin' me time talkin' wid? Foine doin's whin they sind a trunk-walloper down from Boston, wid brass buttons on, to tell dacint people where they can go in their own village!"

The sentry had lowered his rifle and barred the woman's progress. O'Toole tried to explain that the colonel's orders were strict, and that all the women and children who could crowd into the tents were already provided for, but Mrs. Flynn would not listen. Every word he spoke was met with invective and insult.

"Ye murdherin' vill'in," she shouted, "why don't ye tell this spalpeen to shoot me, an' be done wid it? Shure, it wud be an asier death than freezin' on the curb. An' it's ye that was aroun' makin' love to me Mamie, was it? Faith, I'll chop yer nose aff if iver ye put it inside me dure ag'in!"

At this juncture the daughter in question, attracted, as were many others, by the noise, came to see what caused the commotion, and the mother's attention was turned to her.

"Come out o' there!" she shouted. "Will ye let your ould mother slape on the bricks an' ye under kiver?"

I won't have ye here wid this blaggard O'Toole. Ain't ye ashamed, consortin' wid thaves an' cut-throats!"

Ellen came up at his juncture, and it was wonderful to see the sudden change in Mrs. Flynn's manner under the calm eyes of her leader.

"You must go away immediately," was the whispered direction. "I am astonished you should do a thing like this."

It was always Ellen's way—to make each one of her followers feel that she trusted him or her especially. With a last scowl at the sergeant, who reddened to the roots of his hair, the woman went from the place without another word. O'Toole was the subject of a little good-natured bantering from his messmates, but Mamie stood by him loyally, and all was soon tranquil. Cupid could not be suppressed even where powder and bayonet reigned supreme.

Where was Ralph all this time? He had slept with the others in the church, lying on the carpet within reach of Nathalie's fingers, which he clasped furtively under a coverlet. He did not mind the hardness of his couch, with that dear little hand in his. The gasjets were partially lowered, and a "dim, religious light" enveloped the auditorium. Ralph's eyes wandered over the altar, with its many candles, over the walls where pictures of saints were hung; and they rested long on a portrait of the Saviour, who seemed to look down on the concourse with divine compassion. When all about him were asleep he drew nearer to the girl he loved, and softly touched her forehead with his lips. No purer act was ever witnessed by the eyes of angels.

Then he fell into a quiet slumber, still clinging to that little hand, as if it were an anchor to keep his barque secure on the stormy sea of life.

Edna, at the Agency, was undergoing much mental distress. She realized that Philip was experiencing a strain so great that the consequences might prove serious. Though the blind girl's heart had gone over to the "opposition" as thoroughly as Ralph's, she felt that Philip needed her at present. She was astonished at the change that had taken place in her sentiments. Until within the past few days she had never dreamed that there were two sides to a labor agitation. She had been taught by her father to regard the working classes as restless, unreasonable people, stirred up periodically by rascally fellows with personal ends to serve. In place of sight, the girl had developed increased acuteness in her other senses. Honesty sounded in every note of the voices of Ellen and Hugh, whose words sunk deep into her plastic mind. She felt that a great mistake was being made somewhere. If Ellen and Hugh were right, then Philip, her father and the other mill owners were woefully wrong. So troubled was she that she slept badly and awoke with a feeling of apprehension.

Though Mr. Westland had not slept much better, he was out of doors very early. He had a half hope that the "other side" would come that morning with overtures of some kind, something to give an excuse, if ever so slight, to settle the unhappy controversy. He did not, however, meet any of the leaders. He met, instead, Mr. Ezra Baker, who said "Good-morning,"

with a complacent smile that was evidently ironical. It was not Westland's nature to be uncivil, except under extraordinary provocation, and he forced himself to reply and pretend not to notice that an affront was intended.

An inclination he could not resist led him to go among the tents occupied by civilians. Those Ralph had furnished looked more cheerless than the others, their location being on swampy ground, toward which the surface water naturally flowed, to stagnate. Women were astir, children were being washed and combed, and strange-looking edibles were simmering in kettles hung out of doors, over improvised fires. The stroller was met with astonished looks, but with no open insult. Somehow, notwithstanding all that had passed, the people, as a rule, had a kindly feeling for him.

Suddenly he overheard a remark, "*The funeral will be to-morrow,*" and, shaking with a chill quite out of proportion to the state of the atmosphere, which was, in fact, more moderate than on the day before, he turned his steps toward home.

"Perhaps he would have died anyway!"

He recalled those words of Ellen's, given hesitatingly, evidently with a struggle between her tendency toward absolute truth and disinclination to give him pain. He went in to breakfast and forced a few mouthfuls down his throat. Criminals who are doomed to die at ten o'clock are said sometimes by the enterprising newsgatherers to "eat heartily" at nine. Westland's strength had failed greatly, but he did his

best to keep it up, and when he left the table with Edna he did not forget his duty to the lonely girl. He took in his own hand she held out doubtfully, and let her lead him into the drawing-room. As he essayed to place her on the sofa at his side she held back.

“Not this morning, Philip. I want to sit at your feet. I feel very humble to-day.”

He found her a hassock, and she assumed the position indicated, laying her head on his knees. So long a time passed in which she did not speak that he grew anxious.

“What is it, dear?” he asked.

“Because I am so quiet, do you mean? I did not wish to talk, but only to have you near me again. I want to feel your sympathy, Philip, and to give you mine. We need it—both of us—as we have never needed it before!”

He stroked her hair gently, as he was wont to do.

“I have neglected you in the rush of my duties,” he admitted. “But why do you think *I* need sympathy?”

“Because you are in a most trying situation. You are anxious to do right and are not certain that, after all, you will succeed. And there is another reason, Philip—I may speak quite frankly, may I not?—you have found a woman you love, and see between you a great gulf fixed.”

Nothing could surprise him. At another time he might have marvelled how this child had fathomed the innermost depths of his heart, but he never thought of that. Everything had become a matter of course.

“Great gulfs have been bridged before now,” he replied musingly. “As to my business troubles, they are

liable to be lessened very soon. The directors are to hold a special meeting to-day."

She raised her head eagerly.

"To order the mills reopened?"

"No. Mr. Baker has summoned them to hear charges against me."

"Against you?"

Absolute incredulity was in the expression.

"Yes, dear. He brings formal accusations of mismanagement and of too great leniency to our old employés."

She paused to grasp the situation.

"What shall you do?" she asked.

"That will depend on circumstances. I am a little out of patience, but I shall try to meet with calmness whatever comes."

"And—could they—is it in the power of the directors, if they wish—to put some one else in your place? I know it would be a great relief, but no one could bring the trouble to an end as well as you."

He lifted her face with his hands and looked down into it longingly.

"Would to Heaven I could!" he exclaimed. "Can you tell me how?"

"My advice would be of little value. Let your heart lead you; that will be your best guide," she whispered.

The directors met at the time appointed, and so great was the interest that, though they came from several towns and cities, every member of the board was present. When the routine business had been transacted, and Mr. Westland, by request, had made a verbal re-

port of what he had done, he felt that his fellow-directors were in a discontented frame of mind. They had vindicated their power, but their principal thought was the pecuniary loss which was to result from the present and prospective conditions. The pleasure of owning or managing a mill depends, in some degree, on the profits obtained. It was natural, therefore, that when Mr. Baker's "charges" were read they fell on attentive ears.

"Does Mr. Westland desire to reply to these charges at the present time?" inquired Director Erastus Stebbins, one of the largest holders of stock outside the Westland family; "or shall they be referred? If the latter course is adopted I shall move that the committee be nominated from the floor."

Westland rose ~~from~~ with the utmost coolness, and glanced over the paper which he held in his hand.

"I have never," he began, "wantonly insulted any human being. I did order from my house the individual who makes these charges, because, while sitting as a guest at my table, he used expressions unfit for any decent presence. I have frequently met two of the leading members of the employés' union, and have used my best endeavors to convince them that their fight is hopeless. I sent, it is true, a physician to attend an infant, which—(he hesitated, choking a little)—has since—died. I said to a constable who inquired if he should use force to eject a tenant who had received notice that he ought to understand his duty. I told the commander of the militia quartered here that I knew no reason for their presence, which statement the quietness and order prevailing fully bears out. It is a fact

that a young man whose property I hold in trust, but over whose actions I have no control, has, contrary to my wish, assisted the idle workmen.

“So much for these allegations. As to the other, which says I ought to be removed, it is enough for me to know that a single one of my associates holds that opinion. I could not consent longer to serve with the author of this document in any event. I shall resign a position I never sought and which I have reluctantly retained.”

A dead silence fell on the party. Then Mr. Stebbins asked, “Do I understand that your resignation is before the meeting?”

“No. I shall offer it, however, within a very few days.”

Ezra Baker rose.

“I trust that the clerk will make a minute of the fact that Mr. Westland withdraws under charges,” he said.

“That will be as you please,” said Westland, in response to an interrogative look from the clerk; “it is a matter of entire indifference to me.”

Then he left the room.

Mr. Baker swelled with pride at the completeness of his victory, and rising, stated that he had a telegram which he thought the directors ought to hear, although the necessity for it had perhaps passed. He read the following:

TAMPA, October 28th.

Ezra Baker, Esq., Treasurer Great Central Corporation, Riverfall:

No compromise must be thought of. Any person who falters on that question should be removed from his office.

JOHN WESTLAND.

“This is in response to a despatch which I sent our friend yesterday,” explained Baker. “It emphasizes the views we all know him to hold. It will now be my duty—or at least as soon as the acting president has resigned, to serve in his place, as provided in our by-laws. It will be a hard matter to bring order out of the chaos into which our affairs have been thrown, but if you stand by me it can be accomplished. I shall show no mercy to the people who have tried to wreck this magnificent property, and their hopes of winning a whole or partial victory will, I imagine, receive a death-blow when they find that their thinly disguised partisan is no longer in power.”

Several votes which were considered necessary were then passed, and the directors adjourned, satisfied that they were at last on the right track. The telegram from Florida set at rest one or two who had a lingering fear that they had gone too far in forcing out the nephew of the founder of Riverfall.

Edna was surprised as she noted the change in Philip, when they met that night at dinner. He told her of the action of the directors, remarking that it would be a few days now before she would have to change her quarters. He suggested that in the present state of Riverfall she might like to remove to New York, but she would not entertain the proposal. She said she wanted to “see it out,” and as he expressed a similar desire, it was agreed that apartments for both should be sought at the Riverfall House.

“But I don’t understand why you are so light-hearted,” she said, with a puzzled expression. “I

know you're glad to be relieved of responsibility, but the terrible situation still exists and must be met. It was a trifle milder last night, but still hardly comfortable out of doors, I imagine. I don't think any of us ought to be quite happy while the work of ejection is going on."

He leaned over and whispered something in her ear which caused her to take a long breath.

Within an hour after dinner he had sent for and received a visit from Mr. Carlson, the constable charged with serving the writs of ejection. It was something of a surprise to that functionary to be summoned to the Agency, as Mr. Westland had not spoken to him since the day when he declined to construe his duty. Not a word of what had happened at the directors' meeting had yet reached the village.

"How many writs of ejection have you remaining?" was the first question.

"About seven hundred."

"Where are they?"

"Here, in this package."

"I will take them."

The constable, in much surprise, handed them over, inquiring when he should have them back again.

"Never," was the quiet answer.

"N-never!"

"They are not to be served."

"Not—to—be—served!" echoed the astounded official.

"Precisely. You can go now. If I want you again I will send word."

As soon as the man had left the house, Westland sent for Edna. He placed the writs in an open grate, and when she arrived lit a match and guided her hand to the combustible mass. Her pleasure at being the instrument to destroy that heap of distress was great. She was happy as a child. When the papers were consumed Mr. Westland donned his street attire and went in search of Hugh Mayfield. He found him, and was beginning his communication when Ellen joined the group. This was not what Philip wanted. He had hoped to accomplish his intention without meeting her that night.

As he looked into her clear eyes he felt a choking in his throat. How strong his love had grown for this superb creature, who seemed so far above him! He felt a dizziness coming over his brain.

"I am not as well as I thought," he said, after a moment in which he tried vainly to throw off the vertigo. "Will you both come to the Agency, where I can be more at ease? I have something important to tell you."

Mayfield was a tactician. He had long realized that the greatest hope for his cause was the place in Mr. Westland's heart that Ellen had taken. He scented at this moment that the opposing ranks were wavering. Surely Ellen would manage better alone, when her influence would have full sway with their powerful opponent.

"I can hardly spare the time," he said. "Will not Ellen do?"

Westland bowed, speechless at the prospect thus

unfolded. Ellen alone with him! He stammered that he would await her convenience, and she answered that she would attend him within an hour at the farthest.

Westland had never known the distance from the village seem so long. He staggered in his walk, and wondered if the people he met supposed he had been drinking. When he reached home he had a revulsion from extreme joy to awful fear. His entire future might depend on what was to occur within the next hour. Ellen's attitude at this meeting would decide whether his hopes were to be fulfilled or blasted.

Within the time she had specified Ellen came, and was brought at once into the parlor, where he awaited her. He motioned her to a chair, without attempting further civilities.

"Let us come to business," he said, nervously. "Would it be any object if I were to reopen the tenements the people have vacated and let them reoccupy them for the present? I cannot promise that they will be allowed to remain long—perhaps not more than a week or two. But—if it will be agreeable to you—I will admit them on those terms."

"Can you explain more fully?" she faltered.

"Not now, except this: I have taken the balance of the unserved writs from the constable. The ashes you see on the hearth is all that remains of them. If the evicted tenants would like to go back—if you would care to have them—I will give permission at once. It is an act of my own—nothing to do with the directors—I have the power and can exercise it. When the people are ordered out again—as they doubtless will

be—a week's notice will be necessary as before. The nights are growing colder and—I thought——”

His words came slower and slower, and at last his power of utterance ceased. It was not a swoon, but merely the effect of over-exertion upon the vocal organs. Ellen knew there was more cause for this emotion than appeared on the surface, but she thoughtfully refrained from doing anything that might add to his discomfort.

“I will tell my people of your generous offer and advise them to accept it,” she said, without hesitation. “As you truly say, it is very cold at night. Have you anything more to tell me?”

“Yes, Ellen, there is another thing. I shall within a few days resign my position as an officer of the Corporation. I want to join your ranks then, and put whatever aid I can give at your full disposal.”

Her dazed look showed that she did not exactly comprehend.

“As Ralph has done,” he explained, huskily. “You have accepted him; you can accept me. I have not a large fortune, but what there is I will devote to—the benefit of the people—whom I helped to—wrong.”

His voice had sunk very low again, but in the dead silence of the room she caught every syllable.

“I cannot affect blindness to the reason which actuates you, Mr. Westland,” she said, as soon as she could control her voice. “You make this offer from regard for me personally; and that being the case I cannot——”

“Understand me,” he interrupted. “I ask for nothing; I expect nothing. I know at this moment—better than any words of yours can tell me—how hopeless it

is to think of that great reward of which, in an insane hour, I found myself dreaming. I have determined to give up my position with the company, and I wish earnestly to take the side you have taken. The people are very poor; their chance to obtain work here is rapidly passing away. The aid I offer, while not large, will prevent some suffering. You should think well before you refuse it.”

Ellen listened. Used as she was to quick decisions, she found herself face to face with the greatest quandary in her career.

“As I have already said, I will advise my people to return to their homes. The other matter you must give me time to consider. Let me, however, thank you from my heart for what you are doing. I never doubted that Philip Westland, dissociated from the Great Central Corporation, would prove his noble nature. We have differed widely and remained friends through it all—never more, I am sure, than at this moment. God bless you!”

She withdrew, her face radiant with new hope for the cause in which her life was bound up, and Westland immediately wrote a notice which he sent to the constable, ordering all seals taken from the empty tenements as fast as possible, the work to go on through the entire night.

Early the next morning, as Treasurer Baker passed through the village, he was surprised to see goods being carried into a house. He demanded what right the occupant had to be there, and, on being informed, became greatly enraged. Learning that Westland had just

entered Ellen's rooms, he ascended the stairs at a bound and burst unceremoniously in upon them.

"It seems I was right," he said, with clenched teeth. "Your love affairs have made you false to your trusts and your honor."

Sleepless nights and exhausting days had weakened Westland, but he forgot everything in the presence of that man.

"Remember," he thundered, "that I am still clothed with full powers, as acting-president of the Corporation. You can neither insult me nor my friends!"

Baker backed out quickly, but his threatening voice could still be heard on the stairway.

"You have not long left to betray us," he snarled. "And as for that woman——"

Westland was starting to inflict summary vengeance upon the fellow, when he felt a touch of magic power on his arm and paused.

"Those who would be my followers must learn to bear and forbear," Ellen whispered. "It is beneath you to lay a finger on him."

He caught her hand, pressed it reverently to his lips, and, overcome by emotion, drew her to him till their lips almost met. Then, frightened at his own temerity, he suddenly released her and left the house without a word.

XIX

When Mr. Westland arrived at the Agency he found awaiting him a telegram that caused a diversion from the train of thought in which he had been indulging. It gave him something to do outside of Riverfall for the next twenty-four hours, and was in this respect a blessing, for the strain on his overtaxed brain was becoming unbearable. One of the largest holders of stock in the Great Central—a man whose interests he had managed to some extent since he took his present office—had met with a severe accident and urgently requested his immediate presence at the Fifth Avenue Hotel, where he was under the care of a physician.

Arriving at the hotel on the following morning, Westland was met by Dr. Odlin, one of the most famous surgeons of the metropolis, who spoke in that hushed voice which indicates more than it expresses.

“Senator Eastman is awaiting you, Mr. Westland, but before you enter his chamber let me explain the situation. Yesterday, while hunting on Long Island, he received an accidental gunshot wound from the weapon which he carried. Though part of his left arm was torn away, the injury might not have been fatal had medical assistance been near at hand; but, unfortunately, before skilled attendance could be obtained, complications set in. When I told him frankly that he had no chance to recover he inquired with the utmost

coolness how long I could keep consciousness in him. 'Possibly twenty-four hours; perhaps not over fifteen,' I replied. As he seemed anxious to see you I sent a messenger to your office, only to learn that you were in Riverfall. I tell you candidly that he cannot survive. His mind is perfectly clear, however, and he is competent to transact any business he desires."

In the room in which Westland was conducted a handsome man of about forty-five lay, propped up by pillows. The scent of carbolic acid permeated the chamber. Philip noticed that the extraordinary paleness caused by excessive loss of blood only made more striking a face that would have attracted attention anywhere. The eyes were dark and fiery and the hair and moustache were streaked with premature gray which carried with it, however, no impress of age.

The wounded man grasped the hand that was extended with a strength quite at variance with the physician's prediction. It seemed incredible that within a few hours this soul would be asleep.

"Senator Eastman, I am truly sorry for your misfortune."

The remark only brought a smile into the invalid's face.

"Let us attend to business matters," he said, "and then, if there is any time left—which I consider doubtful—you may fill it up with commiserations. Marden," (to his attendant), "I think I can spare you for a few moments."

As soon as the man had left the room the invalid began:

“I rely implicitly, my dear Westland, on the judgment of Dr. Odlin, who guarantees me time enough to tell my story, though he says, also, that I never shall see another sunrise. I have made a will this morning and only wait your consent to serve as my executor to have it completed and witnessed. I have always supposed I should see my threescore and ten years, as my father and grandfather did, but the little affair of yesterday upset my plans. I trust you have time enough to hear my tale, which I fear you will find prosy.”

The listener pressed the hand he held.

“Thanks. I imagine the value, as such things are reckoned, of my estate is something over half a million. I was married and there was a child—a boy—but he and his mother died some years ago. I have no near relations who need this money, but there is a chapter in my history that gives my conscience a twinge (you’ll understand such things better, if you ever find your time limited by a rascally surgeon), and I want to do what I can to set it right.

