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THE STILL HOUSE OF O'DARROW.

BY

IRVING BACHELLER.

CASSELL & COMPANY, LIMITED:
London, Paris & Melbourne.

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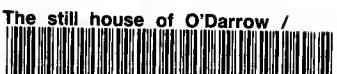

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THE STILL HOUSE OF O'DARROW.

CHAPTER I.

"THE Silver Bottle" was a curious little restaurant, well remembered by old New Yorkers, that stood at the end of an alley on Fourteenth Street snugged in between two high buildings. Its funnel-like roof and chimney, its rounded front and glittering sheath of tin, gave it an outward semblance well suited to its name. When the coals were aglow in its open range of a winter's night, and mine host stood, cheery faced, in his big white apron, turning the hissing chops or pouring water from its simmering kettle, there was no cosier retreat in Gotham. And, oh, my friend Bob Champney was a goodly host, whose salt once taken preserved his memory for ever, and kept one sacred in his sight. He was an Englishman, with a big round belly and a kindly soul, a ready wit, sharpened by much travel, and

that all-embracing certainty of knowledge with which the people of his race have been so highly blessed of Heaven. Indeed, there was nothing in the wide world regarding which he could not give prompt and accurate information. Had one a pain in the stomach, a headache, or even a heartache, he knew the one thing that would give immediate relief. He carried in his pocket a little case of surgical instruments, which had had their baptism of human blood, and which now served only to adorn his tales. Indeed, he was a man who loved the gleam of steel, and who could put it to nobler uses than the slashing of beef. In the broiling of steaks and the cooking of rarebits he was an artist of infallible skill. Now and then some party of gentlemen coming there for meat and drink after the theatre would induce him to trust his gridiron in other hands, and join them at the big round table. Once his tongue was loosed, the Bottle roared with laughter the livelong night. His shirt-sleeves rolled up to the elbows, his ruddy fat face sitting on his shoulders like a big stewpot warmed by the fires of imagination, Bob Champney could hold his auditors so long as he could hold a glass.

One evening in November, 1872, the "Silver Bottle" was quite deserted. It was raining,

and such nights there was but little call upon its hospitality. Only two guests sat at the tables. One of them was a fair-haired, stalwart young fellow, with a boyish, beardless face. The other sat opposite him at the same table. His large features showed the wear of more than threescore years. His head was quite bald upon the top, and its fringe of dark hair, ending in mutton-chop whiskers on either side of the face, was liberally streaked with grey. His dress was almost shabby, but in spite of that one would have set him down a gentleman. When the chops were served, Mine Host Champney came over and sat down beside the young man.

"Mr. Fanning," said he, "I 'ope yer not dead to the world. Y' don't look well. 'Ave a mug o' ale or a sip o' Scotch whiskey served 'ot."

"No, thanks. Do you think that sorrow is like a rat in a hole, to be drowned out with drinking?" said Burton Fanning — that was the young man's name. "Just sit here and talk to me a while—give me a little of the wine of recollection, and I'll be content."

"You've a great power o' gab," said Bob Champney. "Y' orter 'ave been a dominey, or somethin' o' that sort. 'Ere's a man can talk

y' to a standstill. Mr. Fanning, I've the honour to make y' acquainted wi' Mr. Gravingham, a hartist who can draw yer likeness quicker'n I can draw a mug o' ale."

The old gentleman bowed soberly, and, with a dignified remark, shook the hand that Burton Fanning gave him.

"You will find me dull company this evening," said the latter. "I'm in low spirits. This afternoon I had the misfortune to provoke a woman to anger. She applied to me what she thought was the vilest epithet in her vocabulary —called me a 'miserable beggar.' Now, I'm not a beggar, but there's something in a woman's wrath that would make a saint miserable."

"She was probably some purse-proud ignoramus," Mr. Gravingham remarked. "But to be a beggar in this country is almost a proud distinction, sir. Rich men are so common here, and so often vulgar and sordid. The most infamous thing in the world is a rich man whose selfishness increases with his wealth. He is a beggar-making machine."

"'E's wrong in 'is head," mine host remarked, smiling at Burton. "'E gives away 'arf 'e earns to some poor beggar 'at 'e 'ires for a clerk. I 'ad a chap 'ere by the name o' Reeker as took to drink 'n' lost his place.

First I knew Gravingham 'ad 'im for a clerk. But 'pon me word 'e was crookin' 'is elbow 'arf the time."

The dull, deep-set blue eyes of the old gentleman brightened with indignation.

"It's not pleasant for a gentleman to associate with a vulgar sot," said he, "but if the sot is utterly cast out, what hope is there for him? However low he may be, the mere fact that he is living in my sight should enlist my sympathy. Now, if I feel it my duty to help him, what am I to do? Shall I throw alms to him out of my window and bid him quit my sight, as if he were a leper? No; for in giving my alms I would rob him of his self-respect. I prefer to give him employment, and such pay as my limited means will allow."

"'E's allus tinkerin' wi' broken 'arts an' tryin' to mend 'em," said mine host, winking knowingly at the young man. "'E was born rich, 'nd w'en 'e lost 'is fortune 'e didn't lose none o' 'is rich feelin's. If a man could get rid o' w'at's born 'n 'is 'art as soon as 'e loses w'at's born 'n 'is pocket 'e'd be better off."

Before Bob Champney had finished this wise remark, the door of the Bottle was opened quickly, and a tall man in a long black cape-

coat, the collar turned up around his ears, entered the room. He walked with a quick, stealthy stride to one of the tables, and, seating himself, pulled down his slouch hat close upon his eyes. Mine host rose directly, and sent a waiter to the new guest.

"A chop and some ale," said the man, in a savage guttural tone, as the waiter approached him. "Be quick, be quick!" he added impatiently, without looking up.

He sat leaning forward, his elbows resting upon the table while he waited. When his supper was served, he ate quickly, as if with ravening hunger. On the moment of finishing his meal he tossed a coin to the waiter and hurried out of the room.

"'E's a beastly customer," said Bob Champney, resuming his seat. "'E allus comes of a rainy night when the Bottle is hempty, an' me boys are all afeard of 'im."

"That was O'Darrow," said Mr. Gravingham, "a strange man who has gone to the devil, they say. I knew him slightly years ago: His father was a baronet of Irish descent, who married an English lady, and had a large estate in Warwickshire. The title and the property were left to this fellow. He was the only son, and a sorry prodigal; took to gambling

and drink at an early age, but he knew how to gamble, and is still a rich man. Did you see his face?"

"I could only see that his hair and his eyebrows were almost white," said Burton Fanning. "He kept his face well covered."

"Come with me," said the old gentleman as he rose from the table; "come to my room, and I will show you how it used to look. It's a remarkable face."

The young man followed Mr. Gravingham to the street. After a short walk, the old artist stopped in front of a dingy brick dwelling on Bleecker Street, and stood fumbling in his pockets.

"I'm growing old," he muttered, leaning over to examine a number of keys. Presently he mounted the steps, and tried two or three of them in the lock before he could open it. Burton Fanning followed him in the darkness up three creaking flights of stairs. On the top landing Mr. Gravingham struck a match, and, advancing to an open doorway, invited his guest to enter.

"This is my den," said he, lighting a couple of candles.

The room was just under the roof in the rear of the building. The backward half of

the bare roofing slanted quite acutely to the eaves, so that one could not stand erect under it. There were two small windows to admit the light of day. On a sofa that stood against the wall a man lay sleeping. His clothes were almost ragged, and the half of his face that showed in the dim light was red and swollen. There were also in the room a narrow bed, three or four rickety chairs, and a plain table covered with periodicals and the rubbish of an artist's workshop. Great heaps of books and magazines lay in confusion upon the floor.

"My head is like a hen's nest," said Mr. Gravingham, as he emptied some coal upon the fire in his little stove; "it must be kept warm, or it won't produce anything."

"You seem very much preoccupied, Mr. Fanning," he continued, sitting down beside his guest. "Are you ill?"

"If I look badly, it is because I am a little worried," said the young man.

"Ah, I thought so. Your eyes look dull and worry-worn—they're good Scotch eyes, too, and sorrow ill becomes them. Have you friends in New York?"

"No, sir; I live by myself in a small room on Clinton Place."

"Better stay with me, then, a while, if you

can be content in such humble quarters. I've known many a man to jump into the East River who looked more cheerful than you do. Have a drink? No? Will you pardon me, then, if I drink alone?"

The old gentleman poured a half-tumbler of liquor from a bottle that stood upon the window-sill, and drank it eagerly.

"Forgive me if I show too much interest in your private affairs. I, too, have had trouble, and I like to talk with a man who knows the taste of it. Champney calls me a tinker of hearts—an occupation fit for a fool, I suppose, since there's no money in it. Do you see that poor devil lying on my sofa? He used to scrub and do chores over at the Bottle. Got to drinking and carousing, and presently lost his job. It was the old story of from bad to worse. The other day I met him in the street, and he asked me to help him. 'Well,' said I, 'the best I can do is to offer you a dollar a day to come and arrange my papers.' The fellow is intolerably lazy, and does nothing but eat, sleep, and consume my liquor. I cannot arouse any self-respect in him, and he's a poor clerk for anyone but the devil himself."

The old gentleman took another draught from the bottle, and began smoking a pipe.

He had drunk heavily before reaching his room, and was now rather unsteady in his movements.

"Now let me show you my portrait of O'Darrow," he continued, removing a great heap of papers from the table. "That rascal ought to have had these pictures properly arranged by this time." After a moment's searching he drew from the pile a large sheet of Bristol board, and held it off so that the light of the candles shone fairly upon the portrait it contained. The old artist and his young friend looked with silent admiration upon the handsome face in the picture. Its big black eyes were set under a brow that was admirably arched; the nose and mouth seemed to have been nicely chiselled after the model of a god; the face was oval, and would have been perfect in contour but for a deep scar across the left temple, and a chin not quite prominent enough to complete the forceful outline that nature had designed for it. The hair, dark and almost silken in its appearance, was cut short and brushed carefully. There were deep lines across the broad forehead and about the eyes suggesting sternness. It was the face of a man not above forty years of age, but some of those years must have worn terribly upon his strength.

"I soy, Tinker, I know de gent. I 'as gone home wid him when he was dead full."

The voice came from the sofa, whose occupant had awoke from his slumbers, and now sat blinking and looking at the portrait which the old gentleman held in his hand.

"I would thank you not to address me with such familiarity," said the latter, in a resentful and dignified tone.

"'Scuse me," said the man addressed. "I didn't know ye had pertickler company. I don't want er hurt nobody's feelin's. I was goin' to tell ye how I come near bein' scairt to death one night las' winter. 'At bloke you's showin' up 's dead game, gents. Now you hear me."

"A bloke!" the old gentleman exclaimed indignantly. "You should not apply your odious Bowery slang to a gentleman. By the way, Mr. Fanning, this is Silas Reeker, with whose unfortunate history you are somewhat familiar."

Reeker rose and bowed stiffly.

"Beg yer pardon, Tinker," said he, "I know me languidge ain't jest right fer Fift' Avenye, but I don' mean no disrespec'—see? 'Twar this way: I was workin' late one night over to de Bottle, an' de gent come in 'bout twelve

o'clock, an' says he to de boss—ye know sometimes he's got a voice dat 'd make a bull run—says he, 'Dey's been a cove follerin' me all day, an' I want one o' your boys to go over an' stay wid me, f'r I'm all alone 'n de house.' So I goes upstairs an' shifts me duds, an' purty soon we sloped 'cross town 'up d' avenye. 'Twar a very dark night, an' all the way he kep' a mumblin' an' a-whisperin' to hisself. He walked like a streak, but I tagged him right sharp, and bymbye we got thar. 'Twar a gran' place, gents, and no mistake. 'Twar jus' lined wid gold an' silver an' dymon's and red welvet an' the like o' that. Wall, I went upstairs wid him an' sot down in his room. Purty soon he shoved a bottle o' whiskey under me nose an' a tumbler. An' then he flew mad an' pulled two pistols out o' a drawer an' sneaked up to me, an' says he:—'I've got about t'rough wi' dis business. I want you to take de pistol and use it when I gives ye de word—see?' Says I 'Yis'; but I war that scairt me teet' chattered. Says he, whisperin', 'zif he war afraid somebody'd hear him, 'Dey's a man hangin' 'roun' de house as wants t' kill me, an' if he hear me holler for help 'n th' night I want ye t' git in here mighty quick 'n plunk a ball 'n 'im. Now, take a drink 'n go t' bed 'n de odder

room.' I t'rew a little o' de licker down me neck 'n sneaked behin' a big red cyrt'n dat hung ober de door 'twixt my room an' his'n."

Mr. Reeker paused to light his pipe. The old gentleman had laid down the portrait, and both he and Burton sat listening intently, their elbows resting upon the table. Reeker puffed thoughtfully at his pipe for a moment as if enjoying the suspenseful silence of his auditors. Then he slowly proceeded with his story:—

"'Twar darker'n a ship's hold when he doused de glim, 'n' I slid into bed 's quick 's ever I could. I don't believe 'n no ghos' er nothin' o' that sort, but I kep' a hearin' quare noises, an' once I t'ought I heerd somethin' rustlin' roun' de room, an' when I opened me peeps thar war a white thing standin' near me bed. Den I flops de clos over me face 'n harks a minit. Seemed 'sif dey war some bloke sneakin' roun' de room an' t'rowin' a sigh out of him 'bout every step he took. It kep' a goin' 'A-a-h, a-a-a-h,' till I war nigh scairt to death. Wall, 'n a few minutes 'twar all still. I couldn't hear not'in' but the clock tickin' away 'n de odder room, an' bymby I shut me peeps 'n got down to me knittin'. All t' wunce I t'ought dey war somethin' poundin' me ears, an' woke up wid a jump. I heerd somebody talkin' wid de gent

'n d'odder room. I riz up, but I couldn't see no light burnin'. 'Twar all dark. Of a suddint I heered him jump out o' bed. 'Pon me word, some cove 'd bust inter de house an' was tryin' t' kill de gent.

"'Keep away f'm me,' says de gent 'n a voice dat made de house trimel, and den he let a lot o' cuss words out o' him 'at made me hair stan'. An' purty soon I could hear 'em tusslin' on de carpet. An' of all de poundin'! Say, 'twar like a ton o' rocks! First one war on top an' den de odder, 'n de chairs 'n tables flew 'roun' like fur 'n a cat fight. 'N purty soon dey quit fightin', 'n I could hear de gent breadin' like 'zif he war winded. 'De bloke has done him up an' sneaked sure,' says I to meself."

"Why didn't you go and help him?" Mr. Gravingham demanded, interrupting the speaker.

"Say, I wouldn't 'a got muxed up 'n dat squabble fer all de gold 'at 'd slide down-hill in January. No, no, Tinker; I wa'n't takin' no chances. I didn't want no fightin' in de dark, so I lay quiet 'n took me comfort. Soon 's daylight come I sneaked out o' bed wid de popgun 'n me han' an' peeked behin' de cyrt'n. Holy Mudder! what a sight! Chairs 'n tables 'n bricky-brack scattered 'roun,' 'n de ole man layin' 'n de middle o' de floor all covered wid

blood. I t'ought he'd croaked sure, 'n I slipped on me duds 'n made tracks fer de street. I'd had enough o' wisitin' wi' de bon ton, 'n I went down t' de Bowery and trew all de whiskey down me neck dat Jake Humper 'd sell me. Wall, I never knew not'in' till I woke up 'n de cooler, 'n den I t'ought I'd been 'rested fer murder—hope t'die if I didn't. Ye see, de odder bloke 'd sneaked 'n: I didn't know but dey'd put de necktie on me fer dat job. 'Pon me word, gents, I war never s' happy 'n me life as w'en I heerd 'twar only fer bein' full dey'd took me in, 'n soon 's I war let out I shook de town. Now jes' hol' yer breath 'till I tell ye—de gent wa'n't dead at all. I'll take me oat' de firs' day I got back t' town I seen him on de street, er mebbe 'twar a ghos'. Dat's de whole story, gents, 'n I feel better for tellin' it. Now I'll hol' me tongue."