“Some twenty years ago or thereabouts (don’t interrupt me—you can talk, perhaps, for the next fifty years, and I must do mine now or never) I was a young, thoughtless scamp; no worse than plenty of others, perhaps, but bad enough. I had been elected to a seat in the Assembly, and my good father’s heart was set on seeing me make a figure in society and politics. In a luckless hour, however, he sent me down to Riverfall, to learn a little of the business of manufacturing, and for several months I lived there at the Agency, the guest of your Uncle John. One evening I encountered

in the street a young girl, with whose beauty I was at once enraptured. She was the most innocent child imaginable, and had been over but a few weeks from England. What the dickens is the matter with you?"

An exclamation had been drawn from the listener in spite of himself. His excitement was great; for he knew, as well as he could know anything, that the voice he heard was that of Ellen's father!

"Go on, sir," said Westland, huskily. "When you have finished I will explain."

"Perhaps you know the girl," suggested General Eastman. "Her name is Margaret Perry."

"No, I never saw her," replied the other, striving to regain composure. "Pray continue."

"It was the old story. The pretty English weaver soon had possession of what I then imagined was my heart. She loved me from the first and I found her simply enticing. One day a letter from my father urged me to come home at once, as an important division was to take place in the Assembly, and I tore myself from Margaret, fully expecting to return and take her with me after a few days. One thing and another prevented, and finally came a letter saying that the worst had occurred. She begged me to come to her, but I began to wake from my dream. That would not only have ruined my political career, but I believe my father would have cut me off without a shilling. If I went to Margaret, I feared her pleadings would shake my resolution. So I did what cowards always do—sent her some money and tried to forget her. Don't look at me like that, Mr. Westland! A little

clemency should be extended to a man who is dying.”

Thus reminded that his thoughts were too plainly revealed in his face, Westland tried to assume an air of greater calmness.

“It was a contemptible thing,” pursued the invalid; “I hope you don’t think we differ on that. The will I have made gives all my property to this Margaret Perry or her child, if either or both are living; if not, to certain specified charities. Of that will I wish you to act as sole executor and trustee. Please touch the bell and ask Dr. Odlin to come in for a moment.”

The button was touched mechanically, and the doctor made an examination of his patient.

“How long, Doctor?” asked Mr. Eastman, cheerfully.

“Not as long as I hoped. You are liable to a relapse at any time.”

“Thank you. Has Mr. Wetmore, the lawyer, returned?”

“Yes, he is waiting, with witnesses. Don’t delay too much. Your pulse is very high.”

As soon as he left the room the will was put into Mr. Westland’s hands. It was very brief, bequeathing all the earthly goods of Edwin Eastman to Philip Westland, Esq., as trustee, for the benefit of Margaret Perry, of Riverfall, if living, or to her child, if dead, the management of the property to be in all respects at the trustee’s discretion. Then followed a list of alternate legatees. The document needed only the signatures.

“You will accept this trust?” said Mr. Eastman, earnestly, and Mr. Westland bowed in silence. The

attorney and witnesses were asked to enter, and the legal formalities were soon over. When he was again alone with the injured man, Westland spoke feelingly:

“You have noticed my agitation and now that our business is finished I will tell you its cause. Your story has a greater significance to me than you could possibly imagine. Margaret Perry has long been dead. I have seen her grave—marked with only a piece of board, bearing her name and age. She left a daughter, whom rumor has always said was the offspring of a man of wealth, high in the political world. The child has been, like her mother, a weaver, and now that the relationship is brought to my knowledge I can easily trace her resemblance to you. My dear Senator, your greatest loss in leaving earth so suddenly is in being deprived of a daughter of whom a king might be proud. Ellen—that is her name—is a girl of the rarest natural endowments, with a pure and noble countenance and a beauty of spirit which fits her for any society. She is loved and respected by all her comrades. Ever since I have known your daughter I have longed to make her my wife. Yes, after nearly thirty years in which no woman had ever affected my heart, Ellen won it at the first glance.”

Mr. Eastman was lost in wonder for some moments at the strange revelation.

“Describe her to me,” he said at last.

Westland tried, but found the task difficult. Lovers are not impartial judges. He was obliged to admit, in answer to the next question, that he had slight hopes of winning this girl whom fate had placed in opposition to him at the most critical point of both their lives.

The Senator was sinking fast. Dr. Odlin examined him carefully again and intimated that the end was not far away. Philip left the room and, with a strength of mind that was astonishing, Mr. Eastman dictated several changes in the will and also the following letter:

FIFTH AVENUE HOTEL, NEW YORK.

November 12th, 18—.

My Beloved Child Ellen:

With only a few moments to live, the cause of which others will explain to you, I ask your forgiveness. As a late reparation for my long neglect—a neglect which gives me the only pang at leaving earth—I have tardily provided for your wants, leaving all I possess in trust with Philip Westland, whose father was my father's intimate friend. Philip tells me, as things are told to dying men, that he loves you. Dear Ellen, if the time ever comes when you can confide your life to him, I feel sure he will not abuse the great blessing. My strength is failing. I can say no more.

Your Father,

EDWIN EASTMAN.

The weak fingers could only scrawl the signature. The change was indeed coming fast, but though the strength had departed from the maimed frame, intelligence lingered for some moments longer. After speech had failed, the Senator held Westland's hand in his and pressed it faintly. Then the eyes closed, and all thought consciousness had fled, but they were mistaken. A minute later he roused himself, looked about the group, as if to call all present to witness, and said, in a clear voice:

“I have asked my daughter Ellen to marry Mr. Westland.”

It was the last flicker of a strong light. Senator Eastman was dead.

Aside from the fault—the crime—to which he confessed on this occasion, the life of Senator Eastman had been honorable. His success in the political field was fairly won. The fortune he inherited made him neither a spendthrift nor a miser. Let us not minimize his cruelty toward the friendless girl in Riverfall, nor his heartless lack of interest in her offspring, of whose existence he had not even made sure. He did send Margaret Perry money, which was returned to him, but he tried after that to blot her from his mind, and succeeded only too well.

According to a wish expressed by the dying man the arrangements for the funeral were of the most quiet character. Overtures of public officials, members of societies to which he had belonged and of other friends were all rejected; the simple services were to be held in the hotel where he breathed his last. An undertaker was put in charge of the remains, and Philip hastened to Riverfall, which he reached the following afternoon. It is almost as easy to bury a millionaire as a pauper, if one sets about it right.

Going at once to the Agency, Philip found Edna in a somewhat nervous condition. Director Erastus Stebbins had called several times, and from what she overheard, and what the servants told her, his conduct showed considerable excitement. As they were talking the bell rang, and word was brought that Mr. Stebbins

wished to see Mr. Westland as soon as possible in the office.

Erastus Stebbins was a man of pompous mien and heavy voice. He had come to town in response to a note from Mr. Baker, and intended to say a number of very cutting and disagreeable things; but when Philip walked in and extended his hand it was taken in the usual way, while its owner tried to assume his ordinary expression.

“Is it true,” asked Mr. Stebbins, “that you have permitted the families evicted from our houses to re-enter them? I cannot believe it till I have heard the fact from your own lips.”

“It is true. I could no longer endure the sight of those people—most of them ignorant and all of them poor—exposed to the rigors of our New England climate. I had tested their determination to hold out against our reduced scale pretty severely. To go further, now that the frosty nights are upon us, would be indefensible. If such measures are to be continued it will be by some one besides me. My resignation is at your disposal to-day, if you wish it.”

Mr. Stebbins said the situation was becoming grave for the owners of the property. He (Mr. Stebbins) believed himself an honest man and (he hoped) a Christian, but he had no intention of sacrificing millions of property on sentimental grounds. This and much more said Mr. Erastus Stebbins. And when he left the house he was promised that the resignation he desired should be ready as soon as the directors could be got together.

He had hardly left the Agency when Colonel Caswell

called, in company with the Adjutant-General of the State, to learn if the Corporation believed the removal of the militia from Riverfall would endanger its interests in any way.

“I cannot in fairness speak for the Corporation,” replied Westland, “as I have practically resigned my position. You remember, Colonel, I told you the day you arrived that I saw no reason why your men were needed. That statement—as a private individual, and not as a mill president—I now cheerfully repeat. I think you have had no severe outbreak to overcome,” he added.

“None. The conduct of the people has been admirable. I doubt if so many unemployed persons were ever, in such circumstances, more orderly. They were under a restraint far stronger than that of my bayonets,” he remarked to his companion—“that of a woman whom they adore.”

“A wonderful woman, if all I hear of her is true!” responded the Adjutant-General. “Well, Mr. Westland, if you see no need for our troops, I will order them removed. Chairman Hunt begs for a small detachment to continue the guard at his house, but I think he is unduly alarmed. Colonel, you may order your tents struck.”

Westland reminded him again that he had not pretended to speak for the directors, but the Adjutant-General said the directors had never asked for protection. It would be time to consider that matter when they did so.

“There is evidently no excuse for keeping our men here,” he added.

“I want to thank you, Colonel,” said Westland, “for your manly act in giving the use of those tents to the women and children. If I had any doubt about it at the moment it is over now. It was the conduct of a true gentleman, and I shall honor you as long as I live.”

It must have been a mistake, but Colonel Caswell thought he saw a glistening drop in the speaker's eye; and who ever heard such a thing of a mill president, even after his resignation had been determined upon?

Soon as possible Philip took his way to Ellen's rooms. He felt that all the ordeals he had gone through with were as nothing to the one before him—that he had now to face his hardest trial.

XX

Ralph Melbourg had fulfilled to the best of his ability the promise he made his little sweetheart, in relation to helping her at the duties assigned by Ellen. Never in his life had he put in so much steady work. The only thing that interfered with his labor was the frequent temptation to express the passion that fired his soul.

“Just one!” he would plead, when there came an instant that no person was in sight. And then she would run away and profess a comic fear that prying eyes might see.

“If you don’t stop I’ll have to tell Ellen!” she exclaimed a hundred times, “and she’ll give you something to do in another part of the town. Now, mind what you’re about unless you wish to be sent away altogether.”

“Ellen!” he would answer, with a snort. “I guess she knows how it feels to be in love herself. She’d have more mercy on a poor fellow than you have.”

Then Nathalie would look wise and say, “Of course Ellen thinks a good deal of Mr. Mayfield.”

“What a blind bat!” he would retort. “Can’t you see Phil and she are head over ears in love with each other? The moment this trouble is settled you’ll find their engagement announced. Edna knows. She can see ten times as well as a person with two good eyes;

and she told me long ago how she accused Phil of being in love, and he didn't deny it."

Nathalie tried to whistle a bar of music.

"It takes two to make a bargain in matrimony," she said, with a smile of incredulity. "No doubt he loves *her* fast enough; she may not care to marry *him*."

"Pooh! Do you think she'd refuse an offer from a man who can give her comfort and ease?"

Nathalie assumed a pretty air of anger and asked if Ralph thought that was all a woman needed to make her happy.

"You've got a little property, yourself, and you think, I suppose, that a poor girl ought to be obliged to you for making her your wife! If she were ever silly enough to accept your offer you'd throw it at her head twenty times a day that you took her in out of charity!"

She always disturbed Ralph when she got into this strain, for the matter was very serious to him.

"Say!" he cried. "If you're not going to be my wife you might as well tell me now as at any other time. I'll throw myself into the river and end my misery!"

"Go along, then!" she answered, with a toss of her blonde head.

"Good-by!" He started hastily for the door, but meeting Ellen at the entrance shrank back in dismay. Her quick eyes saw that something was the matter, and taking the young man by the arm she asked in a kind tone what had happened.

"She'll tell you!" he replied in a tearful voice. "Ask her."

"What is it, Nathalie?"

“ Oh, he’s such a silly goose ! ”

“ That’s the way she talks ! ” said Ralph. “ I can’t stand it any longer, and I’m going away for good. ”

Ellen looked from one of them to the other. She began to understand.

“ Tell her the whole of it, ” said Nathalie. “ You’re going to the river to throw yourself in. ”

To Ellen’s question whether this were true, Ralph hesitated and finally indicated by a nod that he had been correctly quoted. He held his head down, and the arm that Ellen touched trembled.

“ What does it all mean ? ” asked Ellen, soberly. “ Is it because you love this girl who gives you such pain ? And you ”—she spoke sternly to Nathalie—“ do you think the way to show affection is to pretend you have none ? I know the true state of both of your hearts. Make up this foolish quarrel and never let it break out again. ”

She put their hands together and clasped one over the other.

“ My dear children, ” she went on, though one of them at least was older than herself, “ the pure love of an honest heart is not a thing to trifle with. God has sent no greater blessing to his creatures than the affection which leads to marriage. When you laughed, Nathalie, at Ralph’s statement that he was going to drown himself, did you think how you would feel if his dead body were brought to your door ? Ah, little woman, if you ever know what it is to love another far beyond yourself—and to love him hopelessly—you will realize how great a prize you have trifled with ! ”

She knew the lesson had been learned, and that there was no need to prolong the instruction. As she vanished through the doorway Ralph and Nathalie stole shy glances at each other.

“You wouldn’t have done it,” she whispered. “I knew you were only fooling.”

“I think I would,” he answered. “But what did Ellen mean about loving hopelessly? It sounds as if she cared for some one whom we don’t know. As for Phil, he’s just crazy about her. What a blow it will be if it proves that she has another sweetheart in mind!”

Edna’s name was then brought into the discussion, and Ralph reminded Nathalie that she had promised to pay a visit to his cousin. Now that Phil had decided to leave the directorate of the Corporation there was no reason why she could not meet Edna openly. The result of the talk was that Nathalie promised to go that very evening, and she did so.

The reception which Edna gave the girl was all she could have desired. Saying that her fingers had to take the place of eyes, she asked permission to “read” Nathalie’s features by touch, and the request was at once granted. For some minutes the blind girl made her examination, and when it was finished she kissed her new acquaintance.

“I don’t blame Ralph for loving you,” she said. “You and I will always be friends, and I want you to come to me as freely as if you had known me all your life. I suppose to-morrow or the next day Philip and I will move to the Riverfall House. I consider you already my cousin, dear, for Ralph tells me you have

promised to marry him as soon as these troubles are ended."

"If they are ended by a victory for Ellen," explained Nathalie, with a spark of the old spirit.

"I shall help all I can to have them ended that way," said Edna, quickly. "I may as well tell you I have had my maid write again to papa, who is sick in Florida, pleading strongly to have the old rate of wages restored and the mills opened. If his reply is favorable even Mr. Baker will hardly dare oppose us. In the meantime you may count on me for any assistance in my power. I sent a little money to Ellen once by Mr. Mayfield and she returned it. Her motive was undoubtedly a good one, but times have changed and she ought to trust me now."

When Nathalie returned to her room she sought Ellen and pleaded Edna's cause. She told how earnestly the blind girl was now enlisted on the side of the suffering people—how she had written twice to her father in their interest—how she was only waiting for a word from the Leader to open her purse wide for the needy ones. Ellen promised to talk the matter over with her committee and decide the next day.

"I must tell you something now about myself," continued Nathalie, in a distressed tone. "I've wanted to say this to you for weeks, but the right moment never seemed to arrive. The fact is, I came down to Riverfall on purpose to injure you."

A look of calm inquiry rested on the immobile face.

"Yes, Ellen. Ralph knew me in New York; and he thought at that time the mill owners had the rights

of the matter; and he got me to come here and join you so as to find out your secrets—just like a detective, you know. I didn't think then it was wrong and I wanted to please him, of course."

"What changed your opinion?" The voice was steady.

"Contact with you—nothing else. Within an hour after we met I knew you were right and not he. The first time I saw him to speak to I told him so—and never, since that hour, have I wavered. You won't disown me, will you, for telling the truth? I would give my last breath to bring these poor people out of their terrible condition."

Ellen said only, "Come here, dear," and put her arms around Nathalie's waist. For some time they remained in this position without speaking, and then Ellen asked, "You consider yourself engaged to Ralph, do you not?"

The girl explained the terms of the agreement.

"It must not depend entirely on that, my child," said Ellen, soberly. "When he is ready to promise before Heaven to guard you while life lasts, you must put no obstacles in his way."

XXI

As Mr. Westland passed through the village, on his way to Ellen's rooms, each group of men he met set up a hearty cheer. It did not please him to be thus noticed, but he responded with a polite bow and hastened on. In crossing the common, from which the guard had now been removed, he saw Treasurer Baker in a warm dispute with one of the militia captains. The words of the officer came distinctly on the evening air:

"I have warned you twice, and this is positively the last time. If you interfere with me again you will be put under arrest."

In turning from the captain, Mr. Baker came face to face with Mr. Westland. At sight of him the treasurer lashed himself into a fury and clenched his hands.

"Two days more!" he hissed, "and I will have you turned out like a dog!"

If he had stopped to examine the face of the man he insulted he would have found it perfectly unmoved. There were deeper questions to be settled that day than resenting the spleen of a disgruntled stockholder.

Ellen opened the door to receive him, with the old smile of welcome. The experiences of the past week, the trials, the revelations of his love and her own, had left their traces on her face, but the smile was there still. She offered him a chair and for a minute he sat silent, regarding her with profound emotion.

“Ellen,” he began—it was so sacred to him, that name which everybody used so freely—“you are strong, but there are tidings which none of us can receive placidly. Is there not some friend you can summon whose presence will help you to bear a great sorrow?”

She shook her head, but did not take her eyes from him. She was evidently alarmed.

“There is one here already who loves you beyond his power to express—do not speak, it is needless. He cannot, however, shield you from the blow that is about to fall—that, in fact, has fallen. Are you well enough to listen?”

She tried to speak, but the words would not come. She felt a dread at the mystery about to be unfolded, and yet could not resist the desire to know all. Finally she bowed a sufficient affirmative.

“There was once a lovely English girl who came to America and found work in a factory town called Riverfall. Her name was Margaret Perry.”

He paused, for Ellen’s eyes had overflowed. From the fingers on which her face rested the drops fell fast.

“She was without friends or relations, in a strange land,” he continued, presently. “One day the handsome son of a rich family——”

She lifted a hand to stay him. The subject he had broached was sacred, and had never been alluded to, in her presence, by man or woman, save what her mother herself had revealed. Ellen knew the history of her birth, but she could not bear that another should repeat it.

Westland took the hand that she held up in protest,

and she did not withdraw it from his grasp. Then he spoke in a very low tone:

“This morning, Ellen, I closed the eyes of your father.”

He waited for the shock he expected, but it did not come. Instead the girl sat up and wiped the tears from her face.

“Is that the worst news you have brought?” she asked. “You mentioned a—a misfortune.”

“I do not understand.”

“Listen, then,” she said, coldly. “You tell me of the death of a man who perpetrated the greatest villainy on my darling mother; who, though possessed of ample means, left his daughter to bear alone the burdens of the life he had thrust upon her; who married one woman to keep his place in society, while another claimed him by all the holy vows that he could utter! You call that man my *father*, but you are wrong; *I had none!* I trust you did not think one of these tears was for him. They were for the mother whose young life he cut short, whose last years he rendered more bitter than tongue can express! Dead, is he? How much better had he died twenty-five years ago!”

For some moments Westland experienced a depth of feeling that nearly overpowered him. Lack of filial devotion seemed well nigh unpardonable. He sat straighter in his chair, and when he spoke again his voice had a tinge of sternness.

“The funeral of Senator Eastman will take place tomorrow afternoon, at his late rooms in the Fifth Avenue Hotel, New York. Only three or four of his business

associates have been invited, by his expressed wish. As it will be your sole opportunity to look upon the features of the man to whom you owe your being, may I hope to accompany you there?"

It gave her intense pain to note the change in his manner, but she held out still.

"Why should I wish to see the face of that man, whose name I have no right to bear? I never knew how he looked, and I have no wish to know."