"It was probably a burglar," said Mr. Gravingham, holding the portrait up to the light again. "But it is strange that the assault has been kept secret so long. Probably the police have their reasons. Your part in the affair was not highly creditable, Reeker. If O'Darrow had died they could have hung you for his murder."

"Dat's wot I t'ought, Tinker, an' so I jes'

shook de town," said Mr. Reeker, with a smart twinkle in his eyes.

"You are an ass, Reeker, and the less you talk about this the better for you," said the old gentleman. "O'Darrow is a strange man," he continued, addressing Burton, who had taken no part in the conversation. "They say he is gruff and a good deal of a cynic. He was a wild youth—quarrelled with his father and became a sort of social outcast among his friends in England. You look as if you needed sleep, sir; won't you lie down and rest awhile?"

"No, thank you," said Burton, rising. "I must go to my own room."

"Very well; let me walk home with you, then," said the old gentleman. "Oh, I don't mind late hours, I am used to them."

Reeker had fallen fast asleep again before they started out, and as they walked on in silence the grey light of early dawn began to break in over the housetops.

CHAPTER II.

BURTON FANNING had come to New York fresh from college and a rural home. He had brought with him many wise plans, but plans must yield to conditions, and there's no telling what will happen to a young man. The resistless forces that begin to play with him at the very outset of his career will haze him cruelly if he shows too much conceit. "Look here, my young Master of Arts," they will say when they get him in a tight corner, "let us see if you are a master of situations." Ten to one they'll give him a thorough drubbing, after which he will feel worse than the poor freshman who has received a coat of treacle and goose-down. He'll be lucky if they don't make an incurable fool of him. Young Mr. Fanning had been roughly handled this first year of his life in New York, but he kept a stout heart and a cheerful face. He could not have foreseen that in his work as a newspaper reporter he was to meet Colonel Fairweather Crouch and fall in

love with the colonel's daughter. Falling in love was a thing he had never reckoned upon. He had come to the city with a fine contempt for riches. His mind was bent upon a noble conquest, in which all sordid considerations were counted among his foes. But now, within twelve months after his graduation, he had determined to give up journalism for more profitable employment. This love affair had shaken the foundations of his character like a moral earthquake. His poverty had tripped him when he was well on the way to success, and now in the mart of his imagination money was at a higher premium than it had ever been before.

"Crouch is a notoriously rich man," the city editor had said to young Mr. Fanning one day while the campaign of '72 was at its height. "He has political ambition, and wants to talk on the new issues. You are to meet him at his house this evening. He'll probably talk an arm off you, but boil it down to a column."

Burton Fanning was not yet cured of a certain youthful confidence in men, and Colonel Crouch's cordiality flattered him. He worked hard upon the interview. The colonel's nebulous ideas on reconstruction and the tariff were put in logical order, and set forth with such

piquancy and felicitous phrasing that they were taken up by the National Committee and scattered broadcast in pamphlet form. The colonel was so well pleased that he shortly invited the young man to dine with him at his house.

"I'm a man of business," said Colonel Crouch, when Mr. Fanning was shown into the library, where he was sitting alone. Without further remark he handed the young man a fifty-dollar bill.

"What is this for?" young Mr. Fanning inquired, while he held the bill in his hand.

"It is a slight acknowledgment of your service to me."

"I thank you, sir, but I really cannot accept it. I have been paid for the article."

Colonel Crouch took back the bill, and looked at him in dumb amazement.

"Have I bid too low?" he asked presently. "I'll make it a hundred with pleasure."

"You owe me nothing, and your hundred dollars would be the price of my self-respect, which I value more than any amount of money," said the young man.

"If one can afford it, that's a very proper feeling," said the colonel, with whom everything had its price. "Forgive me if I have given

offence by trying to help you along a bit." Colonel Crouch laid both his hands upon Burton's shoulders, and shook him good-naturedly. Then he excused himself for a moment, and presently returned with his daughter, to whom Burton was introduced.

"Helen and I are quite by ourselves," said the colonel. "Mrs. Crouch is at Lennox, and will not return for a month."

As a débutante of the previous season Helen Crouch had not achieved the brilliant success in society that her mamma had planned for her. She was good-looking enough to provoke admiration in any company, but the stubborn little miss would not submit to maternal management.

Colonel Crouch had grown rich quite suddenly. Both he and his wife had sprung from poor but respectable Yankee stock, and the young lady had inherited some ideas that were more fashionable among her ancestors than among her associates. She held, for instance, that in the matter of marriage the one to be suited was herself. She had received offers from a number of gentlemen, any one of whom would have been acceptable to her parents. But in spite of their devotion and the solicitous urging of her mamma, Helen Crouch was not

yet even engaged. There was young Mr. Pendleton Scaggs, who suited her mamma perfectly, and whose father was many times a millionaire. He was a representative suitor. Sweet-voiced, slim-legged and generally fragile, no amount of money could bridge the gap between this young man and Helen Crouch's ideal. She was a full-blooded, well-grown young miss, and her big dark eyes had the gleam of indignant scorn when her mamma recommended Mr. Scaggs. The big Baron de Bonsilene, who had also offered himself, was a man more to her liking, although well on toward fifty years of age.

When Helen Crouch came in upon her father's arm, young Mr. Fanning thought he had never seen so beautiful a woman. It was no doll face he looked upon. Although its features were nicely cut, the expression of her face was a bit too serious at times to become a lady of fashion ; but what it lost on this account it gained in dignity and sincerity. She hated sham and dissimulation, and found all too much of it in fashionable life. She enjoyed above all things taking charge of the housekeeping when her mother was away, and the colonel depended largely upon her clever management. Helen liked young Mr. Fanning at first sight, and

made him feel quite at home. He came very near her stalwart idea of manhood, and, indeed, a handsomer young man had never sat at the colonel's table. His tall, erect form and Herculean shoulders were quite in keeping with his deep voice and unaffected manner of speech. When he was about to leave the house, Helen Crouch gave him her hand, and remarked laughingly that she hoped he would have occasion to interview her father again.

"I may wish to get your ideas," he said.

"I will talk quite freely, if you will agree not to publish it," she replied.

Burton was sent to see the colonel again, but found him busy.

"My daughter will entertain you for a few moments," said Colonel Crouch. "I will be with you presently."

When, after an hour, the colonel came into the drawing-room, he found the young couple chatting together, and not at all impatient of delay.

"Ah, ha!" he thought; "I don't know but the young rascals are getting a little too well acquainted."

He could see no danger of serious consequences, however, and no occasion to shut the young fellow out of his home.

Outside of business Colonel Crouch had very little shrewdness, and needed watching. He was, indeed, a bit too honest in suiting his actions to his impulses. He often remarked that the shams and deceptions of fashionable life reminded him of forgery and worthless cheques and breaches of trust. Polite society was a bore to him, and his wife, who had got to be a social favourite, only kept him in line by scourging him with threats and invectives. When she was away he enjoyed the glorious privilege of doing as he pleased. He had learned to respect Burton Fanning, and welcomed him at his home with sincere delight. And why should he not? The young man was a gentleman — one, too, who had learned the secret of mixing talk and silence in just the proportions to make agreeable companionship. Burton dined frequently with his new-made friends, and when Colonel Crouch went into a neighbouring state to address the voters he was invited to accompany him and report the trip. Helen and her maid went with them, and while Colonel Crouch was engaged with politics, the protection of his daughter fell naturally to the young man.

On Mrs. Crouch's return there was a great tempest in the family, to which the portly

form of her husband was uncomfortably exposed.

"I am astonished," said the indignant lady, "that you invited a low, beggarly Bohemian to come here and meet our daughter! It's a mercy you didn't turn the house into a bar-room!"

"I am a man of business, madam," the colonel remarked, somewhat warmly. "I had to repay his kindness, and being assured he was a gentleman, we could see no harm in having him dine with us."

"You could see no harm in it!" Mrs. Crouch exclaimed, stamping her foot sharply. "Just look at your daughter! She does nothing but mope in the house and talk about that reporter—a poor penny-a-liner, if you please, whom she is indebted to her father for meeting. The love-sick ninny! She has had the impudence to tell me that he is just her ideal!"

Mrs. Crouch pronounced these words with a provoking sneer, accompanied by appropriate grimaces.

"Then stay at home, madam, and manage the house yourself," said Colonel Crouch, as he left the room and hurried away to his club.

Immediately after this second visit to the

colonel's house Burton Fanning made an important discovery in his own heart. His mind took wings and went soaring into a new empyrean, and left the meaner part of him to struggle vainly with the tasks of life. The next time he called at the home of the Crouches he was bent upon quite a new sort of business. The butler took his card upstairs, and shortly returned to say in a frigid tone that "the young lady was not at 'ome, sir, and would not be 'ome for some time, sir." Here was a new discovery. It indicated that he was no longer welcome at the colonel's house. Smarting with this suspicion, he went at once to his room and wrote the following letter :—

Dear Miss Crouch,—I wonder if you really wished me to call again when you invited me to do so, or was it a mere form of politeness? Please let me know if I may come to see you and be welcome in your father's house? It will be a great kindness to me if you speak frankly, whatever your answer may be. Permit me to say that it will give me great pleasure to come—that is the least I can say of it, and the most that it would be proper for me to say at present. Your father will know of whom to inquire regarding my character. I think he will find that the only bad thing about me is the fact that I am a poor man. I shall await your reply with much anxiety, and am very sincerely yours,

Burton Fanning.

Next day Burton received the following reply to his note :—

DEAR MR. FANNING,—I hardly know how to answer your welcome letter. I am not dealing in light words when I say that it would give me great pleasure to know you better. You had best ask my father at once if you may come and visit us. I fear that you may not find his answer favourable, but we must abide by it, unless something happens to change his mind. With kind wishes, believe me your friend,

HELEN CROUCH.

The young man had not expected a reply so prompt and favourable. He wrote immediately to Colonel Crouch that he would be glad of an early opportunity to speak with him on a personal matter. The colonel's reply was decidedly brief and formal. It said simply :— "Mr. Fairweather Crouch will be pleased to see Mr. Fanning at the house of the former on Tuesday evening of next week, at eight o'clock."

The young man was frightened by the curtness of this note. Its tone suggested opposition. When the hour of his appointment came, however, he did not shrink from the performance of his part. Mr. and Mrs. Crouch met him in the library. The chilliness of his reception quite unhorsed him.

"You have just returned from Lennox, I believe," he said, addressing Mrs. Crouch.

She nodded coolly.

"It is another matter regarding which you wish to see us—is it not, Mr. Fanning?" the lady inquired.

"It is, madam," he rejoined in a dignified tone. "The subject relates to your daughter and to myself."

Burton hesitated.

"Indeed!" exclaimed the lady, as she looked reproachfully at her husband, who sat twirling his watch-chain with an air of fear and dejection. "Pray tell us what it is."

"I entertain a very serious regard for her," said he, "and I have come to ask you if I may meet her here in your home on terms of equality —nothing more."

"Then I can spare you any further words," said Mrs. Crouch sharply. "A marriage, sir, between my daughter and you would be impossible."

"May I ask you to tell me why?" said Burton, in a voice that trembled with emotion.

"She cannot marry a beggar."

Mrs. Crouch arose as she spoke, and confronted him with indignant eyes.

"Agnes," said the colonel, calmly, "please

be seated. There is no occasion for hard words. Pardon her, Mr. Fanning; she spoke hastily. We both entertain the highest regard for you, but my daughter would make a bad wife for a poor man. I hope you will dismiss the subject from your mind at once. We simply cannot grant your request."

"As Mr. Fanning is a friend of yours, I will leave you to discuss this matter with him," said the lady, addressing her husband with provoking irony as she left the room.

Burton rose from his chair.

"I have nothing further to say," said he, nervously brushing his hat. "I did not hope for a favourable reply. But I do not expect to be poor always, Colonel Crouch, and I thought you might offer me some slight encouragement."

"I am sorry your visits here have resulted so seriously," said the colonel, extending his hand. "But you will soon forget all about it, my boy. Good-night."

And Burton passed out upon the street, feeling sadly alone in the world. "You will soon forget all about it." He repeated the idle words to himself in a half-choked whisper, and laughed grimly, while his very soul was smarting, and the tears stood in his eyes. The insulting assumption of superiority with which his over-

tures had been received hurt him past all remedy. He was thoroughly angry, and in this there was the relish of salvation for him. If one's grief is only mixed with indignation, it will never do him any harm. When he sat down to eat in the Silver Bottle he felt hopelessly bankrupt, and would have traded half his life for a Fortunatus' purse. But after he left Mr. Gravingham's garret he felt better. He knew that men had grown suddenly famous in his profession by some fortunate discovery in the maze of circumstance surrounding the events of daily life. Might he not hope that good luck would soon favour him? Reeker's story had appealed strongly to his imagination. The man O'Darrow was to him a strangely interesting character. The face that Mr. Gravingham had drawn, and the tall figure clad in black which he had seen at the Silver Bottle, haunted his dreams. He determined if possible to fathom the mystery of O'Darrow's friendless, hermit life. There could be no impertinence, he thought, in seeking out all facts of public concern regarding the attempt upon his life described by Reeker. Within a week he called one evening at Mr. Gravingham's.

"I came to talk with you a little more about Mr. O'Darrow," said Burton. "Do you know the gentleman?"

"I knew him slightly when we were boys. Our fathers had adjoining estates in Warwickshire, England. But I would not think of speaking to him now. He has prospered, and I—well, I'm not a millionaire. O'Darrow is a hard man, sir, and as likely to curse you as not for asking him a civil question. The portrait I showed you was made from a photograph for a weekly paper nearly ten years ago."

"I wonder if he would tell the story of that midnight assault?"

"Possibly; although I think the man abhors any sort of publicity. Let me see. Perhaps I could get you a letter to him."

"I would be greatly obliged for the favour," said Burton.

"I'm glad of the chance to serve you. Look in upon me to-morrow about it."

When Burton called next afternoon, he found the letter waiting for him which Mr. Gravingham had promised.

"This letter is written by a lawyer who has done some business for O'Darrow," said the old gentleman, as he handed the missive to Burton. "He hesitated about writing it; said he did not know him well, and was afraid he might treat you unkindly; but I assured him that we would take our risk of that. O'Darrow comes to the

Silver Bottle of an evening now and then; perhaps you had better watch your opportunity of meeting him there."

At his lodgings that evening the young man found another letter of even greater interest to him.

Dear Mr. Fanning [it said],—I feel very guilty indeed while writing these lines, because both my father and mother have forbidden any sort of communication with you. But I must write and tell you how much I regret the unhappy result of your appeal to them. I fear they have treated you very rudely, and if their minds should change I hope you may not find it impossible to forgive them. But, alas! old folks are obstinate, and they say a young man's fancy is lightly turned.

I am, and ever shall be,

Your friend,

Helen Crouch.

CHAPTER III.