The voice of Mr. Westland grew still harder.

"He has made a will, leaving all his property, valued at half a million dollars, to you."

Ellen looked surprised, but no more pleased than before.

"To me!" she repeated. "Nothing to the woman who took my mother's place! Did he desert her also?"

"She died years ago. Their only child died too, and he had no near relations. His last words, his last thoughts were of you; with his latest breath he dictated this letter, and his last intelligent act was to sign his name to it."

He laid the missive before her on the table, but she made no move to touch it.

"I am named as executor and trustee of his estate," he proceeded, as she did not speak. "As soon as the necessary formalities are gone through with I prefer, however, to turn the entire property over to you."

It was hard for her to ask the question that was in her mind.

"By what name did Senator Eastman designate his illegitimate child?"

“Let me read you the document,” he answered. When he reached the words, “Ellen, daughter of Edwin Eastman and Margaret Perry,” she clutched tightly both arms of the chair she occupied.

“Do you imagine,” she asked, with deep feeling, “that I will accept this money, coupled with an insult to my dead mother’s memory? Daughter of a woman who never was wedded by a wretch who deceived and abandoned her! I am proud to be the child of Margaret Perry, the poor mill-girl; but the fortune of Edwin Eastman will never make me own myself his daughter!”

With the same hard inflection Westland continued.

“At the proper time, then, I shall ask you to sign a release of your rights, that I may distribute this estate to the alternative legatees. I think we have no other business to transact.”

As he rose stiffly the awfulness of his attitude began to dawn upon Ellen. Till now they had seemed to grow more attached at each meeting. The very last time he called their lips had almost met, and she had offered no resistance in her blind happiness at his touch. As she saw him about to leave in this frigid manner a tide of love swept over her.

“Business being ended—and such unpleasant business—let us talk for a little while,” she said. He had never seen her quite so pale. “It is evident you are not pleased with me.”

“No,” he responded, laconically. “I cannot pretend to understand a child who intends letting the coffin-lid cover her father’s face without one look, no matter what he has been to her.”

“The face of a man who put my mother’s face under a coffin-lid,” she answered, quickly, “is not one her daughter needs to see.”

“I cannot comprehend a hate that follows an enemy to the grave! You have not even read his last words to you.”

She looked long at the letter on the table. Finally she took it up, and saying, “I will read it if you desire,” perused the contents slowly. He was surprised to see the whiteness of her cheek give way to a wave of color.

“Have you read this?” she said, turning her crimson face toward him. “It was unsealed.”

“I have not. I supposed it for your eye alone.”

“Read it.”

He did so, and a flush as vivid as hers followed.

“You will believe me, Miss—Miss Ellen—when I repeat that I had not the least idea of the contents of this note,” he stammered. “You cannot for a moment think——”

She interrupted him.

“But, did you tell him what he says, in relation to me?”

From another woman’s lips the question might have seemed immodest. From Ellen it was as natural as breathing.

“Let me set myself right,” he replied. “Senator Eastman, whom I have long known in a business way, sent for me in haste. Finding that his hours were numbered, his first thought was of your mother. Before my arrival he had made a will leaving all his property to her, or to her child, should it be living. In telling your

father that I knew you I—did—refer to you as he says—but when he dictated this letter I was absent from the room. Soon after he signed it he became unconscious and never rallied.”

Before she could speak again, Hugh Mayfield knocked at the door. It was a relief to the strain of a painful situation, and Ellen became herself again for the moment. She told Hugh, with the full confidence of long usage, what news Mr. Westland had brought, and how she had decided not to accept her legacy. To her surprise he answered without an instant's hesitation, “But you must, Ellen.”

“Must?” she echoed. “Why?”

“I am surprised that you can ask,” he answered. “You are offered the trusteeship of much wealth, which you can use for the benefit of the poor. With it you can relieve the wants of a thousand destitute families. You can build or buy a mill where they can obtain work. You can provide homes for them instead of hovels. You can furnish the sick with medicines, keep the children at school, become, in short, a Princess Bountiful. Would you decline an offer of bread when people are starving around you? If you stood by a stream filled with drowning men, would you refuse a boat by which to save them?”

He turned to Westland and said with a positive air, “She will accept the legacy.”

It was the first time the mind of the man had dominated that of the woman. Clearly it did so, for Ellen made no protest.

“She will also attend the funeral,” Hugh added,

after a brief pause. "She will go to New York with you and do whatever is proper. Believe me, sir, she will be ready."

The prediction was fulfilled. The morning train carried Philip and Ellen to the city. At the Fifth Avenue Hotel he secured apartments for her, and also sent a modiste who took her orders for plain mourning. Hugh had exacted a promise that she would raise no unreasonable objections, and she stifled the rebellious feelings that constantly rose in her heart.

Before the services Mr. Westland came to ask her to look upon the dead. He escorted her to the door of the room where the body lay, remaining outside. She had nerved herself for the ordeal; but when she saw that handsome face in the casket, and realized *whose* it was, her self-possession gave way. With a cry she threw herself upon the bier.

"Father, father!" she wailed. "Dear, dear father, forgive me!"

She sobbed so wildly that Westland thought it best to enter the room.

"Did I say I did not love my father," she exclaimed. "I could not have said it! Why was I not permitted to tell him of my love before he could no longer hear me? Don't you think he can comprehend—a little? May it not be he can hear—and forgive me?"

Westland told her he did not doubt it. It was a pious falsehood, but who can talk philosophy in the presence of the dead? Faith—blind, unreasoning faith, is the only medicine there. It is an opiate which can mitigate, even if it cannot cure!

Finally, supported by his arm, she turned faintly away.

“I did not think I could become so weak,” she said. “I have no one left now. Not a single soul in all the world to care for me!”

When they reached Riverfall again they parted at the station. Mayfield met them there and walked with Ellen to her rooms. She delayed so long in speaking that at last he said, “Tell me everything.”

As the kind tones fell on her ear she looked up. Yes, it was Hugh—steadfast, self-denying Hugh—who had proved himself worthy, over and over.

“Two terrible things have come into my life,” she answered. “I have consented to take my father’s fortune—which bears me down like a burden, and—I have promised to—marry.”

A shadow, brief as the passing of a bullet, crossed Hugh’s features.

“I expected both. When is your marriage to take place?”

“No date has been arranged. I am carrying out my father’s last desire. Ah, Hugh! you cannot imagine how dear he became to me when I saw him lying cold and dead!”

He knew not how to equivocate.

“Do you marry merely to please your father?”

“No, I do not mean that precisely,” she replied, with deepening color. “I have liked Mr. Westland for a long time. You know that, Hugh.”

“Yes, I know. But why do you call your marriage a ‘terrible thing?’”

She looked at him and through him.

“What could be more so? What is so awful, so pregnant with possibilities for happiness or misery? I had thought to go through life unwedded, a humble worker in these mills, content to do what I could to cheer the sad lot of those about me. Now all will be changed. I shall have new opportunities never contemplated. I shall be a wife—perhaps a mother! Oh, Hugh! I tremble before a future I have never before regarded with fear!”

She waited for him to say something, but he remained silent.

“Philip will help me,” she continued. “He is a man of business—he understands how to use that powerful thing called wealth. He is so wise, and I am so ignorant. When he came here he was a hard man, thanks to his imperfect education, but all that is changed. Why do you not speak? Of what are you thinking?”

He smiled strangely.

“I was thinking how easily a woman finds excuses for a man she loves.”

What did he mean? Honest, unselfish, straightforward Hugh! She did not like to press him, and she changed the subject.

“Our funds were exhausted.” She took a roll of bankbills from her pocket. “Here is a thousand dollars Philip has advanced me. He says I will have five hundred times as much. Is it not marvellous that one individual can control such a sum—that one person can decree food and clothing to thousands? It is a power almost akin to that of Deity!”

He looked at the money but did not touch it.

“To whom does this belong?” he inquired.

“To me!” she answered, triumphantly. “*My own!*”

“And how did you obtain it?”

“It will be charged to my father’s estate.”

“How inconsistent!” he exclaimed. “We have argued against this thing ever since we have known each other. We have claimed that men who accumulate money have no moral right to dispose of it at death. We have preached the doctrine that such property belongs to the State. Now, at the first test, we fail!”

But Ellen had her answer ready.

“The State has not reached a plane where we can safely place our possessions in its care. Heaven knows how gladly I would give it the distribution of mine rather than take the task on myself! If I did not know that Philip would assume the most of the burden I should hesitate even now.”

He interrupted to tell her that a meeting of the directors to accept Westland’s resignation was soon to be held, and that it was almost certain Baker would be chosen treasurer.

“Then how providential it seems,” she exclaimed, brightening, “that the aid I bring comes in our darkest hour! We could hope for literally nothing from that bad man. But money—this powerful factor in the world as at present conducted—what will it not buy?”

“Happiness,” said Hugh, laconically.

Her face clouded again.

“You mistrust Philip! How can you! When he

was our most determined opponent you always praised him; now, when he is about to take our side completely, you doubt."

Hugh was not one of those who refrain from giving medicine merely because the taste is disagreeable to the patient.

"Philip Westland," he replied, "is a capitalist, born and bred. If he wavers from his course it is not because his beliefs have changed. I understand him perfectly. He is under the control of a master passion that lulls his real convictions to sleep. Ellen, beware of him when he awakes!"

His words distressed her, but she still wore the look of one who loves and cannot be deceived.

"He is not following the dictates of his conscience," continued Hugh. "He has abandoned the standard of Duty to pursue that of Inclination. He sacrifices his sense of right to his love, as in the old myths men sacrificed their souls to the Spirit of Evil. For you he is crushing down every honest prompting of his heart; and no man can do that with impunity, however mistaken those promptings be."

A glorified expression came into her face—a look like that the old masters caught out of heaven to illumine their Madonnas.

"Happy am I to excite love in the breast of such a man!" she cried. "If Philip adores me as you believe, he will be only too glad to carry out my plans. The fruits of his pernicious training will gradually disappear. Believe me, I will hold the husband's love as securely as I have the suitor's. Banish your uncanny

fears, dear friend. The clouds are leaving our skies, we must not let them darken our faces."

Hugh talked for an hour later, but without effect. In the optimistic light of Ellen's new happiness she could see nothing that militated against her desires. He had merely succeeded in further exciting her brightest hopes.

Westland came in before they parted. When his eyes lit on Ellen's happy face his heart gave a great bound. He took her hand with the reverence of a devotee, raised it to his lips, and faced Hugh.

"She has told you? Congratulate me," he said.

The "mill hand" looked at him with his frank, blue eyes.

"I can easily do that, Mr. Westland. But—can I do as much for Ellen?"

Westland's face darkened. "What do you mean?" he demanded.

A soft arm was placed around his neck, and he grew instantly calm. How foolish to mind one little speck in such a sun as shone on him that day!

"I am sorry it displeases you," he said. "I know how little I deserve such a wonderful gift, but to become worthy of it will be the aim of every hour I live. My resignation has been handed to the clerk of the Corporation, and I shall undertake the more agreeable duty of providing for the people out of work. I have much to learn, but you will find me an apt pupil. I need all the good will, all the aid, all the forbearance you can give me."

He extended his hand, and Mayfield clasped it.

“It was I,” said Hugh, “who first brought you into this room. I shall never cease to regret that act if it brings one pang to Ellen’s heart. We are to continue friends—very good. If we ever cease to be so, woe to the one on whom the blame shall rest!”

He left the room without another word.

“Don’t mind, dear,” whispered Ellen, and at the use of that sweet appellation Philip brightened. “Hugh is sometimes unaccountable, but he is one of the best fellows that ever lived. All you have to do is to observe the conditions he laid down.”

He laughed at this pleasantry, but grew serious immediately, and, taking both her hands in his, he asked if she had repented yet her promise to be his wife. She declared it would be absurd to answer such a question verbally, and for the first time her lips touched his.

“When?” he asked, bending toward her. “When?”

“Oh, not for a long time. There are so many things to be done. We must not think of happiness for ourselves till others are removed from actual suffering. Love should not make us selfish, Philip.”

He drew a long breath.

“I have a plan,” he said, “which may, possibly, be carried out in a few weeks, but if it takes more than that you must not be too cruel. Otherwise, I warn you, as heir to a large estate, I can have you put under guardianship, and get myself appointed to take charge of you.”

Ellen laughed merrily at this, and pressed closer the hand she held. How sweet to have him on such intimate terms!

“What is your great scheme?” she inquired.

“Listen. I want you to do a little figuring with me. The Great Central Corporation is capitalized at \$5,000,000, divided into ten thousand shares of the par value of \$500 each. By your father’s will you have come into possession of six hundred of those shares.”

“Have I so many?” she exclaimed, bewildered.

“Yes, Ellen. You have six hundred, I have two hundred and Ralph has two hundred. That makes a thousand that we three control jointly. It requires five thousand and one shares to make a majority of the stock. If I had the power to vote that number I could elect a new board of directors and start the mills. My Uncle John has three thousand shares. Supposing he yields to Edna’s repeated requests and permits me to use those at my discretion we will have four thousand—almost enough.”

“There are so many *IF*’s,” she interrupted. “And they look so gigantic!”

“There is another thing to consider. Though the par value of the stock is \$500, the troubles here and the prospect of passing dividends (you understand the expression, do you not?) has greatly reduced its selling price in the market. I saw it quoted in the paper this morning at \$307. Senator Eastman left over \$200,000 in what is either cash or easily convertible into it. I can buy a good many shares at \$307 with that, and there are methods known as ‘hypothecating,’ by which the same money can be made to do duty several times over. Shall I send to my brokers to buy all they can on your account?”

Her answer was that she would leave it all to his judgment. If it was possible to start the Riverfall mills it was much better than a wholesale deportation.

“Oh, I hope you will succeed!” she added, fervently.

“How can I help succeeding with such an incentive! You are to wed me, remember, as soon as I start the wheels.”

“I promise,” said Ellen, with a blush, “and the day cannot come too quickly. Go now; you make me say things I am ashamed of.”

It is not easy for engaged lovers to tear themselves apart. It was not hard to persuade her to take a stroll with him, and they wandered down toward the river in the bright glare of the full moon.

Then a strange thing happened. A terrific noise burst upon their ears, and the ground rocked beneath their feet! The air was full of smoke and dust, and from every direction crowds poured out of the houses. Was it an earthquake or some unexampled convulsion of the atmosphere?

In a few moments the truth was passed from mouth to mouth, and the crowd took a single direction.

Mill No. 4, the largest of the seven owned by the Great Central Corporation, lay a heap of ruins.

It had been blown to pieces with dynamite!

XXII

When Ezra Baker took Mr. Westland's place at the head of the Great Central Corporation—as was his right under the by-laws, being next in rank after the president—he told the other directors exactly what he intended to do. The evicting process was not only to be gone through with again, but the emptied houses were to be filled with new workmen, with whom he would start up one mill after another as fast as they were ready. He had no idea of selling this great property at half its value. Cotton spinning had always been profitable in Riverfall, and a cotton-spinning village it should continue to be.

If any interference took place with the new men, the military would again be appealed to, and next time there would be no half-way measures. When the backbone of the trouble was broken, he would hire such of the old hands as he might choose, but none who had made themselves conspicuous. As for “that woman Ellen,” there was little to fear from her; having inherited money she would probably take herself away.

It was noon when the constable began tacking the new notices of eviction on the tenement doors. It was four o'clock when Mill No. 4 was changed in a moment from a fully equipped establishment of the first class to a smoking heap of iron, bricks, mortar and

dust, with a noise that shook every building within half a mile.

Mr. Baker was among the first who hastened to the scene of the disaster. Though recognized by all, no one had a greeting for him. As he looked upon the wreck his lips grew white with rage. Two hundred thousand dollars would not more than repair the loss.

And this was the net result of his first day as acting president!

As he stood there an employé of the office came and thrust a letter into his hand, which had been found on the doorstep of the Agency. Mr. Baker tore open the envelope and read, with staring eyes, the following:

One of your mills has fallen. If the eviction cards are not removed before to-morrow evening, another will go down. A guard will have no effect whatever. You cannot save it, except by taking down the notices. Make your choice!

JUSTICE.

Mr. Baker lost no time in proceeding to the office of the chief of police and showing him the letter.

“A lovely condition of things!” he ejaculated, when the chief looked up. “Now, what are you going to do? Am I to see my property destroyed before the very eyes of your force?”

The chief hemmed gently. He did not wish to offend this great man, and yet he thought Mr. Baker ought to understand one or two matters.

“My entire force numbers but fifteen men,” he said. “How can they guard seven mills covering a space of nearly a mile? Probably the explosive used was dyna-

mite, and I judge from this note that each mill has a quantity of the same material placed under it. It is not necessary for the person who is to cause the wreck to go inside the gates; an electric contrivance would obtain the same result. I see no way but to temporize until another body of soldiers can be brought here. My little force cannot handle a case like this, sir."

The treasurer sniffed indignantly. Nothing is more provoking than to have a police department—no matter how insignificant—show its inadequacy to deal with any question whatever. If you lose your purse—or your child—or your wife—your immediate inquiry is "Where are the police?" Should they fail—within ten minutes—to restore the missing article, in its original condition, their uselessness has been amply demonstrated.

Mill No. 4 had been blown to pieces an hour ago, and the Riverfall police had not yet caught the culprit; now the chief had the impudence to intimate that unless terms were made with the scoundrels all the other mills might share the same fate! Who can blame Mr. Baker for growing excited, and vowing that he would have the chief and his men turned into private citizens before he was a week older?

The treasurer sent next for Chairman Hunt of the Town Council. The official had been so badly frightened by the explosion that his teeth were still chattering. He related with shaking jaws how earnestly he had plead with the militia to remain and guard at least his own residence, which, he had no doubt, was mined and liable to go skywards at any moment. Baker was

disgusted with the fellow's pusillanimity, but he felt it wise to conceal his sentiments as, from his official position, Mr. Hunt might be useful. He advised him to take the next train to the capital, seek an audience with the governor and ask that a regiment—or if possible two—be sent to Riverfall early the next morning. A score of Pinkerton detectives should also be engaged, to come quietly into town in citizens' dress and go into the ferreting business.

Chairman Hunt was delighted at any excuse to leave Riverfall, where he confidently expected to be murdered if he remained. With his teeth still chattering, he slipped through back alleys to the station and departed by the first train on his errand.

Ralph was sitting with Edna in her private parlor at the Riverfall House when the explosion occurred. They had been talking of Ellen's inheritance, and wondering how it would affect the great desire of Philip's heart. The terrific noise startled both, but especially the blind girl, whose first thought was of an earthquake. Though quite unable to assign a cause for the disturbance, Ralph soothed her as well as he could, and hastened out to learn what had occurred.

He had been gone but a few moments when Nathalie came to make a call. The French girl and Edna were now attached friends, and Miss Westland welcomed her joyfully. She brought the missing news, and Edna begged to be taken to the scene. Notwithstanding her lack of eyesight, she had a way of comprehending events, and was as anxious as any one in the village to

reach the spot. On the way the girls met Ralph, whom Edna plied with questions.

She wanted to know so many things that he had difficulty in answering her. She asked for a description of the mill and its surroundings before the explosion and of its present condition. When told that dynamite was probably the instrument of destruction, she wanted more particulars about that article than he could give. A mill, covering half an acre of ground, had collapsed in a second. Such an immense force inspired Edna with an awe she could not express. No one among the thousands that stood about the vicinity felt more deeply the awful disaster.

To the numerous questions and replies Nathalie listened attentively, but said nothing. She seemed "scared out of her wits," as the saying is, and clung to Edna's arm, pale and trembling.