BURTON ate his dinner every evening at the Silver Bottle after that, and often spent half the night listening to the chatter of mine host while waiting for O'Darrow. It was well on toward eleven o'clock one rainy evening, more than a week after he got the note of introduction, when his patience was at last rewarded. Burton sat over his coffee, looking out of the front window of the little inn. The theatres were not yet closed, and only two or three belated shopmen had come in since nine o'clock. Suddenly he saw the tall, erect figure of O'Darrow come hurrying down the alley. It stopped a moment in the broad beam of light that shot out of the windows, and stood on tiptoe trying to catch a glimpse of the scene within. Then the strange hermit came in and sat down at one of the tables. He carried no umbrella, and his slouch hat and black cape-coat were

dripping. He seized a piece of bread and ate it eagerly, while he gave his order in the same querulous tone that Burton had noted before. It suggested the growl of a dog interrupted in its eating. Annoyed by the water that kept dripping from his hat, he suddenly threw it upon the floor beside him. O'Darrow's face still resembled closely the portrait that Mr. Gravingham had shown, but it was thinner and more deeply furrowed. The scar showed clearly across his temple, from the cavity of the left eye back to his crest of snow-white hair. Now that the man was close at hand, Burton hesitated to approach him; but he desired more than ever to learn the story of O'Darrow's life. His work as a reporter had brought him into contact with many strange characters, and it had been his duty to chronicle much of romance and mystery in the affairs of men. Of all things, the study of men was to him most interesting. He entertained small hope of getting anything for publication from the man who sat at the next table, but after waiting so long for him he was determined to make the effort. Without further delay he drew the letter from his pocket and stepped to O'Darrow's side.

"Confound it, sir!" said the latter, turning suddenly and shrinking back before Burton had

spoken to him; "confound it, sir, what do you want?" He spoke like one in anger.

"Pardon me if I startled you," said Burton. "May I ask if this is Sir George O'Darrow?"

"It is, sir," was the sharp response, and before Burton could answer he added, "Tell me what you want."

"I have a note of introduction."

O'Darrow took the letter, and tore it open with trembling hands.

He muttered some angry words under his breath, and crushed the sheet of paper as soon as he glanced at it. "Well, tell me what you want. Don't keep me waiting."

He spoke hurriedly, and with great irritation.

"I am a reporter, and I come to you because it is said that you were assaulted by a burglar some time ago, and were seriously injured."

"A newspaper man. Let me alone; that's all I have to say."

"I would not have spoken to you but that there is a man whom I suspect of being the guilty party," said Burton.

O'Darrow turned about and looked squarely into Burton's face for the first time. His brows were contracted, and his black eyes looked fierce and threatening.

"Poor fool! I can't talk with you here

about it," he muttered, after a moment's hesitation. "If you will bother me, come to my house."

"I don't wish to bother you," said Burton, 'but——"

"Come to my house. I'll see you, I say; that's enough."

"At what hour?"

"At any hour. Go back with me, if you like, only stop talking to me."

Burton returned to his table, and waited until O'Darrow had eaten his chop and swallowed his mug of ale. He had not long to wait, for the strange man ate and drank hurriedly, and rose from the table as soon as he had finished. At eleven o'clock they left the Silver Bottle, Burton following closely behind O'Darrow. They walked along at a sharp pace without exchanging a word, and presently turned in upon the great mansion of white marble which Burton had seen many times before, a huge pile standing detached from the neighbouring houses just off Fifth Avenue. Long shades of gold and brown were always drawn behind the great panes, and there was never a light nor a face at its windows to welcome the comer. O'Darrow hurried across the terrace and down the carriage drive, quite

thickly overgrown with weeds, to a side door. He thrust a key into the lock, which grated harshly as he turned it, and then the massive door swung open.

"Come inside," said he sternly, stepping forward and striking a match, with which he lighted one of the gas jets in a chandelier.

"Sit here and wait a moment," he continued, as his companion entered the room. Burton did as he was directed, and O'Darrow left him alone without further remark. He sat waiting until he heard a man's shout echoing through the silent house. He went to the door through which O'Darrow had gone and listened.

"Come up. Do you hear me? Come up, I say." The words came ringing down the great dark hall, into which he was looking, from the top of the house.

"Yes," he answered, and felt his way through the darkness to the staircasing, up which he proceeded as rapidly as possible.

O'Darrow met him at the top of the third flight, and showed him into a large room in the rear of the house. It was sumptuously furnished, but its handsome fittings were tumbled about in wild disorder. There was an alcove at one side of the room, over which hung great portières of old tapestry.

"You see," said O'Darrow, in a threatening tone, drawing a dagger and pointing at a brace of pistols that lay on a dressing-case, "I am armed, and you had better try no tricks here."

"I trust you do not doubt the honesty of my motives," said Burton, feeling a little resentment at the rudeness of his host.

"That's right; show a little spirit. Curse me if you like, but don't give me any of your fool talk." O'Darrow spoke in a milder tone than before, as if he had discovered the ring of true manhood in Burton's words, and was inclined to respect it.

"I can stand anything but a reflection upon my honour," was the reply.

"Egad! I like you better. We shall get along very well, I think," exclaimed O'Darrow, as if pleased by Burton's remark. "You spoke," he continued, lowering his voice until it broke into a hoarse whisper, "of a man who tried to take my life. Tell me what you know about him."

"It is not much. A short time ago I saw a man of the name of Reeker——"

"Wait!" O'Darrow demanded, with an impatient gesture, as he stepped nervously to the dressing-case, and, taking up an opium pipe,

began to prepare a pill for smoking. Having cooked it for a moment over a spirit-lamp, he deftly thrust it into his pipe and lay down upon the bed, holding the sputtering mass of opium close upon the flame of the lamp that rested on a table beside him.

"Proceed, proceed!" he said impatiently, as he inhaled the smoke.

Burton related the story that Reeker had told in Mr. Gravingham's garret. O'Darrow listened intently to every word of it. The pipe fell from his hand upon the floor as soon as the opium was consumed; the stern expression on his face gradually softened into one of eager interest; his eyes grew larger, and shone with an unnatural lustre in the brilliant light.

"Is that all?" he whispered, turning his eyes slowly toward Burton after the last word of the strange recital had been spoken.

"First, let me ask you if Reeker's story is true?"

"True? Yes, it is true," O'Darrow whispered, staring into the face of his visitor.

"Have you told the police?"

"The police! Who would trust them? They are a lot of knaves."

"Have you ever suspected that it was Reeker himself who assaulted you?'

"Do you see that long cut?" O'Darrow whispered, leaning forward and pointing to the scar upon his temple.

"Yes."

"That was the beginning of it. I was coming back from England ten years ago when it happened. I was aboard a steamer in mid-ocean. I could not sleep nights. The moment I went to bed I would lie thinking, thinking. The wind was blowing hard the night I got that scar. It always made me more restless to hear the wind howl. Listen; can you hear it whistling now?"

There was a moment of silence, during which the wind could be heard in a low, plaintive cry as it swept over the roof.

"That sound again!" he continued, scowling angrily. "It always sets me sighing. That night I lay listening to the wind in the cordage until I could stand it no longer. I rose and dressed myself, as I had done before every night since the beginning of the voyage. I went up to the hurricane deck and sat down alone and looked out upon the sea. The moon was shining, and I could discern the glimmer of its light far off on the rolling horizon of water. The stars seemed to stare down upon me as if they were the eyes of God. I had sat for a

long time nursing my misery when suddenly a strange hand touched my shoulder. I looked up, startled. There was a man standing beside me. The moon went under a cloud, so that I could not see his face. He leaned over me and peered into my eyes without speaking. His manner was not unfriendly, and I did not recognise him or suspect his purpose. Suddenly he straightened up and pointed out upon the water. I rose to my feet, trembling with a childish and unaccountable fear of the man beside me.

"'Jump!' he whispered, turning quickly toward me.

"I saw the meaning of his horrible suggestion, and clung nervously to the ship's rail, sick with terror.

"'Jump!' he shouted impatiently. 'Your life has cursed me and all your friends. Jump! I tell you. The agony will be over in a moment.'"

O'Darrow sank back upon his pillow and closed his eyes, as if the thought of that dread command had quite unnerved him. Presently he took a sip of brandy from a bottle standing upon his dressing case, and then proceeded with his narrative.

"The man spoke in loud and angry tones

I knew he meant to do me harm, but I dared not turn to run away from him. He said no more, but laid firm hold upon me, and dragged me toward the stern of the ship. I struggled vainly to free myself. I called loudly for help as I wrestled with him, but my voice broke feebly upon the wind. He lifted me in his arms with the strength of a giant, and swung me over the ship's side. I clung to him, and caught the railing with my heel, and fought him back upon the deck. Again and again he forced me against the rail, and every time I beat him back, struggling with the fierceness of a tiger. Suddenly my pistol dropped from my pocket upon the deck. I had not thought of that. I endeavoured to reach the weapon, but my assailant was quicker than I. Stepping backward with the pistol in his hand, he took aim and fired. I felt the sting of the bullet, and fell unconscious. When I opened my eyes again I was lying in a New York hospital. No one knew who had assaulted me, but I have seen him three times since then. He comes like a ghost. I cannot keep him out," said O'Darrow in a deep whisper, staring wildly about the room. "See," he continued, rising and pointing to some marks upon the wall, "those are bullet holes. There are one, two, three, four of them, and two more

over here, making six times that I have shot at him in this room, but I have not yet been able to wound him mortally. He is quick and clever, and somehow he takes me unawares. The last time he would have killed me had I not fled from the house, whence he only followed me to the door."

"Have you made no effort to apprehend him?" Burton asked.

"Yes; that night I ran to the station house and reported the occurrence to the police. They came and searched the premises, but found no trace of him. Every day and night for six months I had an officer concealed here. But what was the use? We did not see my enemy, and for all I know he may be dead. The police did nothing but rob and annoy me. They are a lot of fools and blackguards. God save me from their hands."

"Can you describe the man who has followed you? How does he look?" Burton ventured to inquire.

"Yes; he is tall, and his face is terrible to look at. His eyes are dark, and they shine like balls of fire in the night." O'Darrow stopped suddenly, and covered his face with his hands.

"And you do not know the man?" Burton asked, after a moment of silence.

"Know him! This is idle talk," O'Darrow continued. "It can do you no good, young man, and for me the subject is not a pleasant one."

"Is there no respect in which I can be of service to you—that is the point I wish to get at," Burton answered, his kindly heart now full of pity for the man before him.

"Ah, can you be of service? That has the right sound," said O'Darrow, rubbing his head as if lost in meditation. "By heaven, sir! I believe you are an honest man." He rose as he spoke and seated himself in a chair close to Burton. "If you will believe it, sir, I haven't a friend in the world; but God knows it would take me long to count my enemies. Through all these troubles no man has ever come and offered help. Well, it is no wonder. In all my life I have known but one man I was willing to trust, and he has robbed me. I have relatives and property in England, but, sir, I wouldn't cross the ocean again to save my soul. I know that man would follow me, and some moment when I least expected it he would throw me into the sea. No, I shall never take the chance of meeting him again on the water. But if I could get some man to go for me—some honest man—he could save me at least

a hundred thousand pounds. Tell me, young man, if it be possible for you to undertake such a mission?"

O'Darrow turned toward his guest with an impatient gesture.

"You can find others who will serve you better on a business errand," said Burton.

"Others?" he replied with manifest irritation. "Why, I could get a thousand men who would be glad to go. But I'll have none of the knaves. I think I would like you, if there's no deception in your looks. I am a rich man, and my money is as good as any. Why will you not hear my proposition?"

"What is the nature of the business?" Burton asked.

"Oh! it is honest enough; have no fear of that, my boy. Much money is due to me there in England. The rascals will not pay it. I believe my lawyer has been in league with them. I want someone to go and collect the money. I will pay you well to serve me; and mind, if you do it faithfully until I die, you shall never need a dollar. Tell me, sir, will you go?"

"I will let you know to-morrow."

"To-morrow! to-morrow!" said the unhappy man, with a sigh of disappointment. "It

is a miserable word. All my life I have been waiting on the morrow. I shall feel better to-morrow. I shall have this thing or that thing settled and off my mind to-morrow. It is a liar—I do not trust it."

Burton rose to go.

"I can call and give you my answer at any hour," said he.

"Make it one o'clock; we can go somewhere and lunch together."

O'Darrow took the lamp, and proceeded to the stairway in advance of his guest.

"I wonder that you choose to live alone in this great house," said Burton, as they descended the stairs.

"A curse upon it!" exclaimed O'Darrow, his deep voice echoing mournfully through the great hall. And in the moment of silence that followed, every deserted chamber round about them seemed to repeat the words. And every statue that the light revealed stood in an attitude of solemn approval.

"It cost me a million dollars," O'Darrow continued, as he led the way. "It has been a curse to me. I would be happier in a hovel. Built it to please my wife, and, egad! it is a fine house, sir. Come in and look about it a little."

As the parlour doors swung ôpen, the light from a score of jets burst suddenly upon the gloom, and a scene of splendour sprang up like magic out of the vanished darkness. Medallions of gold and silver shone upon the walls; white statues of Parian marble mantled in cobwebs stood solemnly to right and left like monuments, and their cold lips seemed to say, "Here is a dead home." There were soft velvet hangings that scattered showers of dust when the hand touched them, and garish treasures of art whose brilliancy was dimmed by moth and mould and the spider's industry. It is strange how, when a house is darkened, and all human spinning has ceased in it, the spider sets up his looms and begins to drape it solemnly after his own caprice. As they strode across the room, their feet fell noiselessly upon the soft carpeting. "I thought we should be happy here," O'Darrow said, as he seated himself upon a sofa. "But my wife was high-spirited, and we quarrelled about all the household arrangements. It was easy to disagree, with such a multitude of things to look after. When she died my servants began to prey upon me; my guests even, not content with my food and wine, stole the bric-à-brac out of my parlours. So one day I discharged the

servants, and locked my house against all comers."

"It is late, and I must go," said Burton, looking at his watch. The atmosphere of the room was close and unwholesome. It was with a feeling of great relief that he stepped out upon the pavement and breathed the sweet air of early morning. He could hear the clatter of bolts after O'Darrow had closed the door. He stood for a moment looking up at the dark and silent mansion, then walked hurriedly down the street, thinking of the mysterious solitary man who dwelt there.

O'Darrow was not a man to Burton's liking. His manner and conversation betrayed fierce passions that had long gone uncontrolled. He was a hard, sordid man. Here he dwelt in the midst of abundance, with the lust of possession still strong upon him. Regarding his mysterious enemy, Burton was convinced that O'Darrow had not told the whole truth.

The man who pursued him must have been deeply wronged. He had talked freely about his struggles with the strange visitor, but regarding the man himself he had been significantly silent. He had not even confessed whether or not he had ever seen him before the first assault. Back of all these tragic events there must be

some terrible record of evil-doing, and this suspicion caused Burton to hesitate regarding the offer that O'Darrow had made him. But his income would be largely increased, and he was now in sore need of money. Money, he felt sure, would have enabled him to win the woman he loved—one dearer to him and fairer than all others. And might he not hope to earn the price of her in time if he were to accept O'Darrow's offer? This consideration appealed to him with decisive force. Having secured a day's leave from the city editor, at the appointed time he called to see his new acquaintance. O'Darrow was in better humour than he had been the night before, but his greeting was curt, and his invitation to enter sounded like a sharp command. His voice had lost some of its harsh and brutal quality, however, and the expression of his face was less severe.

"You're a prompt youngster," said he, looking at his watch. "What have you concluded?"

"To accept your offer," Burton replied.

"Good; let us go to our lunch."

They proceeded at once to a neighbouring restaurant, O'Darrow leading the way with a quick, nervous tread, in silence, his eyes bent upon the ground.

"How soon will you be ready to start?" he asked, when they were seated.

"Within a week, if necessary."

"The sooner the better. In the meantime I wish you would stay at my house. There are letters to write and memoranda to prepare."

"I can come as soon as I am released—perhaps to-morrow," said Burton.

"You see, there are rents long overdue, and investments I made years back that are going to the devil for want of attention. You must take a list of them, with instructions in detail as to each. The rascals will try to put you off, but you must make them pay. Take no nonsense from them—I've waited long enough."

O'Darrow's eyes blazed with anger as he spoke of his tardy debtors. Then he sat in silence until their meal was served, conning the entries in a memorandum-book.

"It will not take long to tell what you are good for, but I shall keep you for a year at least," said O'Darrow, while eating his chop.

"I do not wish to hold the position if I am not able to earn the money," said Burton.