Presently the crowd made way for Philip and Ellen. Philip had not spoken to Ralph since the night when the young man, in a violent temper, accused him of heartlessness, and avowed his intention of leaving him forever. No witness would have suspected, however, that there had been strained relations between the party. Philip extended his hand cordially to Ralph, who grasped it; Edna introduced "My friend, Miss La Verre," and Ellen spoke to each in turn. The look of happiness too deep for words was still upon her face, and many of her old friends who noticed it whispered to each other that the story of her inheritance must be true. As she turned with the others to walk away, an old woman threw herself at her feet with a loud cry.

“They say you’re a rich woman now, Ellen, and never will work with us again! God bless you and keep you, say I! But can’t you spare just one of your million dollars to buy medicine for my sick old man! We haven’t a penny in the house!”

Quietly Ellen took out her purse and handed it to the suppliant. There was not very much in it, but considerably more than the sum asked for.

“God *will* bless me, Mrs. Westermarck,” she said, with feeling. “He *has* blessed me. But I am not going to leave my comrades; I shall remain and be their Ellen, just the same.”

The crowd surged around the happy old woman, and, as she repeated what had been told her, some wept for joy, while others gave a faint hurrah. When the party were out of hearing of the throng Philip told Edna in a low tone that his greatest wish was to be realized—that Ellen had promised to be his wife.

“No one is more pleased than I,” exclaimed the blind girl. She put out her hand, and Philip guided it till it clasped the one it sought. “Ellen,” she said, “you are going to take my big brother, my dearest friend on earth except my father. It will be lonesome, but I am glad, just the same. I realized how much he loved you even before he knew it himself. When are you to marry?”

Ellen looked proudly at Philip.

“That depends,” she said. “We are to gain a controlling interest in these mills before we own each other.”

Ralph and Nathalie had walked on, busy with their

own interests, and Mollie, like a discreet maid, lingered behind. Westland explained to Edna his plan of buying up stock, but told her not to mention it to any one, as secrecy was important. He said he should take the train back to the city in the morning and buy all the shares he could on the falling market that the news of the explosion would be sure to cause.

Soon Edna called Mollie and left the lovers together.

“I have much to do,” said Ellen. “I must prepare a manifesto, declaring my detestation of this act of vandalism, which cannot have been done by any partisan of mine, though no doubt they will lay it to us. If we can get control before Mr. Baker puts his evictions into effect it will save untold suffering; otherwise my fortune must be drawn on to help the poor. What a pleasure it is to give to the needy! How much those people miss whose only care is to pile up wealth!”

Chairman Hunt, with teeth still chattering, found the governor that night, and induced him to issue orders that another regiment of militia should be sent to Riverfall on the following day. The news of the demolition of Mill No. 4 had been flashed over the wire, and the governor was, therefore, prepared to act at once. Directions were sent to Colonel Kempton, who commanded the Second Regiment, to take five of his companies to Riverfall, his future actions to be governed by his own discretion.

It was too late to get a train for home after Mr. Hunt had finished this business, and he would not have ventured to enter without a guard the town over which

he was supposed to preside. He retired to a hotel and dreamed all night of fleeing before mobs who sought his life, of being blown up in explosions and of finding himself in other disagreeable situations. In the morning he succeeded, by making himself known to the officers of militia, in getting aboard the special train which conveyed them, but even there he was not free from apprehension.

It was a crisp, cold day. The soldiers, wrapped in their heavy overcoats, debated the prospect. Chairman Hunt told them that probably all the mills—the only unoccupied buildings in town—were mined with dynamite, connected in some secret manner with the hiding-place of conspirators, who would enjoy nothing better than pulling the string on the least provocation. It is one thing to charge bayonets on a crowd, and quite another to fight against a foe who possesses such a weapon as this. Some of the younger militiamen wished they had been slower in responding to their captain's call. A judicious attack of illness at the right moment might have averted serious consequences.

Colonel Kempton was not the same kind of man as Colonel Caswell. The former had an enlarged idea of what was necessary to discipline, and would never have offered any part of his quarters for civilian use. It was well for the people of Riverfall that he came the second time instead of the first. Chairman Hunt gave such a vivid account of the ferociousness of the men with whom he was to deal that word was sent through the train to have every rifle loaded with ball cartridge, and so thoroughly was this order followed that sev-

eral men managed to bore holes through the roofs of the cars in which they rode before they had gone twenty miles on their way. One of them even succeeded in blowing off a thumb.

News of the coming of the soldiers had been wired to Mr. Baker, and when the train rolled in he was at the station, pacing up and down like a caged tiger. As soon as he had given the necessary directions, Colonel Kempton, accompanied by Chairman Hunt and Mr. Baker set off for the Agency, now the residence of the new acting president. The fright of the town's chief official had been growing more pronounced as he approached Riverfall. As he alighted from the train his pallor attracted general notice, and a shout of ridicule rent the air. He was an insignificant man in size; and walking between Colonel Kempton and Mr. Baker—both rather tall—he looked much like a monkey dressed up for exhibition. Somebody cried out, "Look at the coward!" upon which he clung frantically to the colonel's coat-tails, and besought that functionary to shoot the offender on the spot.

Though disgusted at this craven spirit, the military commander concealed this repugnance as well as he could. He was too good a soldier to be carried away by personal feeling.

As the trio marched through the streets the crowd retreated sullenly before them, but a parcel of irrepressible boys dogged their steps at a safe distance, shouting uncomplimentary epithets at the obnoxious chairman.

"Oh! git on ter little Hunt!"

“ He wint aff ter git the sojers ter perfect him! ”

“ Hi, Johnny, d’ye moind the ghost? ”

“ What a shmall bit o’ mate fer such a big sandwich! ”

An orderly of the colonel’s, who followed in his rear, turned several times and made a feint of attacking the lads, upon which they started to run away; but perceiving by the merry twinkle in his eye that he had no serious intentions, they returned to their verbal assault. When the Agency was reached Mr. Hunt was on the verge of frenzy; and when the door was closed upon his pursuers he wiped the perspiration from his forehead, though the thermometer on the piazza at that identical moment registered four degrees below the freezing point.

Colonel Kempton listened attentively to all that Treasurer Baker had to say, though there was a great deal of it. He read the anonymous letter threatening further destruction, and admitted that the situation was critical.

“ I’m glad you’ve send for Pinkerton’s men,” he said. “ Soldiers in uniform cannot ferret out such things as this. There’s one thing, though, you must do without delay. Those notices of eviction must come down.”

Treasurer Baker responded by a fearful oath.

“ I’ll see every mill in Riverfall blow to —— ” (a warm place) “ before I’ll do that! ” he shouted. “ If I wanted to surrender to these scoundrels I need not have sent for you. A thousand of the notices are up, and the rest shall go up as fast as the constable and his men can post them! ”

Colonel Kempton shrugged his shoulders.

“I suppose you know your business,” he said, coolly. “But if, as this letter intimates, all the mills are mined, the conspirators may decide to blow them up at once, if they are excited too much. My plan would be to temporize with such an enemy, in order to crush him more effectually later.”

As Mr. Baker was about to repeat his assertion Detective Murray, of Pinkerton’s, was announced, whose reputation, it is needless to say, is equal for shrewdness to any on that remarkable force.

“I came to Cutlerville,” he explained, “and drove over with only two of my men, so as not to attract attention. Several others have gone on to Hosmer, and will walk from there, and more will come this afternoon.”

Mr. Baker told his story in detail again, and though Murray had heard nothing of what Colonel Kempton said, he came to the same conclusion.

“You must take those notices down,” he said, “as fast as you can send men to do it.”

“Never!” cried Mr. Baker, purple with rage.

“But you must! We need time above all things. To provoke a dynamiter is to put a premium on wanton destruction of property. Give me a chance to catch the rascals, and after that you can put up all the notices you wish. You will find but few in the secret. It is not the sort of thing a big assembly takes up. These mills cost a mint of money, and you have no right to imperil them.”

Mr. Baker clenched his fists.

“The mills can be saved if the colonel will follow my directions,” he said. “There’s not a dwelling within fifty rods of the gates. March your men down there and surround all the mill property with a strong guard. Then extend your lines outward in the direction of the tenements, from which the exploding apparatus would undoubtedly be worked. Get a warrant and search the premises as you go. Act as if you meant business, and, my word for it, you’ll have this thing uncovered before another day is over.”

Detective Murray smiled at the treasurer’s impetuosity.

“That scheme might work, and again it might not,” said he. “If dynamite has really been placed under the other mills, and is attached to an electrical apparatus, it is more likely to be operated a mile away than near by. This trouble has been going on for weeks, and the plotters have had every chance. If we are to get them into our net we must pare their claws by a little apparent conciliation. You really must take down those notices.”

XXIII

Mr. Baker had just repeated "They shall never—" when another visitor was announced. It was Mr. Erastus Stebbins, who had just arrived. He looked much worried, and listened carefully to a report of the conversation that had taken place.

"Take down the notices?" he echoed, when Detective Murray repeated his advice. "Certainly they will be taken down! Do you think," he added, warmly, to Mr. Baker, "that we are going to lose a million dollars just to gratify your vanity. The notices will come down, gentlemen, if I have to go and take them down myself!"

Mr. Baker struck his hand heavily on the table.

"I am acting president of this Corporation," he began——

"You won't be much longer," retorted Mr. Stebbins, hotly. "I have a telegram here from John Westland giving me full power to act for him, and I will get the directors together instantly. Those notices must come down, I say!"

"Not while I am in office! I will never countenance such a dastardly deed!"

"Confound it!" ejaculated Mr. Stebbins. "Do you know what our stock sold for after the close of the Board last night? Two hundred and ninety, and falling! Let another mill go down and it won't bring a

dollar a bushel! I've got an interest in this thing, sir! Two-thirds of all I'm worth is invested here! Do you imagine I'm going to beggar myself that you may gratify your temper? No, sir! The notices must come down, sir! Do you hear me? The—*notices—will—*come—down!"

At the end of each sentence the excited man shook his fist close to the face of the treasurer; merely for the purpose of emphasizing his remarks, however, and with no belligerent intention. But Mr. Baker was as angry as he. Striding to his desk he hastily wrote his resignation and thrust it into Mr. Stebbins' hand.

"Now you can do what you blamed please!" he said, with set teeth. "If any one could make a bigger mess of it than you will I'd like to know who. You are acting president, as Chairman of the Board of Directors, and if the Corporation has more than a brick yard and a scrap iron heap to-morrow night it won't be your fault. I wash my hands of the whole matter. These gentlemen"—he indicated whom he meant—"will witness that I warned you!"

Upon which Mr. Baker tore himself off in a huff and slammed the door after him.

"I shall run this place myself," said Mr. Stebbins to those who remained. "Give me your best advice and I'll follow it. That pig-headed donkey would have ruined everything in a few hours more."

Detective Murray looked gratified.

"Order the notices taken down, for the first thing," he said.

"That is also your opinion?" asked Mr. Stebbins of

Colonel Kempton, and received an unqualified affirmative.

The new president called a servant and despatched him for constable Carlson.

“Now to business,” said Mr. Murray. “Have you a suspicion of any one?”

“Not really a suspicion. That Baker has excited me so I hardly know anything.” (He paused to take breath.) “There was one fellow who refused to obey his notice and held his tenement by force after the others went out. The constable knows who he is, and they say he’s a bad man. You might look him up.” (He paused for breath again.) “We must get out of this muss the easiest way we can. I thought it cold when I left home this morning, but I begin to believe it’s the hottest day in the whole year!”

Again the door-bell sounded, and shortly afterwards Ellen and Hugh were ushered into the room where the consultation was being held. The beauty and stateliness of the “mill girl,” still clad in plain mourning, impressed all of the gentlemen, though in different proportions. Hugh introduced himself and then Ellen to Mr. Stebbins, whom he knew by sight, and that gentleman presented both to the others. Mr. Stebbins asked Hugh if he wished to speak to him in private, or would as lief the colonel and detective heard what he was to say.”

“Ellen will answer you,” was the quiet response; and Ellen arose and spoke with ease and fluency.

“We come, Mr. Stebbins, to express our conviction that the injury to your property was not caused by any

of the people belonging to the Weavers and Spinners Union, which we represent. You cannot regret the occurrence more than I, and I desire to offer my aid, in any way you may suggest, to unearth the perpetrator of the crime."

"Will your people open every door to us without a warrant?"

"Every one!" she replied with emphasis. "You will not find the guilty person in my ranks, sir. I have preached forbearance too long to have my words bear such fruit as this."

Detective Murray took up the anonymous letter which Mr. Baker had received, and which had been left by him on the table.

"Do you know that handwriting?" he asked Ellen.

A shocked look came into her face as she perused the note.

"I do not, sir," she answered. "I cannot conceive how such an infamous proposition could emanate from any sane man. It is simply horrible."

Constable Carlson arrived at this juncture, and was notified to use all diligence in having the eviction papers removed from the tenement doors. He made no comment. He never quarrelled with his bread and butter. The oftener the notices went up and came down the better for him.

"By the way," asked Mr. Stebbins, "what was the name of the man who refused to obey the previous notice? The man who fortified himself in his room?"

"William Converse," replied Ellen. "He is not under my jurisdiction. When he refused to obey the

order served by Mr. Westland he was expelled from the society."

Detective Murray went to a window and meditated for a moment, apparently on the prospects of the weather. When he returned he said to Ellen, "I trust it will not inconvenience you and Mr. Mayfield to stay here for an hour or so. I am going to search the house of this man Converse. While I have the most perfect confidence that neither of you are concerned in this matter, you may remain here till my return. You will be under no restraint—unless you should try to leave, in which case my assistants in the next room would probably prevent you. Colonel, if you will favor me with your company?"

Mr. Stebbins was amazed at the cool proceeding of the detective, but he followed Mr. Murray, the colonel and the constable. When they were alone Hugh turned to Ellen and spoke bitterly.

"Do you realize that we are under arrest?"

"Yes," she smiled.

"You do not seem to mind it!"

"No. The arrest of an innocent person carries no disgrace. I only hope they will succeed in discovering the man who blew up the mill."

Hugh's face grew troubled.

"If it turns out to be Converse," he said, "he will have to pay the penalty."

"As he should."

He grew extremely restive.

"If you knew it was he, Ellen, would you aid these hounds of the law to apprehend him—this man, whose

life has been cursed since the first cloudy day of his existence? Would you not help him to escape; or, if taken, would you not defend him?"

"I would not!" she answered, decidedly.

"I would!" exclaimed Hugh. "Yes, with the last drop of my blood!"

She trembled. He had never spoken to her like that.

"Do you think it was Converse?" she asked.

"I fear it."

She paced the room nervously in silence for some minutes.

"Hugh, do you recall that night when he was rebellious in the assembly; the night he advocated meeting force with force—and how he disturbed me?"

He assented.

"My friend, at that time I escaped a great danger. A little less of determination and I might have fallen into the snare. You are now passing through a similar trial. Be careful you are not led too far!"

The cloud did not lift from his thoughtful face.

"There is a limit to endurance," he said, gloomily. "I am sorry—yes, I am sure I am—that the mill was destroyed. But I am equally sure I would save the man, if I could get between him and the law. They would sentence him to long years of imprisonment, at least, perhaps to the gibbet! This punishment he would have to bear for his zeal in *our* behalf, for his attempt to cripple *our* enemies. Do you really hope they will find him, when you know how awful will be his fate?"

She felt the absolute need of firmness, though her woman's heart quaked within her.

"Yes," she answered.

"Even if it were Converse, after all his wrongs?"

"Even if it were *you!*"

He leaned back in his chair and spoke gutterally.

"Or Philip Westland?"

She placed a hand over her left breast and grew whiter. The theme was too painful to continue, and they dropped it by common consent. No more was said till Detective Murray returned.

"I shall have to keep you a little longer, I am sorry to say," was his greeting to Hugh. "You may use the jailer's parlor at the lock-up if you prefer it." To Ellen he said, "You are at liberty, madam, and I am sorry you have been incommoded."

Mayfield looked like a thundercloud about to burst.

"On what charge do you detain me?" he demanded.

"Anything you like to call it," was the cheery answer. "I think it best to have you handy. It won't do any good to get riled. Which do you prefer, this office or the jail?"

Hugh curbed his anger as well as he could, out of regard to Ellen.

"The jail, by all means!" he replied. "If I am to be a prisoner, put me where prisoners are kept. I have lived an honest life for four-and-twenty years. I fear to tell no act I ever committed. Ellen, you will tell your people there is no charge against me. I am ready, sir."

He walked off in an officer's custody, and Ellen went

to her lodgings. Two detectives who had been concealed in a room adjoining that in which Hugh and Ellen held their conversation had reported it in full to Mr. Murray.

Nothing had been found in the room which Converse occupied. According to instructions the constable went ahead and took the notice from the door. On hearing the noise the Englishman came to ascertain the cause, and when he learned expressed his satisfaction loudly. Then Detective Murray and an assistant appeared and grasped him by the arms.

“We are going to search these premises for unlawful articles,” said the detective, “and you may as well submit quietly.”

Converse grinned from ear to ear. “Search all you like,” he said. “And if you need help call on me.”

They inspected the room he occupied and then the entire building, but without avail. There was nothing to hold the man for, and they released him, having to hear some very ironical remarks as they went away.

“Sorry to have troubled you,” said Mr. Murray, with a red face.

“Don’t mention it,” grinned Converse. “Come any time. Come often. I shall always be glad to see you. Only don’t have any more notices tacked on my door. They spoil the woodwork.”

The last they saw of him he stood in his doorway, with his mouth stretched sardonically.

In half an hour every person in Riverfall knew that Hugh was locked in the jail, though charged with no offence. Only Ellen’s influence prevented a demonstra-

tion. Westland had gone to the city on the business which he had planned, and she was quite alone with this emergency. She told her people that they must continue their good conduct, and that the results would soon tell in their favor. She referred to the second removal of the eviction notices, and in the general joy her words had the effect desired.

Acting President Stebbins was glad when the constable came to tell him that none of the pieces of paper remained up. He thought the danger of another explosion was over now and drew a breath of relief. Before sunset, however, he received a note which made him seek Detective Murray with all speed. Together they studied the new message:

If Hugh Mayfield is not set free before the clock strikes eight to-night, another of your mills will go into the air. A word to the wise is sufficient.

JUSTICE.

A comparison of the missive with the one previously received showed it was in the same handwriting.

“We must let him out,” said Mr. Murray, grinding his teeth, “but we will have him shadowed every second. Hang it, Mr. Stebbins, this looks very much like anarchy!”

XXIV

The dreaded hour of eight passed and no other mill in Riverfall was shattered. It was evident that the dynamiters were well informed of all that was going on. When released from prison—where, in spite of his request to be placed in a cell, he was only allowed to occupy the jailer's sitting-room—Hugh exhibited himself freely in the village. The property destroyers were evidently men of their word. They could be dealt with on an understood basis. What troubled President Stebbins was that he could not tell what their next demand might be. For the moment the volcano was not emitting fire; but it was not cheering to reflect that, at the fancy of a concealed foe, the possessions of the Great Central Corporation were liable to be engulfed in its stream of lava.

Before Mr. Westland's departure he placed sufficient money in Ellen's hands to supply the temporary wants of the unemployed. So long as they could remain in the tenements no great danger of excessive suffering need be feared. The mills were now surrounded by a cordon of soldiers on the land side, though for what purpose it is difficult to say, since the enemy's advance guard was without doubt already inside the breastworks. The Pinkerton men scattered about the village attracted no attention among the many sight-seers that now arrived on every train. The news of

what was going on at Riverfall had been read at every breakfast-table in the country, and attracted unusual attention.

Whenever Converse left his rooms he was shadowed. A minute examination of the ground in the vicinity of the mills was also made in the hope of finding a subterranean connection, but nothing of value was discovered. The militia shivered at night in their tents, and the guard paced up and down before the deserted mills.