"Stuff!" exclaimed O'Darrow, hotly. "Let us have no sentimental nonsense. There must be a contract for a year, I say. We will have it

drawn this afternoon. Waiter, send for a carriage. It must be ready in ten minutes."

As soon as they had finished eating, they rode down to Nassau Street, where O'Darrow halted the carriage at the door of a large building. Bidding Burton follow, he proceeded to the office of a lawyer, with whom he was evidently unacquainted, where a contract and a power of attorney were drawn in accordance with his directions. They had returned to the street with these documents duly signed, and were waiting for the carriage to draw up to the kerb, when suddenly O'Darrow's face assumed an expression of great alarm. He uttered a fierce oath as he motioned impatiently to the driver, and then stood on tiptoe looking over the heads of the throng. He seized the door-handle as the carriage came in reach, and, wrenching it open, leaped inside. Burton quickly followed him. O'Darrow was pale, and his eyes glared fiercely.

"Drive on, you fool, drive on!" he shouted. Then turning to Burton he said, in a hoarse whisper, "I have just seen him in the crowd. For Heaven's sake, sir, ask that man to drive faster."

As he ceased speaking, O'Darrow turned and peered eagerly through the rear window. Then

he sat muttering to himself as if unconscious that Burton sat beside him. Anon some half-finished imprecation could be distinguished out of the unintelligible jargon that rose to his lips. To Burton it suggested the roaring of deep volcanic fires.

CHAPTER IV.

"I SHALL wish you to remain with me over night," said O'Darrow, as soon as they were returned to the house. "You will be comfortable in the room that is next to mine, and I shall rest better knowing you are there."

"But I would rest better a thousand miles away from you," Burton thought, as he acquiesced in the somewhat selfish plans of his host. The early twilight of a December day was already thickening between the tall rows of brick and stone up and down the city.

"Do you wish to eat?" O'Darrow asked, when their coats were laid aside. "If so, I will wait here until you come back."

"I am not hungry."

"Nor I. Confound the bother of it! I'd never eat if I could have my way. Come, let us sit awhile in the library."

They walked across the big, dark hall and up one flight of stairs. O'Darrow opened a door

near the landing, and after lighting a match entered a large room, and lifted the shades at two of the windows. The last dim light of day fell in upon long cases of books reaching half-way up the walls, and upon the sculptured bust of many a poet and romancer, surmounting them in a solemn row. They sat near one of the windows looking out upon a neglected garden in the rear of the house.

"Talk to me. Say something, for Heaven's sake—anything, I don't care what," O'Darrow demanded sharply, after a moment of silence. There was the same savage scowl upon his face that Burton had noted when he first met him at the Silver Bottle.

"Well, then, supposing I say that it looks like snow," said the latter.

"Don't talk about the snow; dear Heaven! that is too white. Have you ever seen a man hanged?"

"Yes; at the Tombs."

"Did he struggle much—did he seem to suffer?" O'Darrow whispered, leaning forward, his eyes fixed intently on Burton's face.

"Yes; it was early morning—the light was as dim as it is here, and while I could not see other faces distinctly, his face was so pale that I could even see his lips moving when he spoke the

prayer. After the rope was cut he breathed heavily, and one could tell that he was suffering the stern agony of death."

O'Darrow sank back in his chair, his mouth open, and his eyes staring wildly as if the horror of the scene had taken strange hold upon him.

"Tell me about yourself," he whispered, after a short silence. "What have you been doing all your life?"

Burton told him of his life at home and at college, and of his work in the city.

"Enough!" O'Darrow exclaimed presently. "It is an oft-told tale. I was a merry-hearted youth myself, and the beginning of sorrow came not until I was older than you are. Then I fell in love with the daughter of a poor man, but the cursed pride of my father prevented her from becoming my wife. While I was at college he filled her ears with lies about me, and I came home to find her married. I went to her in anger because she had forsaken me, and she told me then what my father had done. That day the sky turned black above me, and the earth was changed into a den of horrors. Believe me, young man," said he, rising and pacing up and down the room, his face glowing with passion, "there is a kind of love that out-

lives a man's strength, and honour, and reason, and life. Have you never felt it?"

"Yes; only in my case," said Burton, "the poverty was on my side, and the parents have stood in the way of our happiness; but I have not—I have not yet abandoned hope."

"I wish you luck; but ten to one they will marry her to some scapegrace whom she won't care a fig for, in spite of you. In these days they make merchandise of the most sacred things. But there! I'm turning preacher. Would it be wise, think you," he asked suddenly, "for me to marry again?"

"Your life would be happier, I have no doubt, with a wife to share this great house with you," said Burton.

"I do not believe it. I had a fiend for a wife before; I might have no better luck again. I could marry, and within a fortnight, too, if I would, wreck that I am. Egad! there are a thousand men in this city ready to sell their daughters to the highest bidder. But I don't take to women of late. It has been years since I looked into a woman's eyes. Ah, well, what hope is there for me, with the devil at my heels? There is no peace for a man who night and day is racked with fear and horror."

O'Darrow listened for a moment after he had

spoken, scarcely breathing. The room was now quite dark, and all was silent in the great house. He rose presently, lit the gas, and filled a pipe with opium, which he smoked with eager relish, reclining on a sofa.

"My doors are all well barred," he continued, thoughtfully, having finished his pipe, "and the windows are securely fastened; but if a man is determined to enter one's house he will find a way."

O'Darrow rose and lit a candle. Then they proceeded in silence down the long stairway to the first floor, and began to inspect the doors and windows on all sides of the house. O'Darrow stopped at each one and tried it with anxious care. The fastenings seemed to be secure, and they shortly returned to the library. Late in the evening Burton was shown to his bed in a room adjoining that in which he had had his first interview with O'Darrow. He retired at once, and, in spite of his nervousness, shortly fell asleep. In the dead of night he was suddenly awakened by a loud shout that echoed strangely through the great house. He sat up in bed and listened. He could hear voices, and the tramp of feet below stairs. The master of the house was evidently receiving some visitor, for there were two men talking. He could hear the gruff

bass voice of O'Darrow and the milder tones of the other, but he could not distinguish their words. It was probably some acquaintance who knew his habit of keeping late hours. But it might be the dreaded enemy of whom O'Darrow had spoken.

Burton rose out of bed and walked stealthily through the dark hall to the top of the stairway. Two flights below him he could see light streaming out of the library door upon the staircasing. They were evidently sitting in that room, and he was now within easy hearing of their talk.

"Don't touch me," O'Darrow shouted suddenly. "Stare at me and grin in my face if it pleases you, but don't lay those cursed hands upon me."

"Hush!" said his visitor. "There's no occasion for loud talk. We'll disturb the guest if you are not careful."

"Oh, he's asleep," O'Darrow answered, his deep voice contrasting sharply with the tense treble of the other. "Come, I'll settle the matter by some sort of gamble. Let us throw the dice to see whether I owe you all or nothing."

O'Darrow's visitor answered in a whisper, and then there was a moment of silence, broken only by the rattling of the dice.

"Hard luck! hard luck!" said O'Darrow after his first throw.

Burton could hear him muttering curses and grinding his teeth as if the rage of ill luck were on him while he scattered the dice a second and third time upon the table.

"That's not so bad!" said he, "not so bad, after all. Let's see you beat it."

Then his visitor took the box and shook it furiously for quite half a minute. The rattling of the ivory cubes seemed to fill the house with an ominous clamour. Suddenly they fell upon the table.

"What!" O'Darrow exclaimed. "Would you ruin me, body and soul? Hold in your luck a little."

His visitor made no answer, but shook the dice again, and shortly brought them down with a bang.

"Lost! My God, why don't you strike me dead and done with it?" O'Darrow shouted fiercely. Then he uttered curses charged with terrible passion, and seemed to be smiting the table with his fists.

"You must wait upon me," said he presently in a calmer tone. "I promise that I will pay you some time, but not now, not now. I'll give you any sort of bond, but you must give me time."

"Your word is sufficient, O'Darrow," said the other. "I have never known you to break your word, though you've broken hearts beyond counting, and mine with all the rest. It's odd that you have saved this one remnant of honour, isn't it?"

"Nonsense," said O'Darrow. "I'll give you a note of hand due in one year."

There was a short interval of silence, after which the two men crossed the floor of the library and went whispering down the stairway. Burton returned to his room, and throwing open a window, looked out upon the darkness. The sky was overcast, and at first his eye could not fathom the inky depths of air below him. After peering down for a moment he could distinguish a dark figure leaning against the parapet at the foot of the terrace. Presently, as footsteps were heard approaching in the street, it lay down upon the ground so as not to be seen by the passer. For a long time Burton stood watching this figure, unable to make out what manner of human being it was, and at length retired to his bed again, but with no better opinion of the strange man with whom fate had brought him into such intimate association. Next morning he was awakened by a loud rap at his door, and the voice of O'Darrow calling him.

"I shall look for you at four o'clock," said his host, who was waiting for him below stairs. "I may feel then like talking business."

The early twilight of December was thickening over the city when Burton returned from his work down town to O'Darrow's house and rang at the side door.

"Egad, young man, you're like a breath of fresh air. The sight of you puts new life in me," O'Darrow said, as he welcomed his guest. "I am hungry for the first time in years. Let us dress and go out to dinner at Delmonico's. After that I may feel like spending an hour in some theatre. You and I are about of a size, and one of my dress-suits would fit you, probably, if you have none."

Burton was not a little surprised by the plans of his host, but entered into them with all the cheerfulness he could command.

While they sat at table O'Darrow's face lost much of its severity, and he gave a few brief directions regarding his business in England without betraying any sign of the mental soreness that had always seemed to embitter his speech. His heart was evidently warming into new life. His mind was for the nonce forgetful of its sufferings and restored to calmness.

Their dinner over, they went down to the

Bowery and sat for a while in one of the cheap theatres, which were then, as now, much frequented by gentlemen who enjoy an occasional night of low comedy. O'Darrow sat puffing a cigar, as if unconscious of all that was passing on the stage.

"I've had enough of this—let us go home," said he presently. They left the theatre at once, and walked hurriedly up town.

When they turned in at O'Darrow's mansion, the moon, just risen above the opposite buildings, shone full upon its front. As its master was about to open the door by which he was wont to enter, his key fell jingling upon the massive stone sill in front of him. He stooped to pick it up, but before his hand had reached it he knelt down with a low, muttered oath, and peered closely at the surface of the white stone. In a moment he struck a match, and held it so that its light fell upon the door-sill.

The flickering gleam revealed some writing in large rudely-shaped characters, enclosed within a broad black band. Burton was not close enough to make out more of it than "O'Darrow" and "Thieves and Murderers," for he was standing behind his host. But O'Darrow read it, and evidently comprehended its meaning.

Speechless with surprise, he held the match in his trembling fingers until it burnt out. Then he began rubbing the inscription fiercely with both hands, as if his life depended on its quick removal, meanwhile launching hot curses from between his clenched teeth. He continued rubbing the stone until not a letter was discernible, and the white marble was stained with the blood of his hands. Presently he stopped and held up his sore and bleeding fingers to look at them. Then he rose to his feet in silence and turned to Burton.

"Open the door and bring me some water," said he, his deep voice trembling with emotion. "By Heaven! that was a soul-scrubbing I'll not soon forget."

Burton unlocked the door and brought out a basin of water, which he poured upon the hands of the unhappy man. Then O'Darrow wet his handkerchief, and carefully wiped the red and black stains from his door-sill.

"I'm only a crazy puppet," said he, after they had entered the house. Burton had found some soft linen, and was binding up the hands of his host.

"I've been so haunted and set upon, it maddens me to think of it, but this counter-irritation has eased my mind a little."

Presently they went upstairs.

"It has done me good, this going about," O'Darrow said, after they were seated in his library. "I've been living too much by myself of late years, and that's devilish bad company."

His voice had grown brutally harsh again, and there was the same fierce wild look in his eyes that always came back to them at night, as if it were borrowed from the glare of the lights.

"Go to bed, Fanning," said he, throwing himself at full length upon a lounge. "You must be ready by this time. I shall lie here and rest a while."

Burton went at once to his room, and had scarcely fallen asleep when he was startled to his feet by a loud peal of laughter that came echoing up through the dark halls. As it died away into silence, he could hear the sound of voices again. Then he threw his door open and listened. The same strange treble voice he had heard the night before greeted his ears. O'Darrow's visitor had come again.

"You lie, sir—you lie!" the stranger shouted. "Do you hope to deceive me? Ha, ha, ha!"

Again that wild laughter rang through the silent house.

"The boy has no business in this house. What can come of it but evil to him? It

is only temporising with fate. This new plan is but a fool's subterfuge. Oh, by all that's sacred, have you not suffered enough? Why continue heaping guilt upon shame and guilt upon shame? Everyone that ever knew you has been cursed beyond all reckoning, and still you are not satisfied. Have you forgotten how your first wife loved you, and how your fits of drunken rage drove her out of your home in Paris?"

"She never came back," said O'Darrow mournfully, after a moment of silence.

"You know why," the stranger retorted in a low, cautious tone. "She knew you would kill her as you had killed others. I tell you the boy is not safe here."

"Must I then remain alone and friendless to the end?" O'Darrow asked. "Friendless and helpless! My riches make my poverty more complete; there is no charity, no pity for it. Just Heaven, what am I to do?"

"Do? I have told you often what to do," the other retorted in a shrill and angry voice. "Pay me what you owe me. Don't try to put me off with foolish parleying. Come and fight me hand to hand. You've pledged yourself to offer no resistance, but I'll swear I'd rather kill you fighting."

"Not yet, my friend. Put away the weapons. I am not ready yet."

"Afraid!" exclaimed the other. "By Heaven! O'Darrow, you have no more manhood than a schoolgirl."

Burton listened for some moments at the top of the stairway, but heard no answer to this taunting remark. He stood there until O'Darrow and his guest came out of the library and went downstairs in the darkness, whispering together as they had done before. Then, locking his door, he went to the window and peered out again. The moon had fallen below the opposite roofs, and a dark shadow now covered the terrace. After a moment he could discern what seemed to be the figure of a man outside the postern gate, by which O'Darrow was in the habit of entering. Presently it moved away down the sidewalk, its head just showing above the wall. Then Burton went to bed again, where he lay awake for hours in expectation of trouble. He began now to fear this mysterious man to whom he had hired himself. It had become a disagreeable piece of business, and he decided to seek release from it immediately. He had learned enough about O'Darrow to give a sickening sense of satisfaction to his curiosity. The shadow of im-

pending tragedy was upon that house, and his impulse was to flee from it. Next morning he found O'Darrow waiting for him in the library.

"We shall try to finish our work to-day, so that you can go at once," said the latter in a kindly tone. "I like your company better than you like mine, probably. Egad! this can hardly be a cheerful place of confinement for a lad like you."

"I have no fault to find with it or with you," said Burton. He tried to think of some excuse for the request he had determined to make. Now that he was face to face with O'Darrow, he lacked the courage to speak out, and so after breakfast they went to work again upon the foreign accounts.

"I am invited to a ball to-morrow night," said O'Darrow, after they had finished their business. "The invitation comes from an old-time friend, and I've half a mind to accept it, if these hands of mine are not too sore."

He drew from his pocket a letter, and read it aloud as follows :—

"I was glad to see you at Delmonico's last evening. Does it mean that you are getting over your habit of hermitising? If so, I hope you will come to Mrs. Van Schuyler's ball to-morrow night, for which cards are enclosed. I can introduce you to some beautiful

women, who, I will wager, have never met a handsomer man than you. Do try to come."

"I thought I had got through with all that kind of nonsense," said O'Darrow. "But I shall try it again. I've had too much of my own company, and I'll go, whatever may come of it."

There was a note of sad self-compassion in O'Darrow's deep voice as he spoke these words. For a long time he sat smoking in silence, and looking thoughtfully out of the window while the closing day gloomed into night.

"Please summon a cab for me while you are out at dinner," said he as Burton rose to go.

CHAPTER V.

BURTON went to the Silver Bottle from O'Darrow's house. Gravingham was there, and a few newspaper writers, one of them a literary critic who had achieved celebrity as a prophet of the new school of realism. Burton sat down with them beside his friend the artist.

"There's not much emotion in our modern life," said the critic who was discussing a recent novel with one of the company. "You know, it's the age of reason."

"There's as much emotion as ever, but you don't observe it," said Gravingham. "You see no emotion in your club or your apartments, or your office, or the parlours of your friends, and so you decide there's none in the world. You have built a stone wall around your life, and you never look over it. Go stand for a day at the gate of Greenwood Cemetery; go sit an hour in St. Mary's of a Sunday morning; give up the theatre and go among the morgues and hospitals

and asylums and tenements where the real tragedy of contemporary life is progressing, and then you'll think there's nothing but emotion in the world."

"That's the blood and thunder of cheap fiction," said the critic. "I refer to the better side of life."

"It's the blood of broken hearts all the same," said Gravingham, his eye kindling. "Shall we say there's no heat in the world because we live in the frigid zone? Your fashionable world is distinctly one of man's creation—it's as artificial as the painted scenery and masquerade of the theatre; it's the north pole of life. I wish it were possible to open a misery fair in this city, but I suppose it would take the whole canopy of heaven to cover the exhibits—your fashionable young women who have been married to brutes, the *blasés* who have had enough of living, the host who suffer poverty, and all who have been crushed under the heel of hard luck. Such a spectacle would correct your notions of life."

"If it did not drive me to madness," said the critic, smiling at the earnestness of the old artist.

"The rich ought to see more of what is passing among the poor," Gravingham continued.

"They are hopelessly apart, and out of sympathy It's the fault of the rich, who segregate themselves in palaces, and sell their sons and daughters at the altar of Mammon. Even the Church has been used as an auction mart for this unholy traffic. I believe, sir, that intermarriage on rational principles between the rich and the poor would hasten the coming of better conditions, and a nobler race of men."

"Impossible!" exclaimed the critic.

"Then the gospel of Christ is vain folly, and the teaching of the saints is mockery," said the old gentleman. "If it is impossible, then marriage will become more and more a matter of buying and selling. If I had a daughter nothing should be good enough to buy her except considerations of character and mutual fitness."

"Such sentiments do greater credit to your heart than to your judgment, Gravingham," said the critic. "They are absurdly visionary. Now here is our friend Fanning, who earns probably twenty dollars a week. Assume that he marries the daughter of a millionaire who has never cost her father less than one hundred dollars a week since the day of her birth. Don't you see that Mr. Fanning would have married himself to a lot of trouble, and that a speedy

divorce would be the happiest result one could look for?"

"That depends," Gravingham replied quickly. "Has the young lady thought upon the problems of life at all? Has she any well-considered aim? If she has not, I am sure Fanning would never ask her to marry him. If her mind is not incapable of serious thought, she will see that to marry a man who has character and a heart strong enough to win her, even though he has nothing else, is good fortune. She can practise self-denial to a very high purpose, which is vastly better than going into a convent as many do; she can turn to and help him in the struggle of his future life. Such love and happiness and noble womanhood will come to her that it will repay her a thousand times for what she has given up."

"It's all very beautiful, but it won't work," the critic rejoined. "Your poor young man has rarely the chance of meeting your rich young lady, and he'd never have the courage if he had the opportunity to woo her."

"That's his fault," said Gravingham, rising from the table. "The most insuperable barrier is sure to lie in the fact that the young lady has been schooled to vicious thinking. If she is favourable to him, and he cannot find the

opportunity to woo her, he has no invention; and if, having found it, he fails, then he's either a coward or a poor lover, or both."

Burton rose with the old gentleman, and bidding the others good-night they left the Bottle and proceeded to the little studio on Bleecker Street. The young man saw in the words of his aged friend a sharp condemnation of himself, and as they walked along in silence he felt that it was just—that he had been a coward and a poor lover. When they were seated before the stove, Burton told Gravingham the story of his meeting with Helen Crouch, and somewhat of his life since then, and of his hopeless passion.

"Has your blood turned to water?" said Gravingham sharply; "to be such a laggard shows you have no spirit. If you are going away you must see her first. Sit down here and write her a letter, and I will make sure that she gets it."

Burton turned to the table at once, and wrote as follows:—

"I am going to England by the *British Queen* this week, on a mission which promises well. I wish, if it is possible, and if you can think it right, to see you again before I go. To be quite frank, I love you, and I have had more consideration for your family than for myself or I would have confessed it before now. It

seems probable that my income will soon be sufficient to warrant me in trying to win your love, if I am not too late.

"I do not know when or where this will reach you, but the man who brings it may be implicitly trusted."

"So she is the daughter of Col. Crouch, of Wall Street fame?" said Gravingham thoughtfully. "I know many of his intimate friends. Let me have the letter, and I shall see that she gets it immediately."

"I thank you with all my heart for your interest in me," said Burton.

"I would not see a man friendless in such a cause," Gravingham replied. "I am living here now in a miserable garret because I married a poor man's daughter and my father cast me out. Yes, sir, he actually cut me off with a shilling for no other reason. I was the son of an English gentleman of considerable wealth, and was thrown upon the world but little prepared for its hard discipline. We had poor prospects at home, and so we came here to take our chances with the crowd. I could draw pretty well—my schooling had taught me that. But it was hard to turn my work into money. We lived in humble quarters, and our dinners—ah, well! they were not always equal to our appetites—but my dear wife never complained. We were always happy and cheerful; we made it a

point to laugh at misfortune. I remember one night we sat down to our supper hungry and with very little to eat. We both began laughing before we had finished—I don't know why, unless it was because we had caught each other acting a part—and we laughed until our tears flowed like wine, and we were looking at each other and sobbing and smiling. If I had been born poor instead of she, if I had known some craft or trade, I think we should not then have found it so hard to make our way among strangers.

"We were getting along well, but when she died my ambition died; my hand forgot its cunning, and the ruins of a great hope fell upon me and crushed me. Since then I have suffered much, and have maintained but an indifferent show of respectability.

"I have learned to endure and be silent, but I cannot endure that sophistry born of brutal ignorance which says that emotion is dying out of the world."

"I hardly think that O'Darrow would agree with our friend the critic," said Burton; "his life was nearly ruined by his father's pride."

"Yes, I know the story; if he had been permitted to marry the woman he loved it would have been a brighter story, and the curtain would not have fallen upon a tragedy as it will.

"After what you have told me, I am sure some man he has wronged is working vengeance upon him; some fierce and cunning foe, who will probably do him to death in time."

Mr. Gravingham was interrupted at this point by the sound of footsteps on the stairs, and presently a slim, sad-looking man came sauntering in with a pail of beer. His clothing was worn and torn, and largely too big for him. He grasped his trousers by the waistband on entering the room, as a policeman might lay hold of a treacherous prisoner.

"This is Hosier, my new clerk," said the old gentleman. "I had to discharge Reeker for general incompetency."

Hosier bowed stiffly, and sat down upon the sofa as if seeking a safer and less conspicuous attitude. He had nothing to say, but as he sat there he was a highly interesting study. His feet, which were encased in enormous shoes, shrank back under the sofa to avoid observation, while Mr. Hosier gazed pensively upon the carpet. His crown was entirely bald, and his face was small and thin.

"I dare say you found it rather cold outside," remarked Mr. Gravingham to the newcomer.

"Yes," he answered, and then he relapsed into silence.

Presently there was the sound of other footsteps on the stairs, and the irrepressible Mr. Reeker walked boldly into the room.

"Top o' de evenin' to ye, gents," said he cordially. "I t'o't I'd jes slide in a minit 'n git some o' de tings I lef' here."

"If you left anything here you're quite welcome to it," said the old gentleman, rising, "but I must request you to get it and leave my room at once."

"Oh, I ain't agoin' t' stay no longer 'n's needful, Tinker," said the unwelcome guest. Then, turning, he spied Mr. Hosier, who was still gazing serenely at the carpet. For a moment Reeker stood looking at the new clerk with undisguised contempt.

"'S a fine bird you've got dis time, Tinker," said he. "Look here, me fren', you'll wear a hole 'n de carpet if ye don' lif' yer eyes off'n it."

"Reeker," said Mr. Gravingham, "I shall make no words with you. Please get your things and go."

Reeker was still contemplating the unhappy Mr. Hosier, and, no doubt, thinking of his recent fall from the Elysian fields. Suddenly his eyes wandered down to the big shoes that were partially hidden under the sofa, then,

stepping forward, he grasped one of Hosier's feet, and held it up for closer inspection.

"Off wi' dem shoes!" he exclaimed, releasing the foot and pointing at it indignantly.

"Off wi' dem shoes!" he shouted again in a voice that would evidently brook no delay.

Mr. Gravingham stepped forward nervously.

"If I may be permitted to ask," said he emphatically, "I would like to know why you request the gentleman to remove his shoes?"

"Why, sir?" asked Reeker indignantly. "Fur de reason why, sir, dat dem shoes is mine."

Further argument was unnecessary, as Mr. Hosier was already removing the shoes from his feet with as much haste as possible.

"Ah, ha!" said Reeker, lifting the lappel of Hosier's coat as soon as he had secured the shoes. "Off wi' dat jacket."

Hosier immediately removed the jacket in question.

"An' now, gents," said Reeker, bowing politely, "havin' got all me belongin's, I wish ye good-night," and he immediately descended the stairs.

Mr. Gravingham was much disturbed by Reeker's visit, and was no doubt sorely tempted to the use of hard words. But he only

administered a mild reproof to Hosier for the liberty he had taken in appropriating to his own use the property of "another gentleman."

When Burton was about to leave, the old artist went with him to the top of the stairs.

"You must have an eye to your own safety while you stay in that house, my boy," said he.

Burton proceeded at once to his own lodgings and to bed, where he lay for hours thinking over what the old gentleman had said, sleepless with impatient longing to know what the near future had in store for him.

CHAPTER VI.

A DECADE had passed since George Ernest O'Darrow forswore all connection with the polite world. It was shortly after the death of his wife, with whom he had led a quarrelsome existence, that he locked his doors and turned his back upon society. There was much gossip about his mysterious conduct at the time. It was known that there were houses in New York where he had never been made welcome, on account of rumours affecting his good name. But this was hardly enough to explain the sudden and radical change in his social attitude; for, despite his moral infirmities, there were many ladies of high position in New York who were, indeed, too glad to receive him. With all associates his manner had been reserved and haughty. In short, he was a man without friends; and so, after his name was dropped from the rolls of fashionable life, the handsome Britisher was soon forgotten.

When he reappeared at Mrs. Van Schuyler's ball, there were not half a dozen people in the house who had seen him before. The few who remembered him were not slow to recognise his erect figure, his air of distinction, and the classic mould of his face, which time had now crowned becomingly with white hair. O'Darrow was very graciously received by the hostess. Rumours of his great wealth and noble breeding spread among the guests, who pressed about him eager for introductions.

"Your daughter is magnificent," said O'Darrow to Mrs. Fairweather Crouch, as they sat together looking at the dance. "You are the most fortunate mother in the world."

"You are very good to say so," said the lady. "She is really a very dear and sensible girl. Such young ladies are so easily spoiled, you know. The flattering attentions they receive are quite enough to turn their heads."

"It has done me good to look at her. I could almost wish to be young again."

"Do you really feel so very old, Sir George? I thought you were still a young man."

"Thank you. My sins and not my years have turned my hair. Indeed, I am not so old as many a younger man."

O'Darrow was a master of the gentle art of

politeness. He knew how to win the favour of women, and Mrs. Crouch was by no means a difficult subject for him. She was, indeed, greatly flattered that he had shown her such distinguished courtesy, while there were so many others in the ball-room who would have been glad of even a word with him. Helen and young Mr. Pendleton Scaggs, with whom she had been dancing, came along presently.

"Oh, Sir George!" exclaimed the young lady, "I've been hearing dreadful things about you—that you have cut all your old acquaintances, and that for years you have lived all alone in your great house. I am really almost afraid of you."

O'Darrow's face turned suddenly pale, and he shot down at her a nervous, startled glance. If a man had said as much he would have kicked him for his impertinence.

"It is true," said he, quickly regaining composure. "I have lived alone for many years, on account of ill-health, but I am better now."

"A rich man, good-looking, and in ill-health! By Jove, sir, you are a tempting mark for the single ladies. Look out for them," said the colonel.

"As if such an anchorite were in danger

of marriage! They say his temper has been spoiled by too much solitude," Helen remarked, as she walked away with Mr. Scaggs. This interesting young gentleman had given up his hopeless pursuit of her, and had, indeed, succeeded in pledging his affections to another.

"Yes, I'm very much in love," said he, at the first reference to his engagement. They were seated in a deserted corner of the drawing-room. "It's a wonder you never fall in love," he continued. "I've always half suspected that you lost your heart when you met that young giant who came to see your father. Here is a letter. It was given me by a friend, who said it was to be put in your hands. If you don't care to hear from that young man, you'd better let me take it back unopened, for it's ten to one the letter comes from him."

Helen gravely folded the letter and tucked it away in her glove.

"Do you know who it is from?" she inquired.

"I can only guess," he replied. "It was known that I should see you to-night, and so—but, whatever it is, I am innocent of all knowledge about it."

Helen excused herself immediately, and returned to her mother, who was still talking with

O'Darrow. One who knew him could tell at a glance that he had tired of the game, as the gamblers say. He had been forced to answer many troublesome questions, and, after all he had suffered, politeness came hard if he were under the slightest irritation. He had been heard to say years agone: "I hate all kinds of men and elderly women." So Mrs. Crouch had not succeeded very well in her effort to entertain him, though she had done her best to deserve success.

"We hope to see you soon at our house," she said, extending her hand.

"I shall be happy to call," O'Darrow answered, and bade them good-night. Then, presenting his excuses to Mrs. Van Schuyler, he hurriedly left the house, not stopping even to summon his carriage. He shortly quickened his pace to a run, muttering oaths as he proceeded down the deserted avenue.

Burton had been working with O'Darrow that afternoon, and, being tired, had gone to his room early in the evening. Now that he was alone in the great house a nameless fear took possession of him. He tried to read as he lay in bed, but was unable to enjoy his book, for he fancied that he could hear the stealthy tread of feet up and down the stairways, and

a sound as of someone whispering outside his door. This ghostly disturbance, and the recollection of the mysterious voices that had roused him from his midnight slumbers, set him thinking to account for them. It was clear to Burton that O'Darrow must be secretly harbouring some person who might possibly be the enemy he so dreaded. As the conviction grew upon him, he rose out of bed and, opening his door, shouted, "Who's there?" at the top of his voice. The echo of his call rang through the vacant rooms until it died away below stairs. He listened for a moment, peering out into the darkened hall, but could only hear the wind rushing over the roof. Then he locked his door again, put out the light, and tried to sleep. At first the great house seemed full of a tumult of strange sounds, which finally fell into the hush of that dim borderland between sleeping and waking. Suddenly a shrill cry of "Help!" broke in upon his sleep. He rose up in bed and listened.

"Help! Fanning! Fanning!" It was O'Darrow's voice that rang through the house. It trembled with terror. He was running up the stairs as if fleeing from some pursuer. Instantly he threw himself against the door of Burton's room, and beat upon it fiercely with his hands.

"Quick, Fanning! quick!" he shouted, pounding savagely upon it with feet and fists.

Burton sprang out of bed in the darkness, and as he drew the bolt of his door the terror-stricken man burst in and sank upon the floor as if exhausted, repeating in a hoarse whisper his piteous appeal for help. Burton stood close against the wall for a moment, not knowing what to do. Then he felt for a match, and lit the gas. O'Darrow lay panting and trembling upon the floor, his face covered with his hands.

"Are you hurt?" Burton asked.