On the second evening Ellen called a mass-meeting, and when the largest hall in the place was packed with her followers, Detective Murray conceived and carried out an original plan. The soldiers were sworn in as peace officers. When three hundred of them had surrounded the building on every side Mr. Carlson and Mr. Murray entered and announced that all present were under arrest.

There was a moment of consternation, followed by symptoms of an outbreak, and then Ellen's clear voice was heard. She bade the officers do their duty, saying all would submit to the law, and that no force would be required. Mr. Murray announced that he merely wished to prevent those present from leaving till the end of an investigation which had begun, and advised all to be at their ease.

The Pinkerton men, during this time, were busy. Few doors were ever locked in the village, and access to most of the tenements was easily obtained. But President Stebbins, waiting anxiously at the Agency, had another note brought to him, and also the bearer,

a very small boy, who was half frightened to death when collared and dragged into the great man's presence. The little chap, bawling loudly, declared that the note was given to him by a man he had never seen, who handed him twenty-five cents for delivering the message. Mr. Stebbins read the letter, and then went as fast as his legs would take him to find Colonel Kempton.

The letter read as follows:

It is now half-past nine o'clock. If the persons held in Riverfall Hall are not released at half-past ten another mill will go down ; and so on—one each hour—till all are free. A word to the wise !

JUSTICE.

Colonel Kempton, when he read the note, did not know what to say. Detective Murray, who soon arrived, was also nonplussed for an instant.

“ We have settled one thing,” he said. “ The author of that note is not in the hall, and we are equally certain it is not Converse, as we have specimens of his handwriting.

“ It is possible, of course, that this anonymous writer is frightening us unduly,” said Colonel Kempton. “ It may be that no other mill is mined, and that he cannot fulfil his threats. If we refuse to release the people we can learn how much confidence to place in his veracity. It might be a costly piece of information—do not understand that I advise it—but I would give something to know.”

President Stebbins shivered at the suggestion.

“ Good heavens ! ” he exclaimed, “ these mills cost

on an average a quarter of a million! I never can take such a risk as that. It would mean absolute ruin if we were wrong. No, Mr. Murray, tell Carlson to release the people as soon as he can."

As Mr. Murray went on this errand he met Converse, and saw the broad grin of the morning still upon his face. It was a grin of triumph, and carried with it the conviction that the Englishman knew the secret of the plot.

Ellen was speaking to an attentive and hushed audience when he arrived, and the detective had to wait a moment before he could deliver his message.

"My friends, you have still left for your deliverance that most potent weapon—the ballot; a weapon you have allowed too long to rest in its scabbard while your foes have despoiled you. It is for you to say whether a friend of equal rights shall represent Riverfall at the State Capital or a tool of the privileged classes. The caucuses of the dominant parties have already nominated candidates, but where is the choice between them? Have either ever curbed the insolence of capital or made endurable the lot of labor? When we refused to toil in yonder mills for barely enough to keep body and soul together, what had they to offer us—a bayonet! Let us send to represent us a man whose entire energies will be devoted to our cause, a man whom we love and honor, and who has our complete confidence. You all know whom I mean—Hugh Mayfield."

A shout of approval arose, and by a viva voce vote the name was declared the unanimous choice of the meeting.

As Hugh appeared cheer after cheer rent the air again, but he stopped the demonstration with a wave of his hand.

“For the too complimentary remarks of the leader whom we all revere” (he bowed to Ellen) “and for your approbation, my kind friends, let me return my thanks. I shall never be found backward in any work where I can hope to serve you. If I believed I could do half as much in the Legislature as you seem to think, I would not rise, as I now do, to decline your nomination. Comrades, I am only a poor spinner, lacking the graces and accomplishments necessary to success in such a position. Among so many able men my voice would be very feeble; but you have now on your side one who—if his professions are to be relied upon—has your interests at heart as much as I, and ten times my capacity to serve you. I wish to withdraw my name and to substitute that of Philip Westland.”

Amid shouts of mingled approval and disapproval Ellen’s voice was again heard.

“Mr. Westland is not a legal resident of this State, and is consequently ineligible. Hugh Mayfield’s declination is in order. Those in favor of accepting it will say ‘Ay.’ (No response.) “Those opposed will say ‘No.’” (A shout shook the building.) “Hugh Mayfield is your candidate. See to it that he is elected, or never again complain of the unfair laws that govern you.”

The crowd then surged around Hugh and assured him of their loyal support. He shook his head doubtfully, saying they must not expect too much from one

so inexperienced. Mr. Murray stepped forward, made his announcement and left with a feeling of disgust. He thought how unfit for a gentleman to live in the country would be with such ignorant people to make the statutes.

Ralph Melbourg had been very uneasy all that afternoon. He resented the appearance of the Second Regiment in Riverfall, and did not fancy the "airy strut," as he termed it, with which its colonel paraded the streets. He had no fancy, either, for the destruction of his property (as one of the small stockholders), which he thought the military made more probable.

Before Westland's departure for the city he had had a long talk with him, and the two men cemented their former friendship. But all that Philip seemed to think about was his coming happiness as Ellen's husband, and Ralph did not yet deem it wise to introduce the subject nearest to his own heart, the love he had for Nathalie. Philip did not know, of course, that the young woman whom Edna had introduced was the girl of whom Ralph had talked weeks before, and presumed the troubles at Riverfall had driven her out of his mercurial cousin's mind.

A letter had been received from John Westland, bearing that gentleman's signature, though written by his attendant, reiterating his well-known views on the questions concerning which Edna had appealed to him. Hanging almost on the edge of the grave, he had yet the tenacity of will and fixity of purpose of the old days. He went so far as to command his daughter to cease giving aid to people whom he felt were injuring

him maliciously. He had heard his news through Mr. Baker, and was disposed to take a serious view of the matter. There was even a covert threat that it was not too late to alter his will, which left nearly all of his fortune to her, if she persisted in her "ridiculous sentimentalism."

"Philip has written me a letter in which he shows that he, also, has gone mad," said Mr. Westland, Sr. "It is hard, when I am confined here by illness, to be troubled with these things, but I trust you will both see your duty in its right light, and cease opposing those who know more about what is best to be done than either of you."

Ralph could not find much hope in Philip's plan to gain control of the mills while his uncle, the largest holder of the stock, continued in this attitude. Mr. Stebbins, though a more agreeable person than Mr. Baker, was no more likely to become one of Ellen's supporters. But what worried Ralph most on this particular day was the fact that Nathalie was out of health, and that he had not seen her since the previous evening. She had appeared very nervous and fidgety the last time they met, and now she seemed trying, for some reason, to keep out of his way. He had been half a dozen times to her room, only to find the door locked. He went in and out of the Riverfall House, where Edna tried to entertain him, but with poor success. He wanted Nathalie, and no one else would do.

He paced the street, asking various persons if they had seen her. He attended the big meeting, was locked in with the others, and searched the sea of faces in vain.

When the crowd left he stood near the entrance, hoping he might have missed her in the throng, and when the last one had departed a chill came over him. He decided to go and see if Ellen could give him any information.

She was alone, engaged in reading for the tenth time a letter from Philip Westland, the first real love-letter she had ever had. It declared that every hour seemed like a year, when away from her, and all that sort of thing. Sensible men act very much like other people when writing to their sweethearts.

“Good-evening, Mr. Melbourg,” she said, glancing up as Ralph entered.

“Do you know where Nathalie is?” he asked, breathless. “I can’t find her anywhere.”

She smiled into his anxious eyes. She knew now, better than ever before, how to appreciate his feelings. Taking him by the hand she led him across the hall, knocked softly on the door, said “Nathalie!” and, strange to relate, Mlle. La Verre opened the portal.

“Where have you been?” Ralph asked hurriedly. “I have hunted for you ever since two o’clock.”

Nathalie changed color and looked so distressed that Ellen came to her rescue.

“You missed quite an adventure, my dear, by not being at the meeting,” she said. “We were all kept under guard for an hour.”

“I—I meant to go,” stammered the girl, “but I—fell asleep. I was—very—tired.”

Ralph did not look pleased.

“And you slept through all the racket I made! I came here half a dozen times!” he exclaimed.

“She has sat up a good deal lately,” said Ellen in extenuation.

“Why did they arrest you?” asked the girl, to change the conversation.

“I don’t know,” answered Ellen, “but I’ve heard why we were released. President Stebbins received a letter threatening to destroy another mill if they did not let us go within an hour. I wish I knew who is responsible for these things,” she added seriously. “I could almost take him to the police station with my own hands.”

The color left Nathalie’s face, till it was pale as the ceiling of the room.

“Such threats have kept the mill owners from turning us out to freeze again,” she ventured.

“Yes,” Ellen responded, “and deprived us of what public confidence we had gained. I have been to Mr. Stebbins and assured him none of my followers would do such an outrageous thing, but he believes us guilty. I told Hugh I would denounce any man who did it—even if it were himself.”

She then returned to her own room, leaving the lovers in the hallway.

“You are not well,” said Ralph. “I’m sorry I spoke as I did. Go back and finish your rest. It’s very plain you need it.”

She was much agitated, though striving to conceal her feelings.

“Why do you tremble so?” he asked.

“Do I?” She paused a moment, and then burst out, “Dear Ralph, would you care very much if I were DEAD?”

He took her face between his hands and looked at her intently.

“See here! You want a doctor!” he cried.

“No, I am only tired—and nervous. To-morrow I shall be well again.”

He begged her to be careful, and she called him “darling” for the first time as they parted.

He thought he would go to his room and retire, but he was now too uneasy, so he strolled aimlessly about the deserted streets. Half an hour after he left his sweetheart he found himself again in the vicinity of her lodging, where he could see her darkened window. Finally, as he was about to turn away, her door opened and a little figure, cloaked and muffled, came out, looking carefully in both directions.

It was Nathalie beyond question, and, though stupefied at the sight, Ralph was not a moment in deciding to follow her. What could this mean so soon after she had promised to retire and spoken of her exhausted condition? The lad’s suspicious jealousy was faintly aroused. He walked in the shadow till he saw her pause at the ladies’ entrance of the Riverfall House, glance carefully around, and disappear inside.

It was very late, but Ralph went boldly into the hotel, where he slipped a dollar into the hand of a boy who was just about to close the house. The information gained was to the effect that Nathalie had gone to Miss Edna’s rooms. The lover’s jealous feelings were calmed, but his curiosity did not abate.

What could Nathalie want of Edna at that hour?

He cautioned the boy not to mention his visit and

went back into the street to watch. He did not believe the girl would stay very long, and he meant to see her safely home when she came out. A long time passed and he was about to give up the investigation when the ladies' entrance of the hotel opened again and there stepped forth—not one figure but two. As he saw that the second woman was Edna his wonder grew greater yet, and he was about to follow them when a new surprise awaited him.

A man, evidently on the same errand as himself, came out of a hiding-place opposite the hotel, and began to shadow the couple. Ralph, with the utmost care to avoid discovery, began to shadow the man. And in this manner, watching and being watched, the quartet pursued their way through the semi-darkness.

XXV

The reader may now as well be told the truth about Nathalie, if, indeed, with that acute sense which baffles much shrewder writers than the present one, he has not already guessed it. The little French girl had lent herself to the schemes of the dynamiters, being persuaded that a wholesome display of force was the only thing to strike terror into the hearts of the mill directors. They used their arguments in vain for a long time, but at last she succumbed and they found in her a most valuable ally, as will be seen when several things are taken into account.

To begin with, she was a woman, and it is well known that, once committed to a plot, women are more trustworthy than men. She could not be bribed. She had more than the average intelligence. Added to this, her room was in the same building with Ellen's. In case of a general search that was likely to be about the last house in Riverfall to be examined, the strong stand she had made against lawlessness being well known.

Nathalie was for some time averse to entering on a course of action so totally at variance with her leader's frequently expressed views; but was finally persuaded that, while Ellen could not openly endorse the destruction of a mill or two, her cause would profit immensely by it. "Unless something is soon done," said her

tempters, "the new president will order us out of doors again, and next time we have no hope of clemency. If we can hold this threat over his head he will pay attention to our demands."

The plotters were, as had been rightly guessed by Ellen, outside her circle, being, in fact, a small party of anarchists who had come to Riverfall to exhibit their peculiar methods at what they believed an opportune moment. Before Nathalie was consulted, the destructive agent was placed under every one of the mills, and connections made with an electric current at a point outside the section where they were located. When her consent was won, it was but the work of two or three days—or rather nights—to arrange a keyboard under the floor of her closet, where only a most diligent search would discover it. Nothing was required of the girl but to press a given key when she received the signal.

When we remember that in Russia princesses have been induced to take part in plots to murder an emperor, it is not wonderful that such a girl as Nathalie could be made to think herself justified in helping destroy the property of those she believed her natural enemies. She experienced a shock when Mill No. 4 was wrecked, but the feeling soon wore off. There was an exultation in knowing that she controlled that which could make the haughty capitalists pause in their cruel work, and bring even the representatives of the military power to their knees. Hiding in her room, with not even a light to betray her presence, she almost hoped the signal would be given to explode the second charge. Such is the fascination of a potent secret to a susceptible mind!

The remarks that Ellen let fall, however, when Ralph called, produced a revulsion in the young girl's brain. That plain, unqualified statement of her superior that she would denounce the dynamiters, if she knew them, put a very different face on the matter. That Ellen disapproved to the last degree of what she had done Nathalie could no longer doubt. This being the case, she was as anxious to retrace her steps as she had been to take them.

But how to go to work was the question. She had a well-grounded fear of her accomplices, who, should they suspect her of playing them false, would probably kill her without scruple. When Ralph left she racked her tired brain for some way of saving the mills, and could find but one that seemed feasible.

She must penetrate secretly into the basement of Mill No. 7, where the main connections were laid, and cut the wires.

The streets in the vicinity of all the mills were patrolled by soldiers, but under cover of the darkness Mill No. 7 could be entered from the waterside by a boat. It was a bold scheme for a woman to undertake, but Nathalie nerved herself for the attempt. She hated to go alone, from natural timidity, and Edna was the only person whom she dared ask to accompany her.

Midnight is not so different from noon, when one is sightless; and though she were present when the wires were cut, Edna could not testify to seeing it done. She was ready for bed, and was naturally astonished at the visit.

“Edna, dear, would you mind going for a little walk with me?”

“Where?” was the reply, in a tone of great surprise.

“I know it will seem strange, but I am obliged to do some very particular business and I dislike to go alone. It is a secret and I don’t wish you to ask questions.”

Miss Westland looked disturbed.

“A secret?” she returned. “Ah! perhaps it is something for Ellen.”

“Yes.” Nathalie grasped eagerly at the suggestion. “It is something she wants done very much indeed, but you must never let her know I came to you about it. I am supposed to go alone—but I dislike to so much—please wrap yourself up and come.”

The authority of Ellen’s name settled all doubts in Miss Westland’s mind, and without more delay she dressed herself warmly and put on her rubbers, according to directions.

The girls believed that they had escaped the house without observance and took a circuitous route, to avoid the patrol. After going a quarter of a mile they passed through a gate into a field and pursued their way by a footpath to the opposite side of the town. Reaching the river side, Nathalie untied one of several boats moored there and assisted Edna to a seat.

It did not occur to the blind girl that she was running a great risk. She had perfect confidence in her companion, who was, she did not doubt, carrying out Ellen’s orders. With hardly a perceptible sound the boat was propelled to the rear of Mill No. 7. It was not the first time Nathalie had handled oars, having been born on the banks of the Seine. Reaching her destination she stepped ashore, tied her craft, assisted her companion

to land, and then, walking like cats across the intervening space, the girls entered the building. It was by the very door that Ralph had left unlocked for Nathalie when she met him there several weeks previously, and which he had omitted to fasten in the hope that a later rendezvous might be arranged.

It was dark as pitch out of doors and no less so inside, but Nathalie found a seat for Edna near the entrance, and, whispering a warning not to move till her return, stole softly across the great floor to a stairway that led to the basement. Creeping through the darkness she found the place where the apparatus was hid, and lighting a match to make sure, severed the wires with a large pair of shears she had brought for the purpose.

When the work was accomplished she experienced a feeling of intense relief, and, also, at the same time a faintness from the lessening of nervous tension. In ascending the stairs again her strength gave way, and she was obliged to rest when only half way up. As she sat there, her heart palpitating, she heard a piercing scream from Miss Westland, which sounded horribly blood-chilling in that inky environment and awoke unnameable fears. Nathalie dragged herself to the floor above and started in the direction of the sound.

The man whom Ralph had followed was Ezra Baker. Coming home late from a visit to an acquaintance, Baker had perceived two young women leaving the Riverfall House, and had no difficulty in identifying them. Their being on the street at such an hour was enough to arouse suspicion, and he decided to ascertain their errand. It

do, but though he had to admit that things did not look right, he did not mean to leave them in the company of a man like that. And thus it happened that, when Nathalie heard Edna's cry, there were four persons in the building instead of two.

The sound of his cousin's voice, raised to a pitch that denoted extreme fright, startled Ralph. Quickly deciding that he must have a light at all hazards he found a gasjet and lit it, when Baker stalked toward him.

"So you are in this plot, too?" he said threateningly. "Well, I am not surprised."

Miss Westland crept to her cousin's side, feeling her way, and trembling visibly.

"You are a liar!" was Ralph's angry retort.

"What are you doing here at this time of night then?" asked Baker, with a sneer.

"I came to watch *you!* I saw you creeping through the town after these girls, and I knew it could be with no good object!"

"Indeed!" snarled the other. "And what are they doing here?"

"They can speak for themselves."

"They can, and they shall!" exclaimed Baker. "They are here on some mission connected with the scoundrels who are ruining our property and most likely you are their abettor. I will have you all under lock and key in half an hour and let you prove your innocence, if you can, before a judge and jury!"

Nathalie, who had paused at the sound of the altercation, now came and threw herself at Mr. Baker's feet, raising her hands imploringly.

“It’s not their fault, sir!” she cried. “It’s all mine. Call the police; I will be very quiet and go where they please. Believe me—by the soul of my mother!—Miss Westland did not know what I was going to do, and I have not seen Mr. Melbourg until this moment!”

In his horror at her assertion Ralph completely lost his temper.

“What devil persuaded you to join in such a deed?” he cried. “Had you no pity for those who loved you?”

Nathalie looked the picture of woe. She crawled toward her lover.

“Listen,” she said. “I came to save the mill, not to destroy it. I have just cut the wires. Don’t look at me so cruelly. I am faint and cold. I feel as if I were dying.”

He turned his back to her and put his hands over his eyes to shut out the sight. Edna clung to the arm she had taken, unable to offer either aid or advice. It was a situation in which she could do nothing but suffer. Baker had disappeared in the excitement, and was probably carrying out his threat to denounce the trio as soon as he could reach the guard.

“Won’t you believe me?” repeated Nathalie, in piteous tones. “Ralph, won’t you believe me?”

“No!” he shouted, walking nearer the door. “Not content with disgracing yourself, you must bring my poor, unhappy cousin to share your folly! We are going. The police will soon put you where you belong.”

But hardly had he taken ten steps when the large window on one side of the mill was dashed in with a

terrific noise, the gleaming barrels of fifty rifles appeared and a sonorous voice gave the loud command, "Fire!"

In another second every rifle was discharged and then the soldiers rushed into the place. Ralph and Edna were grasped by rough hands and hustled to one side, while the gas jets in all directions were lighted. Detective Murray came with the others and soon was bending over a still form on the floor.

"It's the little French girl," he said, to a subordinate. "Go to her room, Stinson, and make a thorough search. You, Carmody, look into the house where young Melbourg has been staying. Step lively! We shall have the whole thing in our hands if we're wide awake!"

Ralph dragged his two guards to Nathalie's side and knelt on the floor, clasping one of her white hands.