O'Darrow made no reply, but lay motionless where he had fallen. Presently he looked up out of horror-stricken eyes, and asked, in a hoarse whisper, "Do you see blood upon me?"

"I can see no blood," said Burton.

"Here, is there no blood here?" he asked again, feeling his forehead.

"No, sir; I can see no blood upon you."

"Heavens! Is that so? I thought he had cut me there." O'Darrow rose to his feet as he spoke, and stood looking into a mirror. He had not yet removed his gloves or his cape-coat.

"Where is he? Let us try to find him," said Burton.

"Find him!" said O'Darrow, with stern em-

phasis, as he faced suddenly toward the young man. "Thank you, I shall find him, but I shall do my own hunting." He spoke sharply, and added, "I'm sorry to have disturbed you," and then, still trembling with the excitement of his encounter, he went to his room.

Next morning O'Darrow seemed to have forgotten his fright. While they were at breakfast he directed Burton to make immediate arrangements for his passage to England, and drew a cheque to cover the estimated expenses.

"I shall not be with you to-night," said Burton. "Before sailing, I must go to my home for a day or two."

"My house isn't a pleasant stopping place these days," said O'Darrow, "but you will always be welcome there."

"You are very kind. If you will let me speak frankly, I must confess that I, too, have begun to fear the enemy whom you seem powerless to avoid. I have thought sometimes that you suffered him to remain in your house as a secret guest for some reason—possibly because you cannot or dare not dislodge him."

O'Darrow turned pale, and leaned forward frowning.

"Speak not so loudly," he whispered, glancing over his shoulder at the other tables.

Perceiving that there was no one to overhear them, he continued in a low tone—

"I have trusted you, Fanning, as I have never trusted a man before. I beg of you not to speak to anyone of what you may have seen or heard in my house. It is my business, and I do not wish it to be noised abroad to make gossip for fools. Not that there is any secret about it which, if divulged, might hang me. Confound the business! I swear to you the thought of it is so gruesome and disagreeable I prefer to keep silent. Did you think you saw some stranger in the house before I came home?"

"No; I only thought I heard footsteps after I had gone to bed, but my nerves were excited, and I might easily have been deceived."

"They were real footsteps. My enemy has taken up his abode in my house, and will not go away. I shall not try to conceal that from you. He comes out of his hiding-place at night, and I often see him, but until last night he has not tried to do me harm since you have been here. Poor devil that I am! He will not be gone. Now that you are going, I shall quit the house and take rooms at some hotel for a while. There I shall hope to enjoy the rest I need."

The two arose from the table, having finished

their meal, and O'Darrow walked with Burton to his old lodgings.

"You will not see me again until you return," said the former as they reached the gate.

Burton saw tears in O'Darrow's eyes when he looked up at him, but before he could answer, the mysterious man was walking hurriedly away.

The young man had come to have some fondness for his new friend, but he was glad to be rid of him. He had had enough of living in the shadow of that horrible mystery. Who was the strange man whose voice he had heard so often, whose form he had seen in the darkness of the night hovering about the gate of O'Darrow's mansion, whose feet he had heard walking through its deserted chambers, and the mark of whose chastisement was on the brow of its master? Who was he?

CHAPTER VII.

BURTON found a note from Helen Crouch at his lodgings. It said simply, "I shall try to meet you for a moment at the steamer." Brief as it was, this note gave him large assurance and renewed hope. Evidently she was yet free, and not wholly indifferent to him. The *British Queen* was to leave her dock at eleven next morning. He was there an hour before sailing time, and stood at the gang-plank waiting for Helen until the last call to go aboard. She failed to come, however, and at the last moment he was half minded to give up the trip and wait there awhile, for he felt sure she was coming. A second thought convinced him that this would be a foolish thing to do, and he rushed aboard just before the gangway was lifted. While the great hawsers were being loosed he stood on the deck of the steamer, looking out upon the landing. Suddenly he espied Helen standing with young Mr. Scaggs in the big doorway.

She was looking at him and waving her handkerchief. It was over in a moment, but he caught a tremor of emotion in her face, the memory of which was to remain with him as long as he lived. Sweet and tender as her face had always been to him, it was now unspeakably ennobled by this look. And that brief glimpse of it was enough for him. He felt thankful indeed that he had not met her as he had expected to do, when probably the mask of conventional politeness would have covered their faces, and he would have missed the revelation that had come to him. He felt sure that she loved him now, and that was enough. The ship moved slowly out into the river, and Burton Fanning stood trying in vain to conceal his tears. It seemed to him that the fetters which bound him to poverty and a life which had been hard and distasteful were loosed, and that he was started in a new path.

That day O'Darrow took bachelor's apartments on Fifth Avenue. He did not return to his house, nor even send for his wardrobe, but went to a shop for such clothing as he required. A great change had come over him since he met Burton Fanning. That youthful integrity of mind in the young man which at first had nettled him so sorely had finally acted like a

spiritual tonic. The past ten years had been to him like one long twelfth hour of night. Now he could see welcome signs of the coming of a new day. In spite of himself O'Darrow had begun to feel a sort of paternal fondness for the boy. The feeling was strange to him. He had never known what it was to be fond of anything since the disappointment of long ago that had so embittered his life. After he had bidden Burton good-bye he went directly and hired his rooms, then, locking the door, he threw himself upon a lounge and wept as he had not wept before since childhood. All his life passed before him in those few moments of grief and loneliness. For hours he lay thinking over the vanity and the sadness of it. Suddenly he thought he heard a gentle rap. It had grown dusk, and when he opened the door he could not clearly discern the figure that stood in the hallway, but O'Darrow knew well who had come. His visitor only nodded familiarly and walked to a chair without speaking, like a friend who takes his welcome for granted.

O'Darrow sat down, frowning savagely.

"I have come to have an understanding with you," the man remarked in a low tone.

O'Darrow rose from his chair and paced thoughtfully up and down the room for a

moment. As he passed a long mirror he turned to look at its dim reflection of his figure.

"Tears?" said his visitor. "Let me see them. I had thought there were no more tears. It's a hopeful sign."

"Why do you pester me?" asked O'Darrow, turning suddenly and frowning upon him. "You're always at my elbow. I'd like to be rid of you for a while."

"No doubt," the other replied, in a tone of mild expostulation. "But first it will be necessary to get over your dislike of me. I'll be your friend if you will let me. It's a pity you never had a son, a daughter, a friend, or anyone that you might have loved. By all that you have suffered don't you see that a man cannot live without love? If it is no holier feeling than the love of riches, or pleasure, or even of wickedness, it will suffice for a time. You have tried these things and you have hungered for a better passion. Dear God! We know right well how that hunger consumes the heart, and how the lye of the heart's ashes stings the soul. Long ago I counselled you to make an end of it all; which I would gladly have helped you to do but for your fear of what's to come."

"All you say is true," said O'Darrow, in a deep tone that trembled with emotion. "My

life has been a dreary waste; but now it is something besides cowardice that makes me cling to it. I could not be fonder of the boy if he were my own son. I want to live to help him; but not alone for that. Last night I met a sweet young girl whom I love as I had never thought it possible for me to love again. For Heaven's sake don't discourage me now. No man ever felt a purer passion."

"Your heart, then, is not too old and tough for that kind of sentiment. Good! But I warn you not to deceive yourself and me in this matter. If you do," said O'Darrow's visitor, speaking slowly and in a threatening tone as he rose from his chair, "you know what will come of it."

As this threat was spoken, O'Darrow took a blanket from the bed, and, wrapping it about him, lay down upon a lounge, yawning wearily. His strange guest walked stealthily to the door, as if afraid of disturbing him, then, stopping to look back for a moment, he stepped out into the hall and closed the door gently.

That night brought sounder sleep to O'Darrow than he had enjoyed for years. Next day he was quite another man. He felt the relief of a commander who, in the midst of war makes a temporary truce with the enemy. He

hired a valet, and in the evening went to call at Colonel Crouch's. Helen and her mother received him cordially. O'Darrow had a definite object, in seeking which he entertained no misgivings. He was the kind of man that people are proud to introduce in their drawing-rooms as "My friend Sir So-and-So." His handsome face, his stately figure, his elegant manners, and his title, needed not to be supplemented with a certificate of character among such people as the Crouches, and they were very good people at that. Mrs. Crouch had pronounced him "very grand indeed," and said many other extravagant things about him since their meeting in Mrs. Van Schuyler's ballroom. This evening O'Darrow did his best to make himself agreeable.

"I feel the need of friends," said he to Helen before going. "I am almost a stranger in New York now, and I hope I may claim the friendship of yourself and your good mother and father."

"You are very kind, Sir George," said she. "Such a friendless, forlorn creature as you excites my pity. But you have not known us very long yet. Better be careful how you commit yourself."

There was something in her manner as she

spoke that increased O'Darrow's confidence. Indeed, to her inexperienced eyes he seemed to be a model of gentlemanhood, and his attentions flattered her. His manners derived their charm from a certain forceful simplicity. Somehow his every word and action suggested the sinews of Achilles. Whatever his life might have been, she felt that he outclassed the drawling ninnies who were so abundant in fashionable society. After he had gone, Helen told her mother that there was something about Sir George that reminded her of Burton Fanning.

"The impertinent young beggar!" exclaimed Mrs. Crouch, who, by the way, had learned by early experience what a hateful thing poverty is, her father having been a soapmaker until fortunate speculation brought him wealth: "I thought you had forgotten him."

"I shall never forget him," said the young lady in a provokingly sentimental tone. "Indeed, mamma, I almost think I was in love with that young man. Upon my word I cannot understand your dislike of him. You must admit but for his poverty he would have been very nice."

"For my own part, I must say that I always thought him very, very stupid," Mrs. Crouch declared, as she bustled out of the room.

More invitations came to O'Darrow during

the next few weeks than he found it possible or agreeable to accept.

He was at dinner with the Crouches one evening, after which he went to the theatre with Helen and her mother. He had met his enemy but once since the night he moved into bachelor's quarters. Then the man had overtaken him in the street and walked for a little way beside him in silence as if to show that he was not entirely unmindful of what was passing. But he was no longer quarrelsome or intrusive, so that O'Darrow could eat and sleep and go his way without fear. One afternoon he went driving in the Park with Helen and her father. They were in an open carriage, the rear seat of which was occupied by the young lady and Sir George. They had just turned toward home when he saw his ancient enemy standing beside the road a short distance ahead of them. The strange man stood as motionless as a statue while they drove by, staring hard at them, but betraying no sign of recognition. Helen saw the pallor on O'Darrow's face as he turned to look back, and spoke of it.

"Did you notice that man standing beside the road?" he inquired.

She looked up at him, half-amused by his earnestness, and asked, "Are you afraid of highwaymen, Sir George?"

It was getting late in the afternoon, and that part of the drive was quite deserted. O'Darrow turned and eagerly scanned the roadway for a moment, while a puzzled expression stole over his face. Then he sat looking thoughtfully about in a spell of abstraction, and only spoke now and then for the sake of politeness until they had returned home.

"Do you believe in ghosts?" he asked Helen after they had sat down together in the drawing-room.

"Devoutly," she answered, laughing. "Not that I have ever seen one. Have you, Sir George? You do not really think it was a ghost you saw in the Park to-day?"

"Oh, no. But in some respects that man is like a ghost. Don't you know there are people who keep turning up most unexpectedly, as if fate were continually driving them across your path? Some time I will tell you about him."

"What time?" she asked.

"When you have promised to become my wife, if you must know."

His handsome face was very serious when Helen looked up at him.

"Oh, Sir George, this is unfair," she exclaimed. "You ought not to take advantage of a woman's curiosity."

"You know what is said of love and war," he continued. "I love you, Helen, very dearly, and am, I fear, bad enough to do anything to win you."

"I have resolved to be an old maid," said she. "I am greatly honoured by the love of such a man as you, but I cannot promise now to be your wife."

O'Darrow was surprised at her answer. He had been confident of success in this matter, and even now he thought she was only playing with him, after the fashion of women he had known.

"In spite of that I shall try to win you," said he. "You will think better of me some time, I hope."

"I fear I shall never change my mind," she answered, quite decidedly, and Sir George did not return to the subject that day.

O'Darrow dined with the Crouches in the evening. Helen and her mother went out after dinner to join a theatre party. O'Darrow and the colonel retired to the library with their cigars.

"I have fallen in love with your daughter, sir," said the former, as soon as they were seated. "It is not necessary for me to ask you the question that you know is on my mind. Please speak to me quite frankly."

The colonel sat thoughtfully looking at his cigar for a moment without speaking.

"I am very much complimented, Sir George," said he; "be assured of that. I like you immensely, but I know next to nothing about your affairs."

"I've got more money than I know what to do with, if that is what you mean," said O'Darrow.

"Rumour has credited you with great wealth; but a father ought to know how his daughter is to be provided for. If the girl is willing, and we can agree upon a settlement for her, you'll not need to wait long for my consent."

"Tell me what you think would be satisfactory," said O'Darrow, after a moment's pause.

The colonel rose from his chair and walked up and down the room, his brows knit thoughtfully. He was very fond of his daughter; but all his life he had been driving bargains, and, as long as she must marry, why shouldn't he do the best he could for her? Of course, her husband must be a gentleman, but aside from that he recognised no sort of sentiment in the matter. Love was a thing for fools to prate about.

"Well," said he presently, "I think you should give her some definite sum in her own

name—say, five hundred thousand dollars—which, with what I can do for her, would be quite sufficient."

"It's a bargain—I beg your pardon—I mean that I am willing to meet the conditions you have named," said O'Darrow, who then described to the colonel the character of his various investments and his plans regarding them.

It was near midnight when O'Darrow left the house. The sky was clear and the air bracing. He hurried down the avenue in the direction of his apartments, but before he had gone half the distance he suddenly discovered that his enemy was walking beside him. They whispered together for a moment. Then the strange man spoke out sharply as they walked along—

"It's a shame to sell an innocent girl like a chattel. It's a shame—isn't it now?"

"Ah, well," said O'Darrow, "if he chooses to sell her it's his business."

"Pardon me, it's God's business—this dealing in human souls."

"Perhaps," O'Darrow answered, half doubtfully; "but in this case it makes no difference, since I love her, and shall be so tender of her."

"It's a comfort to think it makes no difference, but in your soul, O'Darrow, you know better. I perceive you are trying to be honest about it,

but I warn you that no good can come of such unholy barter. Consider—she does not know the man she is to marry. Has she such love, think you, that, forsaking all others, she will cling to you and bear all things for your sake? You know what she might have to bear."

O'Darrow groaned bitterly as he hurried along, but made no reply. His enemy walked beside him in silence to the next corner, where he bowed politely and left him.

CHAPTER VIII.

NEXT morning Sir George Ernest O'Darrow took unusual pains with his toilet, and when he started up the avenue on the way to breakfast with Helen and her mother the glow of high respectability was upon him. In recent years he had been extremely careless of his dress, but now the revolution that had been going on in him had re-established the old dynasty of self, and the new king was displaying his banners. After a long talk with the two ladies, Sir George took them out for a drive. Mrs. Crouch desired to stop for half an hour at a charity hospital in Harlem, where she had church business to attend to, and when she alighted from the carriage the good lady gave them permission to drive northward a little way along the shore of the Hudson instead of waiting at the gate. It was a clear, bright day. The sting of winter's cold was tempered to the heart's delight by a genial sun. They were riding slowly along the river-side, admiring the scene, when suddenly O'Darrow

became silent and quite deaf to Helen's chatter. They had come to an open space, where the road ran close to a cliff of rocks that slanted toward the river and then plunged sheer to the water's edge, a hundred feet below.

"It is no wonder that you do not feel like talking here," said she. "How grand the river looks!"

He made no answer. His eyes were directed upon some object at the edge of the cliff, and there was a strange, wild look of fright in them.

"Why, Sir George, where are you driving to?" Helen asked.

The horses had left the road, and, their ears erect, were measuring their steps timidly as they approached the edge of the rocks. O'Darrow sat like one in a trance, staring straight ahead. The horses reared backward at the brink. Helen uttered a wild cry of terror, and her companion, now feeling his peril, threw all his strength upon the reins. The horses plunged sideways, upsetting the waggon and throwing both its occupants upon the ground with terrific force. As O'Darrow rose to his feet, he saw the team go tearing down the road, throwing the shattered vehicle right and left at every leap. Helen lay near him, pale and still as if dead. He raised her head and spoke to her,

but she made no answer. Then he lifted the girl in his arms, and walked hurriedly back to the drive and toward the city. In a moment a mounted policeman came galloping up the road, and brought his horse to a standstill at O'Darrow's side.

"Is she badly hurt, sir?" the officer asked. "Wait here, and I will bring an ambulance."

"I must go, I must go! I really cannot wait!" said O'Darrow, staring wildly at him and hurrying along all the faster.

"You can never get her to the hospital. Why don't you wait?"

"Away with you! I am in a great hurry!" O'Darrow said, not even stopping to look up.

Seeing that he was half crazed, the policeman rode off with all speed for help. O'Darrow kept his way, bearing the lifeless girl, her head hanging limp across his arm, and her loosened hair streaming almost to the ground. Presently the officer came back with an ambulance.

"She is my love," said O'Darrow, when they stopped him. "I must go! I must go!" He endeavoured to walk by them, but was finally persuaded to get into the ambulance with his charge.

"Who is this young lady?" the surgeon asked him.

"This is Colonel Crouch's daughter," said he. "I bought her from him. The poor girl belongs to me now."

He would answer no more questions, but sat stroking her hair and muttering to himself strangely. When they arrived at the hospital, half a dozen men were required to get him out of the waggon and into his room. Helen was still unconscious, and her father was immediately sent for.

"Your daughter has been seriously injured," said the house surgeon, when Colonel Crouch was shown into his office. "There is a fracture of the skull upon which an immediate operation will be necessary. I think she will survive it, but I must not conceal from you the fact that there is danger."

"Good God!" he exclaimed, sinking into a chair. "Is it as bad as that?"

For a moment the colonel sat quite dazed, wiping the tears from his eyes. It was the first hard stroke of misfortune that had ever fallen upon him, and it hurt him sorely.

"Can I see her?" he asked in a broken voice.

"Better not see her now."

"I am a man of business," said the colonel, after a moment. "I want the most skilful

attendance that can be secured. If she recovers, I will give 10,000 dollars to every man who helps to save her life."

"That is unnecessary," the doctor calmly replied. "If you were a poor man she would be just as carefully treated."

The colonel looked at him in amazement. It seemed unjust, somehow, that in this crisis his riches could avail him nothing.

"Am I to understand that we have your consent to the operation?" the doctor asked.

"Do whatever is necessary," said Colonel Crouch. "Only I must be present."

"We shall begin shortly," said the doctor, as he rose to leave the room. "Wait here, and I will send for you in good time."

While the colonel was waiting, O'Darrow, who had stealthily made his way down stairs, came into the room.

"Is she dead?" he whispered, as he sat down beside the colonel, his eyes staring wildly.

"Not yet, sir," Colonel Crouch replied sharply, turning toward him. "Was my wife with you?"

"Your wife? No, she was not with us; she is safe."

"Tell me how it happened," said the colonel.

"I tried to kill her, that is the truth of it; but I love her. You sold her to a brute for

five hundred thousand dollars. You did not know me. I am a crack-brained grovelling brute and a slave of the devil. There was no agreement as to how the girl was to be treated. Your concern was not about my character, Colonel Crouch."

"Sir George, what are you saying?" the colonel indignantly replied. "You must be insane."

"There is no doubt of it. This very day I have suffered enough to drive a man to insanity. I cannot stand this persecution any longer; I shall not try. Even if she lives I can never marry your daughter. But I love her, and would give every dollar I have and my worthless life to see her well again."

"What can I do? What can I do?" the colonel repeated, wringing his hands and pacing up and down the room.

"Have you any influence with God?" O'Darrow asked solemnly. "You are a business man. Why not drive some sort of bargain with Him?"

O'Darrow was interrupted by a number of attendants, who came in and took him back to his room.

"The excitement has carried him quite out of his mind," said the doctor who came with

them. "He will have to go to an asylum for a few days."

In a moment Colonel Crouch was shown to the operating room where his daughter lay, covered with clean white linen, upon a table, pitifully helpless—"a subject," indeed, submitting silently to the trial of its great issue, and conscious of neither pain nor fear. The grave-faced surgeons stood about her, looking at the wound upon her head and discussing in low tones how they had best proceed. The colonel walked calmly to a chair, and sat down where he could see the form that lay so still upon the table. O'Darrow's strange rebuke rang in his ears. Had he really sold his daughter to a brute? The idea seemed appalling. As he thought of it now, that arrangement was dreadfully like a bargain. The surgeons proceeded with their ghastly hazard of skill, and while his daughter's life was wavering in the balance Colonel Crouch sat with bowed head in silence, humbly beseeching the forgiveness of his sins.

CHAPTER IX.

ON reaching England, Burton found that the affairs of his employer were sadly confused. O'Darrow's former agents had failed, and a considerable amount of his money had gone down with them into the pit of bankruptcy. His landed property was badly run down, and many of his tenants were hopelessly in arrears for rent.

"So you have come to collect Sir George's rents?" said a lawyer whom Burton found it necessary to consult. "I wish you luck. It is strange that he neglected his interests so long. But he was always a sorry prodigal, whose ways were past all comprehension. Are you not familiar with the baronet's history? Indeed? Let me say, then, for your own information, that it is not highly creditable. He was a gambler of great skill and phenomenal luck. He made large winnings at Monte Carlo repeatedly, and no man in London ever got the better of him

at cards. He fought a duel in Paris and killed his man, I believe. His wife was a woman of bad repute, whom he never dared introduce to respectable people. In short, his life was quite given over to debauchery, gambling, and shameless intrigue. Nearly all his old friends turned against him, as might have been expected, and he left the country in disgust. And now Sir George is living in New York? Well, I hope he is doing better."

"His life has been very quiet of late years," said Burton. "In fact, I think he has outlived all delight in dissipation."

"It's a wonder he is living at all. There are few men who could have stood the wear and tear of such a life. What with all the provocation he has scattered, it's a wonder, indeed, someone has not killed him."

"I am surprised to hear it," said Burton. "Has he enemies who might be inclined to do him harm?"

"Enemies!" exclaimed the barrister, smiling, "why not? A man whose only aim is to profit by the loss of his fellows, and who goes about breaking up homes, cannot help making enemies. He becomes the natural enemy of all good men. I do not believe Sir George would dare to return to England or France. I have

no doubt he would have to fight for his life if he did so."

This talk with the lawyer confirmed the suspicions that Burton had long entertained regarding O'Darrow's enemy. That he had sown the seed of persecution there was no longer any doubt. Some one of the men he had wronged was dogging him with devilish persistency. The fact that he had not yet taken O'Darrow's life showed clearly that he desired to reserve him for further misery, and wreak out his wrath upon him by slow degrees. Burton found purchasers for a considerable part of the property, and placed the rest of it in the hands of a reliable agent. It was a disagreeable piece of business, and he was glad to be done with it.

He wrote to his employer a week before he sailed, informing him by what steamer he would reach New York. On his arrival, however, he looked in vain for O'Darrow at the dock. Burton went at once to the great white mansion and rang, in the hope of finding its master. It had the same inhospitable aspect as before. The shades were all drawn close, and no one came to admit him. He remembered that O'Darrow had expressed his intention of going into bachelor's apartments, but where had he

gone? At the Silver Bottle Burton found Mr. Gravingham eating lunch. The old artist greeted him warmly, and invited him to share his chops and ale.

"Of course you have heard of what befell O'Darrow recently," said Mr. Gravingham.

"No, I have but just landed."

"I only know what I have read in the papers," said the old gentleman. "It seems that Sir George had given up hermitising and got back into society. He was driving with a young lady whom he was soon to marry, and whose name has not been made public. The horses took fright and came near dragging them into the Hudson. They were both thrown from the carriage, and the young lady's skull was fractured by striking the sharp edge of a rock. O'Darrow was crazed by the shock, and was taken to an asylum, where, in my opinion, he ought to have gone long ago. The young lady is still in the hospital, but is said to be getting better."

"Do you know where I can find him?" the young man inquired.

"Yes, he is at Bloomingdale."

"I must go there at once," said Burton, rising from the table.

When he announced his name and the object

of his visit at the asylum, he was shown at once to the office of the superintendent.

"I am glad you have come," said the latter. "Sir George is quite well again, and has been asking for you. Shall you be with him much after he leaves here?"

"I shall probably see him every day for a while," said Burton.

"If you should notice any recurrence of this trouble please let me know about it," the doctor added, as he conducted him to the patient's room.

O'Darrow was sadly changed since Burton saw him last. His face had grown thin and pale; the old look of weariness had returned to his eyes.

"Thank God you're back again," said he in a hoarse whisper, shaking Burton's hand. "I thought you would never come."

"I am glad to report that my mission has been quite successful," said Burton.

"Let business be hanged!" exclaimed O'Darrow. "I care not a fig for what you have done. Let us get out of this place. I've had enough of it." His eyes kindled with anger as he spoke. He took his coat and hat from the servant who had brought them, handed him a roll of bills, and then walked hurriedly out upon the street, followed by Burton.

"I've suffered incredible horrors since you left, my boy," O'Darrow continued as they proceeded down the avenue toward the city. "Before I can tell you about it I must pull myself together a bit." They walked on in silence at a smart pace, and presently turned in at a florist's shop. O'Darrow bought a large basket of flowers, and scribbled directions as to its destination on a card.

"Be good enough to go with the messenger, and present my compliments to the young lady's mother," said he to Burton. "Inquire how the poor child is getting along. Tell her I am quite well again and will call at once. Pray be careful to remember just what she says to you. I will be at my house at five o'clock."

Burton proceeded with the messenger to the hospital where Helen lay, not knowing whom he was to meet. When Mrs. Crouch came in to receive the message, he rose and looked at her for a moment, unable to speak.

"Mrs. Crouch!" he exclaimed, presently, turning pale. "I—I did not expect to see you. What has happened?"

She made an effort to reply, then they both sat down, the lady covering her face and weeping silently. The truth flashed upon Burton's mind with confusing and painful

suddenness. The love he had kept warm in his heart now seemed more hopeless than ever. But he resolved to save Helen if possible from the fate of marriage with O'Darrow.

"She has spoken of you often since she began to improve," said Mrs. Crouch, having recovered her composure.

"She is getting better, then?"

"Yes, she is out of danger now."

"Thank God for that," said Burton. "These flowers are for her. I brought them from Sir George O'Darrow, who requested me to say that he would call at once."

"Poor man!" she exclaimed, "I suppose he is quite out of his mind."

"I hope you have discovered," said Burton, "that Sir George is not a fit companion for your daughter? Mrs. Crouch, the time has come for plain talk. How could you think of marrying her to a man who is utterly depraved? Believe me, I have no selfish motive in saying this."

"Mr. Fanning, we have wronged you," said Mrs. Crouch, rising and extending her hand. "Try to forget it and forgive us."

"I forgave you long ago," said he; "but there are things that cannot be forgotten—such, for instance, as having an arm or a leg torn off,

to forget which would mean the absolute loss of one's senses."

Burton left the hospital at once, his heart full of pity for O'Darrow. After all, was it not a mean thing he had done in speaking so harshly of him? He carefully recalled the words he had spoken as he walked along, and he knew he had done right.

CHAPTER X.

IT was not quite five o'clock when Burton rang at the side door of the great white mansion. O'Darrow, yawning and rubbing his eyes as if he had been asleep, admitted him promptly.

"I feared you'd fail me," he whispered, as he preceded Burton up the gloomy stairway to the library. "I can't bear to be alone now."

He let the shades up to the top of the windows, and they sat down together in the dim twilight.

"What did they say to you?" O'Darrow asked.

"Mrs. Crouch would not receive the flowers."

"She's a sensible woman! Did she inquire about me, or say anything regarding my conduct?"

"Not a word," said Burton. "She only said that she supposed you were insane. I am bound to tell you frankly, Sir George, that I warned her not to permit the marriage."

O'Darrow sprang from his chair, his eyes ablaze with anger.

"Confound your impertinence!" he shouted; "you are a meddler. What do you mean?"

"I mean that I loved the girl long before you saw her," said Burton, rising to his feet and facing him indignantly; "and, if I did not love her, it would be my duty to save her from the fate of marriage with a man like you, if I could."

O'Darrow dropped back into his chair as if a heavy blow had felled him, and, laying his head upon his arm, sobbed loudly, like a woman sorely grieved. The door stood open, and the sound of his weeping echoed through the dark and silent house. A score of voices rose out of the gloom to mock his sorrow. Burton sat down beside him, not venturing to speak for a moment. Such grief was past all consolation. O'Darrow grew quite calm presently.

"I'm a sad villain, Fanning," said he, "but I really meant well in this love affair. The cards are running badly now—that is all. When my heart changed for the better my luck ran to the bad. If you love her, why do you not seek to marry her?"

"Because they will not permit her to marry a poor man."

"Fools! They'd rather sell her!" exclaimed O'Darrow. "But you are no longer a poor man. I have willed to you half my fortune."

"I thank you with all my heart," said Burton, who was taken quite by surprise. "But, believe me, I do not desire it—indeed, I cannot accept it. Dear as this girl is to me, I have determined never to buy my wife with money."

"Then I wish you to bestow it for me. Do not oppose me in this, I pray you. Egad! Fanning, I am in fear of perdition. I have not long to live, and you must help me. My money has done me no good. The getting of it was a curse to me. Now, please God, if well applied, it may help to atone for my sins."

O'Darrow leaned forward, pleading in eager tones, as if he felt the peril of some great and irreparable loss. Burton sat thinking for a moment, while the pathos of the situation took strange hold upon him. Surely, he thought, money gained for its own sake is a cursed thing, and it is no wonder he desires to be rid of it.

"I must have your answer now," said O'Darrow, his voice trembling with emotion. "I cannot wait. If you will not help me I must go to-night—now—and find someone, if I can, who will take the money."

"I wish to help you, if possible," said Burton, "but how can I do it?"

"Let the money go to save others from a fate like mine, and may God prosper it."

"Your life was sadly embittered years ago by that unfortunate love affair," said Burton. "You and I know that the rich man's pride is a merciless, heart-crushing power. What though lives are wrecked, this thing must be satisfied. It takes no note of what God has put into the human heart. It exalts what is mean and sordid in the soul of man, and crushes out all that is noble and worthy to live. By your leave I would urge you to make war upon this heartless despotism. Why not establish a home for yourself in this city, and suffer all honest people, though they be poor, to come into it as if they were your own kindred? Every day I would have both the rich and the poor at my table, so that they might know each other better. I would have the rich man learn how money can profit him when used as a means of destroying his own selfishness."

"You must do it for me, and may your good work deliver my soul!" said O'Darrow.

"I trust you may live to do it yourself," said Burton.

"No. I am a poor wreck that will go to

pieces presently. There is no human kindness in me—no patience, no sympathy. Here I am, a worn-out, sorry villain, trying to make a bargain with Providence to escape perdition. It's enough to make one laugh, isn't it, for all it's such a serious business?"

"You are not well," said Burton. "After a night's rest here at home you will feel better. Please regard me as a friend who will do anything in his power for you."

"I thank you for that assurance," said O'Darrow. "I can trust you to carry out my wishes. I could not trust myself."

"You seem to have lost your interest in life," said Burton.