"My God, is she dead?" he moaned, pressing his lips to hers. "No, she is not—she cannot be! Some one go for a surgeon, please! Perhaps the bullet has only stunned her. Darling, open your eyes and speak to me!"

Detective Murray bade one of his men hasten for a doctor. Ralph's grief, deep and profound, affected all who stood near. At a signal from their chief the guards stepped back a little, leaving the young man free for the time.

"The last words she heard me speak were of unkindness," Ralph ejaculated. "God grant she may at least rouse long enough to say she forgives me! She was to be my wife," he added tenderly, in explanation of his sorrow.

He kissed the still features again. Never till now had he realized how dear to him that child had become.

Edna, who was permitted to approach, knelt by his side and touched the inanimate form. Her fingers rambled over the face.

“She lives,” she announced. “I believe a surgeon can save her. Don’t give up, Ralph. Have courage.”

Colonel Kempton, who had been hastily summoned, now joined the group.

“Mr. Melbourg, this is sad business,” he said.

“She was trying to save the mill,” replied Ralph, raising his swollen eyes. “I don’t know how she learned where the wires were, but she had cut them just before your men shot her. They must be in the basement, as she came from there. This lady is my cousin and is blind. She says she had no suspicion of what Nathalie’s errand was and I am sure she speaks the truth.”

Detective Murray thereupon explored the basement. He was not long in discovering the cut wires, and saw with satisfaction that all danger from that source was over.

While he was gone Dr. McNally arrived, and after an examination agreed with Edna that life still remained in Nathalie’s body.

“She must be taken where she will have absolute quiet and the best of nursing. Where shall it be?”

“I will take charge of her,” said a quiet voice. It was that of Ellen, who had just entered the building.

“That will be excellent,” said Dr. McNally. “Go for a carriage as quickly as you can,” he added to a boy he had brought with him.

“A moment. Let us see what Mr. Murray says,” remarked one of the Pinkerton men.

Mr. Murray was feeling good natured. He believed the danger to the Riverfall mills was ended, and as he reappeared his countenance wore a contented smile.

“I wish to have this nearly murdered girl taken to my apartment,” said Ellen. “She cannot move hand or foot, but if you think it necessary you can station a guard at my door.”

The form of the request grated on the detective’s ears.

“She will be very well cared for at the jail,” he answered, haughtily. “We shall make every effort to aid her recovery, as we want to know a number of things she alone can tell us. And, for the present, at least, this lady and gentleman” (he indicated Ralph and Edna) “will go with her.”

Ellen put her arms around Edna’s neck and whispered words of cheer.

“I can’t conceive what they intend to charge you with,” she said, “but I am sure it must beailable. You can easily arrange to give sureties in the morning. Poor little Nathalie! I pray her hurt be not fatal!”

The carriage soon arrived and willing hands lifted the still burden into it. As the distance was short the two other prisoners expressed a preference to walk and all were soon inside the iron gates.

The jailor asked Detective Murray if any one was to be allowed to talk to the captives.

“Not a soul. Let no one go near them without my order.”

XXVI

Philip Westland, in New York, had been engaged in watching the market rate of Great Central shares, and buying as many as were offered. He was full of his project for getting control and operating the mills on a basis of fairness to the workpeople. Hugh's fear that his conversion to Ellen's views would be only temporary—that he would “awake from his dream” and go back to exploiting the laborers for all they would bear—did not seem likely to prove correct. He was travelling on territory quite new to him, it is true, and no doubt his actions were influenced mainly by the passionate love he had conceived for the fair leader of the insurgent forces. Nevertheless he found a genuine pleasure in taking the side of the unfortunates, and constituted himself their advocate.

He had written another long appeal to his uncle in Florida, detailing the conditions at Riverfall in his own way. There was no choice, he declared, between making reasonable concessions, and seeing the value of the property shrink twenty-five per cent. or more. With the majority of cotton mills in New England working on full time it was not easy to engage several thousand skilled people to take the places of those who had gone out. He also wrote of the deplorable condition of the operatives and of their unaltered determination to accept no lower wages than those they had received. He

pictured the conditions during the evictions in a way that he thought must touch a tender chord in the breast of his powerful relative, and also submitted a long array of figures to show that a reasonable dividend could be paid if the old scale was re-enacted. He even offered to guarantee this for the first year at the expense of his private purse, and ended by referring to Edna's entire agreement with his views, thinking that this was a sentiment by which the old man could not help being affected.

No answer had been received to this epistle, when, on the morning after the arrests at Riverfall, Philip received a telegram from Ellen, begging him to come back immediately. As soon as steam could convey him to her side he was there. She met him at the station, and, as they proceeded to the village, detailed briefly what had occurred.

“I do not quite understand yet,” she said, “what part Nathalie played, except that she cut the dangerous wires. Whether she was privy to their being placed under the mill or learned of it accidentally we have not discovered, as she is unable to be interviewed. We judge that she merely took Miss Westland for company, fearing to make such a journey alone. Of course that was unwise, but I cannot find it in my heart to criticise her till I know all the facts. It was Ralph's lighting of the gas that attracted the attention of the patrol, whose sergeant sent in haste for the colonel and Detective Murray, and then feeling, as he says, that no time should be lost, ordered the rifles discharged. The court is now in session, and I have sent word that you will undoubtedly furnish sureties for your relations.”

They found the court-room crowded and the local judge almost overcome by the sudden importance of his position. In response to questions by Mr. Westland he said he should require \$10,000 bail from each of the defendants who were present and \$20,000 for Miss La Verre.

"I can give whatever bail your Honor demands," said Westland, "but my relations will object to be put in the situation of criminals, unless some sort of evidence appears against them. I hardly know yet of what Miss Westland and Mr. Melbourg are accused."

"Of aiding and abetting a conspiracy to destroy the mills," said Detective Murray, to whom the judge turned.

"How? By cutting the wires that made such destruction possible? Or by being present when this was done, not knowing what was occurring. For these, I understand, are their only offenses."

The judge turned again in doubt to the detective.

"I shall submit no evidence to-day," said that official, "but I insist on substantial bonds. At the proper time we will confront Mr. Westland's friends with all the evidence they need."

Westland simply said, "Very well," and gave the necessary bonds for all the accused. Then the released prisoners accompanied him to the jail where all were immediately admitted.

Dr. McNally permitted the visitors only a glance at Nathalie, who lay unconscious on the jailor's best bed, in charge of a nurse, and then took them into another room.

“It would be dangerous to attempt her removal,” he remarked gravely. “She hovers between life and death, and the slightest thing may turn the scale. If you can make arrangements with the jailor, she should remain here for the present.”

A full purse is not so bad a pleader, and a bargain was soon made, with the proviso that Ellen and the others should have free access to the sick girl’s room at any time.

On his promise to use every care, Ralph was permitted to remain at the bedside. He told Dr. McNally that the bit of girlhood lying there was more to him than all else on earth, and that the physician must look to him for his compensation. It was a sad vigil to which he set himself, for there seemed to be nothing that he could do, but he was content nowhere else.

After escorting Ellen back to her rooms, Mr. Westland went to see if he could use any influence with the new president. He was received with formal politeness, but with a constraint of manner that told how little Mr. Stebbins fancied the part he was playing.

“I come to offer my congratulations,” Philip began, “that the mills seem at last to be out of danger. I trust you don’t feel that in offering bail for the girl the militiamen wounded I am setting myself against you. She cut the wires—that is certain—and is, I believe, entitled to our thanks. How she knew of their location I cannot tell and I fear she will die with the secret on her lips. As to Ralph and Edna, neither you nor I can conceive of their guilt.”

Mr. Stebbins was reticent on that subject, and Philip changed it.

“If we are to protect our property from a great loss something must be done very soon,” he said. “The damage caused by idleness will be greater than what was to be saved by the cutdown, not to mention the destruction of Mill No. 4. I see by the morning papers that our stock sold yesterday for 209.”

Mr. Stebbins gasped.

“Then I am ruined!” he cried. “I have all of mine hypothecated at \$200.”

“Perhaps the falling off will be only temporary,” was the soothing reply. “I have every confidence in the ultimate arrangement of our affairs, and have left orders with my broker to purchase for me at every decline.”

Mr. Stebbins seemed hardly to hear him.

“I am ruined,” he repeated, in a faint voice.

“How many shares do you hold?”

“Three hundred. I am ruined. There is no doubt about it.”

“What will you take for your holdings, *en bloc*?”

The president looked up blankly.

“Do you want them?”

“I have a client who does, if the price is right. I will give you \$25 a share above the highest price to-day—whatever it is—for the lot.”

“You can have them,” said Mr. Stebbins.

“Put that in writing.”

“I will.” He reached for a pen. “And I will resign from the directorate at the meeting which I have called for to-day at four. The Lord knows I haven’t had a good night’s rest since this row began.”

Armed with the contract Westland went from the

house with a lighter heart, for he had taken another step along the road that Ellen wished so dearly he should tread. He met Hugh before he reached his destination, and was telling him the news when Detective Murray joined them.

“I bear sad tidings,” he said, looking from one to the other. “Mr. Baker’s dead body was found in the river this morning.”

“His body!” exclaimed both men at once.

“Yes. According to Mr. Melbourg’s story the treasurer left the mill just a moment before the firing. He may have fallen in the darkness and struck his head against the stone embankment. At any rate there is a fracture of the skull which the doctors say would be fatal even had he been rescued.”

“I am very sorry,” Westland said simply. Hugh looked grave but said nothing.

“Such is life,” commented the detective. “To-day we are here—to-morrow we are— By the way, the man Converse and several of his associates have disappeared. They probably were afraid the French girl would confess,” he added, tentatively.

Westland shook his head and said he could not believe her guilty. Her conduct was, in his opinion, totally inconsistent with such a hypothesis.

“You would change your mind, I guess, if you saw the machinery we found under the floor of her room,” was the response. “Yes, it is true; she had an arrangement by which she could blow up any mill in Riverfall at her pleasure. That’s one thing we’ve got down fine. We have proof, also, that she was in that room at the

moment Mill No. 4 was exploded, and also on the night when the letter was sent demanding that we release the people in the hall under threat of another explosion. There are few cleverer cases in the history of crime. I am sorry young Melbourg got mixed up in the matter, but you ought to know the facts, Mr. Westland. Now, when the guilt of Miss LaVerre is certain, can you afford for your reputation's sake to continue her bondsman?"

Quite stunned by these statements, Mr. Westland went in search of Ellen, to whom he related what he had heard. The death of Mr. Baker impressed her greatly, and in a hushed voice she gave utterance to regret that he could not have met the great change in a more suitable frame of mind. As to Nathalie she said, "Her guilt or innocence is not the main question; we must save her life before we talk of that." And he stooped to kiss her, thinking sadly of the young girl whose soul hovered between earth and heaven and whom he now knew was the affianced of his cousin.

When the directors met Mr. Stebbins offered his resignation and proposed that Philip Westland be chosen to fill the vacancy. This was such a surprise to the others that the motion was declared carried without debate. Mr. Stebbins said he did not wish to state his reason for resigning, and Mr. Westland, who waited in an adjoining room, was invited to take his place at once on the Board. The first business in order was the selection of another director, to take the place of Mr. Baker, deceased, and Mr. Westland, to the astonishment of some of those present, proposed the name of Miss Ellen Eastman.

All had heard of the will by which Senator Eastman

bequeathed his fortune to the woman who had led the forces of the locked-out operatives in their fight against the Corporation, but all were not prepared for this *coup*. One of them, Director Stearns, arose and spoke with some heat.

“I do not care to act on a Board with that woman,” he said, angrily.

“The lady proposed is one of our largest stockholders,” replied Westland, courteously. “Am I to understand that Mr. Stearns resigns from the Board?”

“I certainly do,” was the answer. “I will not be a party to the plan it is evidently intended to carry out.”

Mr. Stearns flounced from the room in a state of high dudgeon.

“I perhaps ought to state,” said Mr. Westland, composedly, when the meeting was ready to proceed with business, “that Miss Eastman will be, within a brief time, my wife.”

Quite paralyzed by this statement the remaining directors had voted the lady into office almost before they knew what they were doing. Philip now had three of the directors—Ellen, himself and a Mr. Edwards—that he could rely on, but the Board consisted of seven, leaving a majority still in doubt. To his delight one more director was ready to play into his hands. Mr. Rice, a Boston lawyer, arose and remarked with irony that if Mr. Westland intended to favor the scheme he had advocated previously he did not care to remain longer. His resignation was consequently accepted, and Hugh Mayfield elected in his stead.

Everything had worked better than Philip had thought possible, and the newly constituted board pro-

ceeded to choose its officers, as follows: President, Philip Westland; Vice-President, Ellen Eastman; Treasurer, Hugh Mayfield. After which it adjourned subject to call.

At the close of the meeting Mr. Stearns returned and announced in an ill temper that he should appeal to the courts to contest Miss Eastman's election. "I am told that she is not of age," he said.

"Ah, but she is," replied Westland. "She is twenty-one—to-day."

When he went to tell Ellen what had been done she was inclined to object, for he had given her no intimation of his intention to use her name. But he easily persuaded her that all was for the best.

"The people have more confidence in you than in me," he said smiling. "The stockholders cannot turn us out now until February, at any rate, and before that time a great many things may happen. One has already transpired, the price of cotton has gone down half a cent a pound, and is at the rate it was before the reduction in wages. Don't interfere with my plans, dearest. We have thousands of mouths to feed, and we cannot be particular about trifles."

That night an immense crowd gathered about a written notice that had just been posted on Mill No. 2, and as these lines were read frantic shouts of joy rent the air:

The Great Central Mills will be opened next Monday morning at the old schedule. All who wish employment are requested to notify the treasurer before that time.

PHILIP WESTLAND, *President.*

HUGH MAYFIELD, *Treasurer.*

XXVII

John Westland, on his sick-bed in Florida, fumed at the news which constantly arrived concerning Riverfall. His physician has since declared that he would have died weeks before but for a rigid determination to defeat the "assaults" on the property he had spent his life in acquiring. When he learned from Philip that he had gone way over to the enemy, he was furious. And when Edna added her last plea for the mill-workers he called a lawyer and cut her off with \$2,000 a year, in a codicil to his will, leaving the signature until he could learn what effect this would have on her intentions. His letter to Mr. Baker was supplemented with another to Mr. Stearns, on whom he felt he could rely, declaring that any compromise with the advocates of capitulation was out of the question; but this arrived one day too late to be of service, Philip being already installed in office.

The telegraph, through the Florida "Times-Union," told Mr. Westland, Sr., of the culmination that had placed on "his" directorate a cotton-spinner and a weaver who had reëstablished wages that he had sworn never should be paid in "his" mills. So the weary old man took his pen and signed the codicil which disinherited his only child, after which he went to sleep, to awake, let us trust, in a better land, where there are

no harassing problems to annoy and distress the virtuous.

The news was doubly painful to Edna, who had hoped all along that her father would ultimately return, and that she might convince him of the justice of Philip's change of policy. For the fortune she had lost she thought little and cared less. It was sad to know that her parent had died with bitterness against her in his heart, but her conscience told her she had acted rightly. When they brought the body home she attended the customary rites and wore the regulation mourning, and her nearest friends considerably refrained from referring to the subject of the will in conversation with her.

Ellen had become her most intimate friend, now that Nathalie was confined to her bed, and the two girls grew devotedly attached to each other as the days went by. But Ellen was beginning to feel the effects of the terrific strain under which she had labored, and confessed to attacks of insomnia that left her spiritless and exhausted. Hugh let out the fact that neither had eaten more than once a day during that awful fortnight when food was so scarce, in order to husband their resources for those weaker than themselves. His superb physique brought him through all right, but the woman was suffering from the experience.

Edna never tired of talking of the night she and Nathalie visited the mill together. One day she made some astonishing statements to her friend:

"You can imagine how frightened I was," she said, "when I heard Mr. Baker hastening after me. Even

when Ralph's voice assured me I was safer, I was far from comfortable. Then came the crash at the window and the awful noise of the rifles; and then we were under arrest and poor Nathalie lay on the floor, fearfully injured. Such a din, so many men shouting and running about! I was really glad when we got inside the jail, even though we were prisoners. The parlor where they put us was bright and pleasant, and there were pretty pictures on the walls."

Ellen stared at her.

"You could not see the pictures!" she said, wonderingly.

"Ralph could describe them to me, couldn't he? I have fifty pictures of my own, and I know them all by heart, but I don't think they ever seemed as nice to me as those in the jail. The jailer's wife was so good, too. She is very sweet, with rosy cheeks and brown eyes."

Ellen blinked rapidly. She had feared her tired brain would collapse, and now she felt that the time was coming. It could not be that she heard her companion aright.

"How do you know the color of her eyes?" she asked faintly.

"Oh, I have ways of telling. The sound of a voice conveys a very good idea of personality. For instance, I know that your hair is dark, that your eyes look like a deep pool in the midst of a wood and that you wear a wide linen collar and black gown."

Edna must have heard these things and remembered them. But Ellen's brain was tired, all the same. She felt as if it were not going just right.

“When we came out of the jail,” pursued Edna vivaciously, “there was a woman standing in the doorway of the large white house just as you turn the corner. She had a child in her arms and seemed frightened. The sky was perfectly clear, not a cloud anywhere. Oh, I can tell the weather! Such glorious air could not belong to a dismal day.”

She took up her guitar and struck a chord on the strings. Then she put it down again.

“But it *was* frightful in the mill,” she began, as if in terror. “That dark place suddenly lighted up with the flash of those rifles—the gleaming barrels levelled at us——”

Her auditor interrupted with some impatience.

“Flashes and gleams, child? What do you know of lights and shades? I cannot comprehend at all!”

Edna laughed gayly.

“Why, Ellen, before I was seven I could see as well as any one. I know that guns flash fire when they are discharged, and that light glances from rifle barrels. I have had hundreds of books read to me, and I have a good memory.”

When Philip came in Edna could conceal her secret no longer. The jar on her senses by the discharge of the rifles had done what the highest paid physicians had been unable to effect—partially restored her long-lost sight! At first she saw but little, lights and shadows only, but later she could make out shapes, and now she could tell one person from another at close range. She was so happy she could hardly contain herself, though, fearful that the restoration might be only temporary, she had held back the truth as long as she could.

The news was sent to Ralph, who came to offer his congratulations, but nothing could brighten him much. His thoughts were altogether with his little sweetheart, who had not yet shown any sign of knowing him.

When Nathalie did regain consciousness she was alone with Ralph. She had evidently forgotten the events that led to her prostration, for she inquired in whose house she was, and how she came to be so ill. The rifle ball had been extracted, and the anodynes that Dr. McNally administered deadened the direct pain from the wound.

In spite of Ralph's devotion he was much chagrined that his loved one should take part in such a plot. In the face of Ellen's explicit statements of her abhorrence of violent methods the girl's conduct seemed wholly without excuse. But Nathalie's danger was still too great to allow any such thought to find utterance. Her question as to what had occurred was met with evasion, which seemed to trouble her. Suddenly she burst out—

“Oh, I—I remember!” (She began to sob.)
“Ralph! Can you—ever—forgive me?”

He leaned over the bed and soothed her.

“I was so—so wicked!” she moaned. “Was any one hurt but me?”

“No, darling—hush!”

“I am so glad! I deserve my punishment; but I meant well, Ralph, indeed I did! I thought it would prevent the poor people being turned out of doors again—and the nights had grown so cold!”

“There,” he said, gently, “you must not get excited.

Lie still and listen, for I have much good news to tell. An overturn has taken place in the management of the mills. Phil has been elected president, and—yes, dear—Hugh Mayfield is in Mr. Baker's place. Think of that! The people cannot be turned out of their homes, and—best of all—the mills are running. The old wages are paid, too, and Philip has great hopes for the future. He says the time is coming when the houses will be rent free. The soldiers have gone, and when you go out every one you meet will wear a smile."