"My interest in life!" O'Darrow shouted in a hoarse and angry tone, rising and feeling his way through the darkness to Burton's chair. "Heaven knows, I've a greater interest in death. What a mercy if I could only perish utterly and drown all fear or thought of self in dreamless and unending sleep! But I fear there's something in me will live to suffer tortures after death. If so, there'd be less horror in this familiar place."

O'Darrow paused as if he hoped to hear some reassuring word from Burton. After a moment of thoughtful silence he continued:—

"To think my soul will live in spite of me—a thing no mortal ingenuity can kill—a bit of property I hold in trust until the seizure of death, after which its fate is all unknown, fills me with dread and horror. By heaven! I'm half persuaded the only real things are those we cannot see or feel, and which God alone controls. For days after that accident my life was a strange sort of dream. I went back again to the home of my boyhood. I had no memory of sorrow or wrong-doing or of evil days. Indeed, it seemed those days had never come. I felt again the sweetness of my mother's love and the joy that mere existence brings a child. My environment was as real as that my eyes see now. After this happy time had passed the first sorrow of my life came, and then the shameless debauchery of my mind—the wasting of all good in me. After a week, it seems, the scene shifted, and the first sound that reached my wakened ears was that of my own voice shrieking curses. How are we to know where reality begins and ends, having caught our senses lying? If it were all a dream and nothing were real but the dreamer, why, then there'd be some hope for men like me."

O'Darrow spoke readily and with evident

feeling, as if he had pondered much upon the subject of their talk.

"You had better go to bed," said he presently. "A man needs rest after so long a journey. If you can find the way to your room I shall sit here by myself awhile. Somehow I can think more comfortably in the dark."

The twilight had deepened into darkness, and now it was impossible to distinguish any object in the room. Burton rose directly and felt his way to the door and up the stairs. He had not reached the top of the first flight when he heard the familiar voice of O'Darrow's enemy speaking in a low tone.

"We must lose no time," he said. "Shall we need a light?"

The voice proceeded from the library. Burton stood still and listened in surprise that the man could have entered the room so quickly after he left it.

"No; I like the darkness better for this business," O'Darrow gruffly answered.

"It's all the same," said the other, in a loud, impatient tone.

"Hush-sh," hissed O'Darrow. "Let me close the door. He may hear us."

Burton heard the door close gently, and the sliding of the bolt. There was no bitterness in

their voices such as he had noted at other times, but they spoke with a quiet determination that, somehow, set his heart thumping. He regretted that he had not gone back at once before the door was closed. Now, should O'Darrow stand in need of help, it would be impossible to reach him. Without further hesitation he hurried back to the library door and stood with his ear close against it.

"The knife is very sharp," said the stranger. "It will not hurt badly."

"Out of my way," O'Darrow answered. "Why do you keep crowding against me? Don't be in such haste to get through."

"Die, you brute!" yelled his enemy. "Take that, you fawning cur! I'm tired of your whining." The words were spoken in furious anger.

For a moment Burton heard the tramping of their feet upon the carpet, and the sound of a struggle, hand to hand, between the two men. Then he rapped loudly upon the door, and called upon them to open it, but they gave no heed to his calling. He listened again. He could hear them fighting furiously up and down the room, crashing into chairs and tables. Then there came the jar of a heavy fall, and the struggle ceased. Running up the stairway to

his own room, he threw the window open, and, leaning far out of it, shouted loudly for help. His voice rang out upon the silence of the night with awful distinctness. The neighbours rose from their beds in terror, and threw open their windows, peering out to see what show of foul play the cry betokened. In a moment two officers came running up the deserted street. They stopped in front of O'Darrow's house.

"Hello!" one of them shouted. "Who called?"

"In here," said Burton. "Be quick! I will open the door."

Then, lighting a candle, he hurried downstairs to admit them. They found the door of the library still securely fastened. They pounded upon it, and listened for a moment, but only silence answered. To Burton it seemed to cry out most urgently, "Make haste! A man has been murdered here, and the murderer is skulking from window to window, planning his escape!" They tried all the other doors upon that floor, but could not open them.

"We must force it, sir," said one of the officers, stooping and peering into the keyhole of the library door.

"I do not think the murderer has come out,"

Burton whispered, "unless he has escaped from the windows."

One of the officers stood with revolver and club in hand, while the other threw all his weight upon the door. In a moment the fastenings gave way, and, bursting open, it swung aside. The officer to whom it had yielded stepped cautiously forward, holding the candle above his head and peering about him. He advanced slowly in a zigzag line to avoid certain dark streaks and splashes upon the matting, and lit one of the jets in a chandelier. Then he looked under the tables and behind the bookcases. After a moment he returned to the centre of the room, and stooped to examine something that lay upon the floor.

"Come in," said he presently, turning toward the two who stood waiting. "There's no one here but a dead man."

O'Darrow lay prone upon his back. His shirt-bosom had been torn open, and there were many wounds upon his throat and breast, out of which the blood was still flowing. Though dead, he held a keen-bladed knife in his right hand. Chairs and tables were overturned, and books and papers were strewn upon the floor. All about him was the horrible stain of the butchery, so that they had to step carefully

to avoid it. They looked in every place of possible concealment about the room, but could discover no trace of O'Darrow's enemy. The windows were all fastened; he could not have escaped from either of them. There was but one door opening upon this apartment, and they had found that bolted on the inside. The officers looked knowingly into each other's faces.

"This man had an enemy," said Burton, "and I know he was shut up with him in this room. I heard them talking together."

"Maybe he was one o' them fellers as was his own worst enemy," observed the officer who had first entered the room.

"He was a strange man," Burton replied.

There was no longer any mystery in O'Darrow's life. That which lay so pale and still under the dim light told the story of his fate with awful frankness. He was gone, and his inseparable and dreaded enemy had followed him to carry out the righteous plan of God. Burton stood looking into the face of his dead friend for a moment, then turned to the officers.

"Go and summon help," said he. "I will wait here with the body."

Burton threw open one of the windows and sat down beside it while the two officers hurried away. He could not bear to look upon the

hideous object that lay so near his feet. The fresh air brought a sense of relief to him, and he sat resting his chin upon his hands and staring out into the darkness. The rustling of the window-shade filled the silence with imagined tumult. When at length he turned to look about the room, he started from his chair, and raised it quickly as if in self-defence. A woman, clad in squalid garments, knelt close by the body of O'Darrow. Her face showed the loathsome bloat of dissipation and the withering effect of age. There was that in it which indicated that everything good, even reason and the sense of shame, had abandoned her soul to its fate. A fierce energy of passion lit up her sunken eyes.

"For God's sake let me look at him!" she cried, as Burton stepped toward her. "Let me look at this man who has wronged me so. He's killed himself, ain't he? I knew he would. It's God's justice, I tell you, boy. You don't know what he's done, but I do. Maybe he thinks he's mended all the harm by cutting himself so, but he hasn't. I'll follow him this very night, and I hope I'll see the vengeance of the Lord. I've watched this house for years, and if I could only have got in I'd have haunted him like a ghost—maybe I'd have seen him die. Ha! ha!

O'Darrow, I can speak to you now—you cannot harm me any more."

She spoke in a shrill voice, and her words were broken with weeping. Leaning forward, she smote the dead man in the face, and rose to her feet, glowering down upon him fiercely.

Burton laid hold of the woman's arm to prevent her from scourging the helpless body. As he did so a squad of policemen came hurrying up the stairway and entered the open door.

"Here's Crazy Nell," said one of them. "Lead her out, one o' you fellers. I saw her at the gate when we first came. She must 'a sneaked in somehow while the front door was open."

"I stood inside the gate all the time you were gone," said another, "but she might 'a got by while me back was turned. She's allus hangin' round this corner."

The woman was hustled down stairs and out into the street. She had come voicing the outraged spirit of the world toward such as he—even that of his own heart—and adding to the whirlwind of wrath and curses that had risen for a witness against him. Now she had gone perhaps to try that stern and dubious remedy which had brought at least the semblance of peace to O'Darrow.

CHAPTER XI.

AWARE that under the circumstances he could hardly hope to avoid arrest for the murder of O'Darrow, Burton surrendered himself that night to the police. Next day the coroner held an inquest over the body of the unfortunate man. A physician from the asylum in which O'Darrow had been confined just before his death was the only witness whose testimony it will be necessary to reproduce here.

"The deceased was placed under my charge about two weeks ago," said he. "He had met with an accident which developed evidences of insanity. I am of the opinion that for years he must have suffered from a well-defined species of mania. Any undue excitement would be apt to throw him off his guard, and render his unsoundness more apparent. I watched him closely for a week or more after he came to the asylum. He had a habit of talking to himself when he was alone and, as he thought, unobserved. He

employed two distinct tones of voice, as if he imagined himself talking to another person. I am convinced that there were two distinct impulses in his mind which inspired these conversations. One of them was that thing called conscience—the moral intuition which was born in him, if you please; the other was an opposing impulse proceeding from mental characteristics developed by his habits of life. I know nothing of his history, but I infer that he had become thoroughly disgusted with himself. This habit of self-accusation that was probably contracted years ago—this long-continued warfare between the good and evil tendencies within him—led to a species of mania that is by no means uncommon. I have no doubt he thought himself at times in the company of another person who seemed real and tangible to him as I do to you. This imaginary being may have personated either the good or the evil part of his mind. It probably tortured him with remorse, and eventually drove him to self-destruction, which may have been attempted more than once on different occasions. I have repeatedly observed similar forms of mania. It is not improbable that most men who commit suicide labour under like delusions. Suicide, as a rule, is the last battle of a long war between opposing forces in

the mind. It signalises the surrender of one side or the other. It is impossible to tell when this mania is approaching its crisis. Yesterday morning the deceased was apparently sane, and we could see no reason for detaining him."

After the two officers were examined, a verdict was rendered "according to the law and the facts," and Burton was immediately discharged. He went at once to his former lodgings, where a letter was awaiting him. The direction upon the envelope was in O'Darrow's handwriting. As he unfolded it, the bold signature of George Ernest O'Darrow caught his eye. This letter contained the following abrupt sentences:—

My Dear Boy,—I have a presentiment that my end is near. It will be swift and terrible when it comes—doubly terrible to me since I know the truth. I have told you more than once of the man who seeks my life. I solemnly assure you that the coming and going of this man, his strange utterances and his power over me, are beyond my understanding. Twice he has appeared to me when I was in the company of another person, and yet the other person could not see him. What manner of being is this whom, apparently, no eye but mine can see? Is it my conscience, my outraged soul, that has taken to itself a visible form and the power of speech? And, if so, is every man who wrongs himself irreparably haunted by a phantom of his own creation, forever chattering of his misdeeds and conspiring with him and

against him ? These questions I shall not try to answer. I have lost all confidence in my own senses. I seem to be writing to you now. Perhaps I am altogether mad, and this I seem to do may be as unreal as any dream. If not, these questions may reach you, and suggest considerations of moment, not alone to yourself. I saw my enemy to-day, and it was planned how we would end this life of mine to-night. Perhaps this meeting was but the delusion of a morbid mind, and to-morrow you may find me living as before. If so, you will know me better, and possibly you can suggest some remedy for these strange ills I suffer. But I pray to God that I am not deceived—that this long and fierce rebellion may have its end at once. I have tried all things that promised peace, but there is no peace for me. Whichever way I turn, naught but contention and defeat and incurable despair await me. Oh, God! I know it does offend my soul to dwell in this body, sore with rankling memories, and in spite of fear it bids me welcome death.

My will is in the hands of my attorney, whom you know. He will surrender it to you on demand. May God give you wisdom in the use of that money. And now, my good friend, without whom I would be friendless, although I have always seemed to be a hard man, I hope you may never think of me as lacking that sense of gratitude and tender regard which I assuredly owe you.

Very sincerely yours,

George Ernest O'Darrow.

Burton re-read this letter many times in the solitude of his room, deeply moved by its awful

earnestness. It brought home to him a solemn truth, that this thing we call the soul is like an unbidden guest, breaking bread with us in the house of life and insisting upon a scrupulous hospitality. That afternoon he took it with him to Mr. Gravingham's garret and read it to the old artist. Then Burton told him of O'Darrow's will.

"I told him about you one day," said the young man, "and he has directed me to pay you 500 dollars a month in his name, for as long a time as God spares your life."

Mr. Gravingham sat for a moment nervously wiping his eye-glasses, without speaking. Then he walked to the window and looked out into the sky.

"It's a sad world," said he presently, turning towards Burton. "I must go and try to find that miserable Reeker. He was half-naked the last time I saw him. Thank God, I can now keep my clerks looking decently."

"And you can have a poverty fair every week," said Burton. "O'Darrow's house will be thrown open to all good people whom we may wish to bring together."

"Good!" the old gentleman exclaimed; "but you will find there are many we must reach who have fallen so low that you would scarcely

wish to welcome them in your home. I suggest that for these we have a special dinner at the Silver Bottle—say, once a week — if Bob Champney will co-operate with us. If your time is not occupied to-morrow, I will take you among the people whom we desire to help. Many of them are my friends. I have done what I could for them in my humble way as a gentleman of limited means. When you see them you can choose your guests."

Next morning, after religious services in the library where the tragedy had occurred, Burton accompanied O'Darrow's body to its resting-place. In the afternoon he went with Mr. Gravingham through some of the great tenements in the lower part of the city.

CHAPTER XII.

ONE evening, about a month after the melancholy death of Sir George O'Darrow, the big white mansion was all aglow with light. Long tables were spread in its spacious dining-hall, and at the head of one of them sat the new master of the house. A large company of ladies and gentlemen—some of them hard-handed and plainly clad—shared his hospitality. Helen Crouch presided at another table, around which were quite half a hundred children, whose laughter echoed through the great house. When the dinner was over Burton rose and said :—

" The man does not live who knows no want. The rich may feel the sting of a poverty no less terrible than that of the poor. I have seen with my own eyes the rich man's poverty. It is a shameful thing and hard to bear, and still harder to relieve. Both the rich and the poor are in need of God's mercy and of what help they can

give each other. They can help each other if they will. The rich man should sow the seed of charity that it may bring forth fruit fit to satisfy his soul's hunger. He should remember that his giving must be unmingled with pride or vanity or scorn, lest it produce only bitterness. He must not close his doors against the poor as if there were pollution in their touch. Every day his eyes should behold their poverty; his ears should hear the voice of their complaint. Whatsoever he does for them he should do with sympathy and his best judgment—not as one who is giving simply, but as one who is receiving more than he can possibly give. It is my purpose to make this house a place where all who suffer want of whatever kind may meet here and be not ashamed of their poverty, and do such things as their wisdom may direct to help one another."

Until near midnight O'Darrow's splendid mansion rang with the sound of music and the voices of its happy guests. When they had gone and its lights were at last extinguished, Burton rode home with Colonel Crouch and his family.

"I believe thoroughly in the sentiments you expressed this evening," Helen said to Burton, as they sat down after removing their wraps.

The Colonel and Mrs. Crouch had discreetly left them together.

"I hope you like me as well as you like my sentiments. I love you, Helen, and I need your help. Will you be my wife?"

She sat beside him, removing her gloves and looking down as if she were unconscious that he had spoken.

"Let me help you," said he, taking her hand and deftly pulling the kid off her tiny fingers. "We had better handle this subject without gloves."

"And without veils on our faces," she added, smiling, as she uncovered her face, which up to this time had worn a very serious expression.

He drew her to him and kissed her fondly.

"You presumptuous man!" said she, boxing his ears mildly. "I did not mean that you could kiss me."

"I have loved you ever since we first met," said he, "and I wish the question of my rights and privileges to be settled now and for all time. Will you be my wife?"

"I had made up my mind to marry a poor but honest young man," she answered, "to whom my fortune would be of some service. I understand you are a rich man now, Mr. Fanning."

"It is my misfortune to have become suddenly rich," said he, "but I would be poor indeed without you."

"I suppose one ought to pity the poverty of the rich man," she answered, smiling.

THE END.

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