Nathalie's face that had lightened grew sombre again.

"No face will wear a smile for me," she said, wiping away the tears that fell fast. "And I meant to help them in all I did! I thought Ellen would really be glad—though she would not wish to know in advance—and I never understood how she felt until that night you came to my door with her. Then I saw it all at once, and got Edna to go with me while I cut the wires, though she had no idea what I intended. And, when I had it finished and was coming up the stairs, I heard her scream. I ran up and met you, and you scolded me. And then—the soldiers broke in and fired—and that was the last I knew."

It was quite clear now that Ralph's heart warmed toward the child.

"Well, dear," he said, "it's all over, and we should be thankful it's no worse. Dr. McNally says you must not talk for a few days, and he only permitted me to stay with you on my promise that you should keep quiet."

"Just one thing more," she pleaded wistfully.

“Have the soldiers, the officers—anybody—found the men—who placed the wires there?”

He shook his head.

“Then I am willing to suffer.” She gave a sigh of intense relief. “I am willing even to die. They will ask many questions—the police—but I shall tell them nothing. Those men meant to help the poor people, as I did, only they made a great mistake. I shall not tell their names—never!”

This reflection seemed to give her comfort, for she repeated the closing words over and over, till at last she fell asleep.

President Westland of the Great Central Corporation was spending considerable time during these days in the company of Detective Murray of Pinkerton's, and the latter personage was convinced at last that he might as well throw up his case against Ralph and Edna. There was, of course, not the slightest evidence against either of them. Philip tried to have Nathalie included in the list, but to no purpose. He urged that the apparatus under her floor might have been placed there during her absence, to throw suspicion on an innocent party. Perhaps, he said, it was done during the temporary eviction of the tenants.

“I have positive proof that she was in the room when Mill No. 4 was destroyed,” replied Murray. “It is a case for the Superior Court, Mr. Westland, and it must go there.”

The New York newspapers had a good deal to say about the “trick” by which Westland secured control

of the directorate; and Ellen, in the highly nervous state to which she was reduced, had a copy of one of them placed in her hands by an inconsiderate caller. At Philip's next visit to her room he found her much excited.

"You must write a denial of these horrible slanders in the 'Herald'!" she cried. "You have read them, I suppose."

He sat down and took her trembling hands in his strong ones.

"Yes, I have read them," he answered. "And technically, at least, they are true. I *have* done what I could to depreciate the selling price of the stock, so as to get possession of it at a price we can afford to pay."

She drew back and wrenched her hands from his.

"Listen a moment, love. We are running the mills to keep a town from starvation. Had we not got possession thousands might have perished. We cannot consider the incomes of well-to-do people for the present. You would not have tolerated the dynamiters, but we are destroying the property of the stockholders for the present as effectually as they tried to do. Mill No. 4, lying in ruins, is as profitable at this moment as any of the other six. Our goods are even boycotted to some extent by the wholesale merchants."

He could not please her, for she instantly took the other side.

"The mill owners robbed the people," she said, in a low tone, as if addressing herself rather than him. "They gave us long hours and low wages, and kept back unwarranted sums out of the product of our toil.

Now that we have the opportunity, may we not in justice take our own? In the twenty-two years my mother and I worked for them they received thrice the value of their shares. In the name of Heaven, how much do I owe them?"

"Yes, Ellen," he answered, "but many of those who hold stock to-day have bought it in recent years. Some who paid \$600 and \$650 a share could not sell for \$200. The 'Herald' tells the truth about that."

She spoke with set eyes, like a seeress.

"Why did they buy the shares at that high price?" she queried. "You know very well. It was to gain an easy living at the cost of low-paid toilers. They knew, or could have known, by what outrageous oppression the twelve per cent. dividends on quintuply-watered stock were produced. They took a partnership in that villainy, as the ancestors of some of them did in privateers and slavers! If the privateers were caught and swung from the yard-arm—if the negroes rose and cut the throats of their captors—who will extend them sympathy? These purchasers of Riverfall stock played a game of hazard."

He realized that her mind was not quite normal, and he thought it best to remain silent for the present. After a little she proceeded:

"The capital of the Corporation is five million dollars. All that was ever invested here from outside is one million. Hugh knows. They built the first two mills, part of the houses and the original dam out of the million, and the rest has grown from surplus earnings. The capitalist has had a fine time. He has drawn

enormous profits. The workman has been permitted to exist, and his wife and children have kindly been allowed to labor by his side till they and he have produced this immense property. The stockholder has had his share. It is time the laborer had his!”

Still he said nothing, and her next words cut him like a knife.

“I made you a promise—I said I would marry you. I have changed my mind. How could I be the wife of a man who turned women and children out of doors in October, who cared not if they starved, who let one of them die——”

“Ellen!” he gasped. “*Ellen!*”

“And who,” she went on rapidly, “reserves his pity for the pampered darlings of the aristocracy, lest they soil their dainty hands and cease devouring the bread stolen from honest labor! They may lose a trifle of their ill-gotten wealth, and his tender heart is bursting with sympathy! Its every pulsation is opposed to the dearest wishes of my soul; and yet he told me he loved me!”

He knew that his worst fears were realized. Her mind was giving way.

“He does love you, Ellen,” he said, bending toward her; “he always will.”

She burst into tears and seemed as weak as an infant.

When he could make an excuse to leave her, he went as fast as possible to Dr. McNally’s. He explained the crisis, and the physician hastened to Ellen’s room. As he was about to knock he heard hysterical laughter.

“Have you heard the news?” cried Ellen, as he

entered. "I have inherited five hundred thousand dollars! I can live in a palace and buy anything I want! No more of these low-down mill operatives for me!"

She stood erect, with one of her arms raised above her head, in the attitude of a mad queen. Hugh, who arrived a moment later, took in the situation at a glance, and helped persuade the distracted girl to accompany him to the doctor's house, where she was put under restraint and given a quieting potion.

"I don't like the looks of the thing; on my word, I don't," mused the physician, in response to Philip's anxious inquiry. "But we shall see—we shall see."

XXVIII

The will of John Westland, when it was presented for probate, astonished all his relations. That he might disinherit Edna was feared by Philip, though he could hardly believe the old gentleman would carry his feelings so far. She was his only child, and she was totally blind, at least as far as he knew when he signed the testament. To cut her off with just enough to keep her out of the almshouse seemed incredible in a parent who had always shown much love, though his disappointment at having no son had never been concealed. Philip had not realized till now how bitterly his uncle resented the change that had taken place in Riverfall. Edna was the only being on whom her father could wreak vengeance, and an estate valued—at least before the lock-out—at more than a million was taken from her by a stroke of the pen almost with the last movement of his hand.

As soon as he knew what had happened Philip called the others into council. His heart was full of the misfortune that had happened to Ellen, but he could not leave his helpless cousin to hear this news from strangers. As gently as possible he told her that her father's threat had been fulfilled.

“What does it matter?” was her only comment. “I shall not starve, you say, and if need be I think I could even earn something, after a little. I only wish

my dear father could know what a blessing Heaven has sent me in the restoration of my sight."

Philip wondered if that father was conscious of the scene that was being enacted. If so he must repent bitterly his rashness.

"Who gets the estate, then?" inquired Ralph moodily.

"You never would guess."

"Some hospital or missionary society, I suppose?"

"No. The property goes to one who will, I feel assured, permit all our plans to be carried out. Hospital trustees and missionaries might not do that."

The young man stared, and Edna's countenance showed great curiosity.

"Out with it!" cried Ralph. "I'm not good at riddles."

"He has left every dollar to *you!*" said Philip, gravely.

"*To me!* What are you talking about. I'm as deep in this thing as Edna."

"Ah, but he didn't know! He wouldn't leave it to her, and naturally he couldn't leave it to me. There was no one but you."

Ralph put both his hands in his trousers pockets, and walked up and down the room two or three times with his mouth closed tightly.

"I've a notion never to speak to you again, Phil Westland!" he said at last, pausing before his cousin with angry countenance.

"What's the matter?" asked Edna, opening her eyes in wonder.

“Do you imagine—either of you,” was the hot response, “that I’ll touch a cent of that money—that I’ll be a party to robbing a girl of her rights? What in thunder have I ever done to make you think I’m such a cur!”

“You’ll have to take it,” responded Westland, “or all my schemes are spoiled! It’s either you or the Metropolitan Museum of Fine Arts—there’s no other choice.”

“I’ll be hanged if I do!” cried Ralph, “no, not even to help you out. I’d like to know why Edna can’t contest such a silly will, made by a man in his dotage, just to satisfy spite——”

But the blind girl’s hand was on his shoulder.

“I can’t let you say anything against my father,” she said, earnestly. “I agree with Philip, and I never would dream of contesting an arrangement of one who in all his life gave me only kindness. You will have to take it,” she continued, with a smile, “and become a trustee for the poor people of Riverfall.”

It was some time before Ralph could be brought to their way of thinking, but after a few days he succumbed. Nathalie was the one who tipped the final balance. When he told her in her bed of weakness she put out her hand and took his, pressing it to her lips.

“You can’t refuse, dear,” she said. “All that has been accomplished may be overturned at the next meeting of the stockholders unless your side owns a majority of the shares. It won’t do to run that risk.”

“I can’t!” he said, distressfully. “It would be an outrage!”

“Ralph,” she pleaded, “I am going to die—very, very soon. This is the last thing you can do—for *me*.”

He bade her hush, saying that she was getting better every hour, but she begged for his promise.

“I tell you what I *will* do,” he said, after a long time, “If you’ll get well, I’ll—I’ll *think* of it. If you’re able to sit up in that big chair a fortnight from to-day, when the hearing takes place—maybe—I’ll accept the property—that is, if Edna doesn’t change her mind and put in a contest.”

They clasped hands over the bargain, and Nathalie did her best to carry out her part of the contract. But the poor child grew whiter every hour, and the strength she needed did not seem to come to her wasted frame.

The Westlands, as was natural, moved back to their old quarters in the Agency, and Edna highly enjoyed rambling over the house and seeing with her eyes the objects familiar for years to her touch. She liked the view from the terrace, which was really very pretty, the hills and river beyond the long line of factories affording delightful vistas. She was shocked, however, to find how squalid were the tenement houses occupied by the workpeople, and came home in grief from her first long stroll among them.

“It’s awful!” she said to Philip. “What sort of young men and women can one expect to grow up in such surroundings? Not a flower, not a porch where they can sit out of doors, not a tree in all those lanes! How could my poor father be satisfied to live in this luxurious abode and know that over there his own village endured such conditions? There must be a blindness of the heart, Philip, as well as of the eyes.”

“We are going to change it all,” he responded, cheerfully. “When spring comes and our tenure of office is made sure by Ralph’s votes—and when my sweet Ellen is well enough to aid us—we will so revolutionize Riverfall that no one will recognize it. I have a hundred schemes, and every one is possible, though twelve per cent. may never be paid to the stockholders again. Ellen will be so happy. I want you to accompany us to New York in a few days, where I have made arrangements to consult a specialist about her.”

“I will gladly go,” was the reply. “Nothing will give me greater pleasure than to be of service to my dear sister.”

The journey was made as outlined, Ellen seeming to enjoy the ride on the train, the handsome rooms in the hotel and the stirring sights of the metropolis. As she sat in the private parlor, awaiting the physician, there was nothing in her smiling face that indicated mental derangement. She was clad in a tasteful costume, with her hair becomingly arranged, and on being presented to the medical gentleman she gave him her hand gaily.

“I am glad to see you,” she said. “My friends are laboring under the strange delusion that I am not quite sane—that I need rest and care. Now, I appeal to you, did you ever see a more rational person?”

“You are certainly on the road to recovery,” he ventured.

“Recovery? Recovery from what! I sleep soundly at night. I have just finished an excellent breakfast. My temperature is normal. Perhaps you imagine there is something the matter with my mind; put it to any test

you please. My name is Ellen Eastman. We are in the Hotel Imperial. That gentleman is Philip Westland, and that lady is Edna Westland. What ails me? I really should like to know."

There was nothing in her manner to excite suspicion.

"Miss Eastman is one of the principal owners in the Riverfall mills," said Philip, glancing at the doctor.

Ellen lifted her head and her eyes gleamed with an unnatural light. The right chord had been touched.

"Yes, I am!" she exclaimed, straightening herself in her chair. "I am worth more than half a million! Do you know what it means—to be worth half a million?"

The change was sufficiently plain, but Philip proceeded.

"We are talking of giving our tenants free rent after the beginning of the next financial year," he remarked.

"And why?" asked Ellen, in a sharp, rasping voice. "Why should not a spinner pay rent as well as any one else? He talks of reducing their hours of labor, too! Instead of having them commence at half past six in the morning he wants them to wait till seven! Placed at such a disadvantage, how can we compete with other manufacturers? Those operatives want too much, but they shall never have their way. I must make my dividend!"

Edna thought how strange it was for Ellen to use these expressions. They sounded so unlike the gentle girl who had gone to bed supperless on Riverfall common.

"You believe yourself quite well?" said the physician.

“Certainly. Only”—she paused a moment—“I have some strange dreams. In one of them I imagined—the idea!—that I was a weaver in the mills in which my money is invested! I thought—ha, ha!—that I lived in a lodging like the others, and had the same poor food and clothing—ugh! And I dreamed there was a lock-out, and that soldiers were sent for, and that I slept in a tent their colonel lent me!” She paused, shading her eyes with one hand, thoughtfully. “It was so real that sometimes I almost believe it true, only I know it cannot be. For I am rich, rich as a queen! with more than half a million, all my own! No, it—could—not—have—been.”

The doctor murmured that it must be unpleasant to have dreams like that.

“Terrible,” she answered. “I could not endure to be poor. I presume those who are born to that condition grow used to it, but it would kill me. To work, work, work, early and late; to sleep in a room barely furnished; to eat the food those people have to eat—I would rather die. And yet I dreamed”—she shuddered—“that I was one of them!”

When the doctor left he arranged that Ellen should be taken to a sanitarium near the city, where Edna could be with her constantly. He could give no positive statement yet as to what the outcome would be, but he spoke words of encouragement, and the next day Philip went back to Riverfall hopeful.

Dr. Odlin ordered that his patient (who had not the least idea that she was such) should be humored in every reasonable wish. She soon developed a great fondness

for clothes and jewelry; and very handsome she looked when the modistes had done their best. She asked to be taken to theatres and operas, in which she evinced a childlike pleasure. She drove in the park at the fashionable hour, and her face became well known at the large dry goods and millinery establishments. No one would have suspected her condition, but for the expression that fell from her lips on all occasions:

“I am worth more than half a million, and can buy anything I please! Do you know what that means—half a million?”

She began, also, to talk by the hour of the “palace” she was going to build when spring returned. Not a residence among those she inspected on her drives equalled the descriptions she gave. One day her buildings were to be of brown stone, another of marble, and again of onyx. The sun was to shine perpetually on the lovely grounds. Birds were to sing unceasingly in the evergreen trees. Servants in livery were to respond to every conceivable wish. Gayly-caparisoned steeds were to draw her carriage of truly royal splendor, with coachman and footman in gorgeous liveries. And when tired of this she ended——

“I am one of the largest stockholders in the Great Central Corporation at Riverfall. We have six immense mills, with three thousand people at work in them. They now labor but eleven hours; they must work thirteen. The company pays only twelve per cent.; it shall pay twenty. I want a great deal of money.”

They brought Hugh Mayfield once to see her, hoping

that his honest face would arouse the dormant faculties. He held out his hand, but she drew back with dignified repugnance.

“I remember you,” she said loftily. “You are an employé in my mills, and no doubt an excellent fellow, but you should recognize the difference in our stations. I wish you good-morning.”

Edna, with dim eyes, followed Mayfield into the corridor.

“It must be very painful to hear such language from your old friend,” she said.

“We cannot weigh the words of a distraught mind,” he answered, imperturbably. “When Ellen recovers she will treat me in the old way. What advice does the doctor give?”

“That we exercise patience and do not cross her more than is necessary. He believes that in the end her phantasies will vanish as they came. God grant it! Have you seen Nathalie recently?”

“Yes.”

“She—she is getting well?”

“She never will be well.”

Edna uttered a slight scream.

“You do not think so?” she protested. “Poor, poor Ralph!”

“I am sure of it.”

The result of this conversation was to obtain Philip's consent that Edna should accompany Hugh back to Riverfall. Her duty seemed divided at this point. When Mr. Westland heard what Hugh had said he bade her go, but when Ellen learned it she was angry.

“Do you mean to leave me for a common working girl!” she demanded with a frown. “I know—I remember distinctly—you think I am not rational, but I am. Nathalie is one of the people that made the trouble which closed the mills. She was in league with the wretches who destroyed one of our most valuable buildings; let the jailor take care of her—it is no work for a lady!” Then when Edna looked the sorrow she felt, Ellen melted a little. “I suppose we must be charitable,” she said. “Go, if you wish, but be careful. Those people are liable to spread any sort of contagion. Have your clothing fumigated before you return.”

Nathalie was very shy when she met Edna. The sight brought back vividly that awful night, when she took her helpless friend into such mortal peril. But Miss Westland had many words of comfort.

“I never can repay what I owe you,” she whispered, as Nathalie turned away her face. “Had it not been for our adventure I might have been blind to my dying day. The oculists agree that it was the combination of fright and noise that gave me back my vision. It is you, then, I must thank—under God—that I can look on the blessed sunlight and the dear faces of my friends.”

Nathalie still covered her countenance from view.

“I am glad if my great error has brought good to any one,” she answered, faintly. “I did not see how wrong it was. You have all been so kind, I am dreadfully ashamed. No one has spoken a cross word, and sometimes that seems harder to bear than punishment. I thought at first they would hang me, but now I suppose it will only be a long term in prison.”

“Indeed it will not!” answered Miss Westland. “No one has suffered except yourself, and you have endured quite enough, poor girl! If some one else had consented to operate that battery, every mill in Riverfall might have been destroyed. You did a magnificent act when we took our midnight journey. I think you a real heroine, and so does Philip.”

This brightened the invalid a little, and she uncovered her face.

“You will be good to Ralph when I am gone?” she whispered.

“When—you—are——”

“Yes. It will be soon now. I promised to try to sit up next Tuesday, but I am weaker than ever to-day. Dear Ralph! I love him so! And he needs some one—some good girl—to watch over and advise him. Are you not happy to see his face now—the best boy on earth!”

Edna was about to caution the sick girl against unhealthful fancies, but she had fallen asleep with a smile hovering around her pale lips.

XXIX

There was a warm time at the February meeting of stockholders. The minority, who felt their large profits slipping from them, made a good deal of talk, but the faction represented by the Westlands and Ralph Melbourg had undoubted control. In a corporation there is little help for those who are outvoted, even by the narrowest margin, and in this case the balance was tipped safely toward the reformers. One or two of the smaller holders of stock used impolite language, and even shook their fists in the faces of the re-elected president and treasurer, but that amounted to nothing. Philip and Hugh had agreed not to let their tempers get the better of them.

A very able financier had been engaged at a handsome salary to assist Mayfield in his unaccustomed duties. In spite of the ill-will of the trade, the superior quality of goods produced at Riverfall, and the willingness of the managers to "meet the market" in prices soon put them where every yard of cloth they could produce was wanted. Hugh's great value, as may be supposed, was in his close touch with the operatives, who held him only second to Ellen in their regard, and were highly pleased to find themselves in his employ. Every cloud was therefore dissipated for Philip, except the dark one that encompassed his sweetheart.

She had improved but little, apparently, and early in

March Dr. Odlin advised a change. After consultation among the three, Philip and Edna decided to take a southern trip with her, the physician being induced to accompany the party. They made the journey by easy stages, stopping for a short time at Washington, Savannah and St. Augustine, finally reaching Palm Beach.

For some days Ellen seemed quite happy in the tropical atmosphere. She walked and drove a great deal, and sat on the veranda of the Royal Ponciana till late each night, showing a buoyancy of spirits that gave no indication of her malady. Then she suddenly became sombre, responding reluctantly when spoken to and preferring to be by herself. She no longer cared to ride or to hear music or conversation—and at last became melancholy to a marked degree. She denied, when questioned, that anything was the matter, but her actions disputed the assertion. Her friends did not dare leave her a minute alone.

One morning at breakfast, after a long silence, she asked in a troubled tone why one set of people should always be served and others do the serving. Mr. Westland tried to explain that the owner of the hotel paid the servants, but she was not satisfied.

“They are busy, while we are doing nothing,” she said. “It cannot be right that some should always serve and others be served by them. I feel that I am assisting at an injustice, and I want a waiter to sit at the table this noon and let me wait on him.”

Mr. Westland persuaded her to finish her breakfast, though she ate little, and after a talk with Dr. Odlin he explained the situation to the chief steward, who served

lunch in a private dining-room, and sent one of his men to play the peculiar rôle required. When Ellen found the man at table she took her place behind his chair and attended to his orders with diligence. It was only with a strong effort that Westland could keep back his tears at the pathetic spectacle.

When the meal was finished and the waiter had departed she found a new cause for criticism. She called Philip's attention to a gardener at work on the lawn.

"Tell me," she said, "why that man wears poorer clothes than you, though he labors all day and you enjoy your leisure? It is a very unfair arrangement."

He tried to explain about property and its privileges, as carefully as if she were a child of five, taking her first lesson. He told her how those who worked received stipulated sums, which were theirs to do what they pleased with. Some persons spent their wages or salaries as fast as received, and on account of such improvidence found no rest from toil. Others put their earnings into investments, and if they saved more than they used, the balance descended to their children, as her father's had done to her.

She listened with the utmost attention.

"So some people can compel others to do all their work—and I am one of those?" she asked, as he concluded.

"Yes, my love."

"But it cannot be right, Philip. Our pleasant life makes much disagreeable toil. While we rest in the shade others are in the hot kitchens, preparing our meals. When we return from a delightful drive they

have our horses to groom and our carriages to wash. It is all wrong!" she cried, apprehensively. "I want to do my share, and shall never be content till I may."

"Darling," he answered, "you are to be my wife. It is the duty of a husband to work for both. As soon as you are quite well our wedding will take place."

Glancing about to see that no one was looking she kissed his hand.

"Let me help!" she pleaded, in a low voice. "I want to be of use. I feel like a thief when I eat what others have earned, and wear what tired fingers have put together for my benefit. When I can really help, Philip, I shall be happy again."

In a few days the party started to return north. It was raining when they took the carriage at the hotel entrance, and Ellen nearly lost the train in her sympathy for the "poor driver," who had to sit out in the shower. She talked all the way of the unreasonableness of being inside the landau, while he was in the rain. On the railway her thoughts flew to the engineer and fireman, who all night watched over the safety of passengers who never sat up for them. Westland's answers to her hundred questions did not satisfy her. It was clearly wrong, she argued, that those who did nothing should fare better than those who toiled. When, in the course of the talk, he referred to Riverfall, she asked him many questions about that place, which she did not remember ever visiting. She wanted to go there and help the poor operatives in some way, and when he assured her that she should have that privilege she grew radiant. From this time she gained steadily, though

memory was still to be appealed to before the cure was complete. Dr. Odlin wanted to wait till some of the improvements in her old home had been begun, at least, before he permitted her to view it again. He relied on the wave of happiness which was being stored up for her. And one Saturday evening, about five o'clock, he alighted with the Westlands and his patient at the Riverfall station, where an immense crowd was gathered, manifesting the most eager interest.

One of them, impossible to restrain, caught sight of her, and cried, "Three cheers for Ellen!" which were given with a will by thousands of throats.

"Who are those people," she asked, turning wonderingly to Philip, "and why do they cheer me?"

"They are the workers in the mills," he answered, drawing her arm tightly through his, "who have assembled to welcome you home."

Her puzzled air did not immediately vanish.

"Home?" she repeated, vacantly.

"Yes; home to Riverfall; to the village where Ellen was born, where she tended her loom. Home to Riverfall, where she led the people during the great lock-out, and where she learned to love Philip Westland."

She was silent for a minute, and the great throng scarcely seemed to breathe. Then Hugh came slowly through the mass and won a pleased glance of recognition.

"Ellen," he said, taking her outstretched hand.

"Hugh!" she cried. "Dear, good, faithful Hugh!"

Another shout rent the air, making almost as loud a noise as Mill No. 4 at the explosion. Dr. Odlin

watched Ellen narrowly, and his face lit up as she raised her eyes to his.

“Friends,” he said, “it must give Miss Eastman great pleasure to see the warm home-coming welcome you have assembled to give her; but as she is rather tired from her journey, I must ask you to excuse her for the present.”

The whisper ran around that this was the wonderful doctor they had heard of; and, with three more cheers, the crowd made way to let them pass. As agreed in advance Westland walked with Ellen slowly through the streets to the house where she had lived. When they had ascended the stairs and entered her sitting-room they found that nothing had been changed. It was in every respect the room she had left.

He waited for her to speak, for much depended on her first words. As she took in, one after the other, the familiar objects, a mellow light filled her eyes. The plants had not been permitted to suffer, and the canaries were singing in their cages.

“*It is my home!*” she said, drawing a long breath. “I am Ellen, the mill girl of Riverfall.”

He waited still, overjoyed to see how calm she was.

“I had a strange dream,” she continued. “I thought I was a rich heiress. I am glad it is not true. I shall go back to work to-morrow.”

He ventured to tell her that to-morrow would be Sunday.

“Will it?” she asked, in great surprise. “I thought this was Sunday. Did not somebody tell me the mills were running?”

He said they were, but the machinery stopped Saturday now at four instead of half-past six.

“Ah!” she replied. “I suppose they begin early enough in the morning to make up for it.”

“No, dear, they begin later. The mills do not open in the morning till eight, and they close in the evening at half-past five.”

She seemed much pleased. He sent for supper from the Riverfall House and with it, as had been planned, came Edna and Ralph. The party were actually merry as they sat around the simple board and talked of past and present.

“You have no longer any doubt who you are?” Westland asked, jokingly, as Ellen clasped his hand across the table.

“No, Philip,” she answered, drinking in his loving glance, unabashed by the presence of others. “I am Ellen of Riverfall. I seem to see everything clearly at last. Oh, my darling, how good you have been to me!”

The next day was the fairest Sunday any one remembered seeing in Riverfall. When Ellen looked from her window she heard the churchbells ringing a call to the faithful—at least, that is what the sextons meant them to do. But the metal’s music resolved itself into these words only, and repeated them over and over:

“Ellen—is home—again! Ellen is—home—again!”

A little after ten a sensation ran through the village. Ellen and Mr. Westland were on the street together! People flew to windows, and stared around the edges

of curtains. Small boys tumbled in and out of alleys, in mad anxiety to see without being seen. The men on the sidewalks touched their hats and the women curtsied, giving the couple twice as much room as they needed.

“They are going to church!” ran the whisper, from one to another. “And to the French church, too!” was soon added, to the general astonishment.

Yes, they were going to the French church; had they, then, turned Catholics? No. When Westland asked Ellen where she preferred to attend worship she thought a moment and then said there was but one clergyman in town she would care to hear.

“Only one gave us shelter when we were homeless. It would put me in an irreligious frame of mind to go elsewhere, but I would like to hear good Father Laroche.”

The usher recognized them with a smile and escorted them to a central pew. Ellen did not understand the French language and the meaning of the sermon was lost on her, but she felt a satisfaction in being in the presence of that good man. The clergyman noticed that the visitors received more attention than his discourse, but he was content. He even came to shake their hands before they went out and his fine face beamed with pleasure at Ellen’s fervent “God bless you!”

“When we get things arranged,” she said, as they walked back toward her home, “there are several things I hope to do. I want to erect a large Protestant church, in which some devout man will preach Christianity with no sectarian bias; a place within whose walls any tired

soul can come and find physical or spiritual succor. I would also like to erect a hall, attractive and spacious, that shall be open always to the people for social and recreative purposes. Shall we have money enough for these things, Philip?"

"Yes, dear."

"I would like to go to see Nathalie now," she said presently. "Edna tells me she is confined to her room."

"She will need a little preparation, I think," he answered. "I will consult Dr. McNally. You must conserve your strength, sweetheart. By the way, Edna insists that you must move to the Agency and share her apartments. We have so much to do, it will be most convenient to have you there."

XXX

The invitation to Ellen to remove her home to the Agency was accepted after much debate. Dr. Odlin urged it, as he was obliged to return to his practice in the city, and believed his patient would recover more rapidly in the midst of the pleasant surroundings. Edna plead for Ellen's companionship with all the ardor of her warm nature. Ralph thought the idea one that admitted of no argument, and said so in his usual frank and impetuous manner. But the voice that finally turned the scale was Philip's. Appreciating the real reason for Ellen's hesitation—a natural dislike to living as a member of the family of her betrothed before marriage—he brought Dr. Odlin to admit that there was no real objection to the nuptials taking place at any time.

When he urged her to make no more delay Ellen asked, half in earnest, if it were not dangerous to marry a woman whose mind had so recently been unbalanced, but he declared himself ready to take every risk.

“I have waited so long!” he said, pleadingly.

They agreed entirely upon the sort of wedding they wished. Not the least display, only a simple service, in the presence of their most intimate friends.

“Just Edna, Ralph and Hugh? That will be enough, will it not?” he said.

“One other, if you are willing,” she answered pen-

sively. And when he looked the question she said, "Nathalie."

"We shall have to be married in jail, then. Oh," he added quickly, "I'm not objecting!"

But Dr. McNally, on hearing of the plan, had a better one. He knew that, use what skill he might, his patient was not long for this world. She could, he thought, be carried without danger to some more cheerful home, where she could spend her remaining days in greater comfort. A further consultation among those interested resulted in preparing the brightest and largest chamber at the Agency for the coming guest. When the journey was successfully accomplished Ralph smiled for the first time in weeks, and Nathalie's pale face beamed with placid delight.

To the sick girl's great joy the ceremony was arranged to take place in her room, and even the wedding breakfast was served in an ante-chamber, where through the open doors she could see and hear everything. She was too weak to speak above a whisper when the news was conveyed to her, but she pressed the hands of each in turn, and begged them not to curtail their gayeties on her account. It would make her very glad to hear their cheerful voices, she said.

When the breakfast was nearly ended Ellen spoke of how happy they all ought to be, though she claimed the best right to head the list. "Do you know, Nathalie," she said, as she sat facing the invalid, "the mills are already running on shorter hours and making money at that? The future is so bright for our people! Philip tells me he hopes to raise wages soon, and later to give

absolutely free rents! Until a new hospital, a library and an evening school building are erected and paid for, the directors have decided not to declare over four per cent. dividends. Ah, my *husband*”—she paused and drank in that word—“is a very good man, for a capitalist!”

She laughed brightly as she pronounced the hateful epithet, and Westland regarded her with deep affection.

“I doubt if there’s much of the old style capitalist left in me,” said he. “I have learned some important lessons during the past month or two.”

“Let me play ‘teacher,’” cried Ellen. “I will see how well your tasks are done.”

“I have learned,” he began, “that wealth should never be permitted to accumulate in private hands beyond a very limited extent; that all natural increases in value should be the heritage of the entire community where they occur; that the State should confiscate private fortunes on the deaths of those so foolish as to secretly amass them; that no child should be poorly nourished, meanly clad or deprived of a good education merely because its father is not an able financier; and—above all—that there can be no overproduction of clothing and food, while a single human being is cold or hungry.”

Ellen clapped her hands like a child.

“You have learned the alphabet. The rest will come easy!” she exclaimed.

Philip put his hand on her arm in the gladness of possession.

“ We who sit at this table,” he continued, gravely, “ are able, by one form or another of chicanery, to claim three-fourths of Riverfall, giving us, if we choose to exercise it, practical ownership of the bodies and souls of over nine thousand persons. We must get control of the rest, too, as soon as we can; not to exploit it for our own benefit, no, indeed! but to give it back to its rightful owners, the people who have created it by their labor.”

His wife seemed to hang on his words.

“ Give it back? ” she repeated vaguely.

“ Yes. We want an ideal community in which each will share in all work and the benefits to be derived therefrom; or, as it has been better put by our great Master,* ‘ From each according to his ability, to each according to his need.’ The responsibility for the use of millions is too great for any one man or any hundred men. I want it put on nine thousand shoulders.”

She threw her arms enthusiastically about him.

“ The idea is magnificent! ” she exclaimed.

“ Indeed it is! ” assented Ralph Melbourg, catching Nathalie’s rapt expression. “ What do you say, Edna? Shall we join Phil in this plan? ”

Miss Westland regarded with a sweet smile her cousin’s bright face. Her sight was now fully restored, and there was no trace of her former misfortune.

“ You forget, my dear Ralph,” she answered, “ how nearly penniless I am. Your adhesion is all that is needed to assure success.”

“ Oh, pshaw! ” he retorted, “ you know I only took

* Edward Bellamy.

possession of your fortune to help you over the legal difficulties. "Of course I'm going to give it back to you again."

"If you do, I shall certainly use it for our community, so it will amount to the same thing."

"No, it won't, for then it will be your gift to them, as it should, not mine. We're with you, Phil. Count in our stock and buy up the rest as soon as you can."

Westland said he would do so, and in the state of the market he thought he could secure good bargains. He believed he could get the balance at an average of less than \$200 a share.

"Won't that be robbing the poor owners?" asked Ellen archly. "Some of them paid much higher, I am afraid."

"When one is on a quest for stolen goods he need not be too sensitive."

"Forgive me for a slanderer," she responded warmly. "There is no trace of the capitalist left in you."

"Just a little. Even in this righteous cause none of us will be wise to surrender his last dollar. While the world at large is governed by its present social system—which we at this table cannot overturn at our mere caprice—each needs a certain amount of forethought for himself. In a land lower than the sea, dykes are necessary. Some day, please God, the people will own all the dykes in common, but for the present we must guard our homesteads."

Hugh asked Philip to explain what changes in Riverfall and its inhabitants he expected to be able to accomplish. Mollie fetched a big roll of plans that had been

prepared, and at Nathalie's earnest request they were spread on the counterpane of the bed she occupied, so that she might see as well as the others.

"Now, this first plan," said Mr. Westland, "you will have no difficulty in understanding, for it is our town as it exists to-day. This one" (unrolling it) "is what we hope it will be in two years at the farthest."

Ralph stared blankly at the great sheet of paper, and Nathalie seemed entirely puzzled.

"Little is left of present conditions except the mills and the natural topography, and there's no reason why anything should be. Instead of the helter-skelter lack of arrangement of lanes and alleys, we have, as you see, a broad avenue in which a wide strip of shaded green will occupy the central portion; also a circle, three hundred feet in diameter, in the middle of which a fountain is to be placed; the other principal streets radiating from this centre in all directions and the subordinate ones in circular form at regular distances. These frequent bits of green are little parks and gardens that will be open to the mothers and small children in each locality. Along the river bank fields of commodious extent are reserved for cricket, baseball and other games, while the girls and boys have outdoor gymnasiums here and there. On this spot" (indicating the place) "the finest building we intend to erect will stand—the public library and reading-room, and I may add that Andrew Carnegie's name will not affront callers at the entrance. Reservations are made here and there, as you will see, for schools, churches, winter bath houses and the ordinary public buildings, while the remaining lots will be

occupied by the people, who will own this entire property one day in their absolute right."

"Do you understand it, Ralph?" whispered Nathalie, in whose hand the young man's was nestling.

"Not in the least. What are you going to do with your people while this change is going on, Phil? and where are you going to get all the money to do it with?"

Ellen looked admiringly at her husband as he proceeded to explain.

"The area of the new village is somewhat larger than the old. We will begin half a mile back, on land that is now unused, and build according to this plan toward the present village. By the time we reach it there will be four hundred dwellings ready for occupancy, and those nearest will simply change quarters, others doing the same as the demolitions continue. It has all been figured out by a capable architect. As to the cost the stock we already control brings in \$160,000 a year in dividends, even at four per cent. We have no land to buy, much of the old material will find place in the new structures, and when we have finished, as you may imagine, we shall have a town worth, in the market (though it will never get there) many times the present one. I will show you now several sketches of the buildings we expect to erect."

But Ralph shook his head in a perfectly "dotty" manner, for the elegance and beauty of the structures intended for public use quite overwhelmed him, and he could not comprehend how those rows of tasty cottages, embowered in vines and surrounded with grassplots and gardens, could be habitations intended for "mill-hands."

He had never dreamed of anything equal to this. Edna and Ellen, who had assisted at the planning, laughed delightedly at his expression.

“Why, they look like gentlemen’s residences!” he exclaimed.

“That’s just what they are to be,” replied Philip. “Homes for gentlemen and ladies, in the best sense of the term—honest people who earn instead of steal the necessities and luxuries of life. We believe a good, clean, healthy habitation the first step toward making a good, clean, healthy family. They won’t all show their fitness for these surroundings at once, we don’t expect it; but I predict the general result will surprise and please you. The rent won’t be too high for even the poorest of our people, as nothing at all will be charged. We have a right then to demand cleanliness and care of surroundings of every tenant, and such rules will be rigidly enforced. In two years, I assure you, the village outlined on these plans will be completed and in operation, with little or no indebtedness remaining. We shall have our new schools, both day and evening, our library, our baths, our parks and playgrounds—yes, and our hospital, the building we are in at this moment, with its lawns, being set aside in our scheme for that purpose.”

“And where are you to live?” demanded the young man.

“We have selected—Ellen and I—the sunniest lot on this central circle. It is our one bit of selfishness, and I hope will be forgiven. Our house is to be no better nor worse in its appearance than the others. We

shall do no more for Riverfall than we ask every other resident to do—devote our best energies to its success. Why should we be better housed or fed?”

Nathalie and Ralph were whispering busily together. It was evident they had forgotten the subject that was being discussed, and thinking it unnecessary to explain it farther Philip allowed Mollie to remove the sketches. The hour was approaching when their train was due, and the newly-wedded couple went to make final preparations for the short journey they had permitted themselves.

Ralph was trying to bring into the pale face a tiny bit of color.

“You’ve not forgotten your promise, darling? When the troubles were settled in favor of the people you were to become my wife. These wedding festivities make me impatient.”

The slender fingers—oh, so slender now!—wandered caressingly over his countenance.

“You must wait till I am a *little* better,” she whispered.

“Don’t be too long, then. And we won’t be content like Phil with a ten days’ trip, will we? I’m going to take you across the Atlantic, to the country where you were born. And after that, we’ll go to Venice, and to Rome! I’ll—I’ll take you to see the Holy Father!”

She breathed more rapidly. “I’d love—to see—the Holy Father,” she said, never taking her eyes from his face.

“We’ll go through the Vatican galleries, where there are splendid paintings of the Virgin and the saints! You’ll be quite happy then.”

She spoke drowsily.

“When I see—the Virgin and the saints—I’ll be quite happy.”

The nurse, who had been watching her patient carefully, touched Ralph on the arm, and he rose from the bedside. Nathalie was asleep and it would not do to disturb her. Ellen came to kiss her good-by, but was denied the privilege for the same reason. So she took the red and white roses that adorned the table, placed them where the girl could see them when she awoke, and silently left the chamber.

Two hours later, becoming uneasy at Nathalie’s appearance, the nurse sent for Dr. McNally, who found that the pulse had ceased to beat. It seemed impossible it could be death, for the face was like that of a child in calm slumber. She had merely drifted gently from the earthly to the celestial harbor.

THE END

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