





SYBIL KNOX

OR, HOME AGAIN

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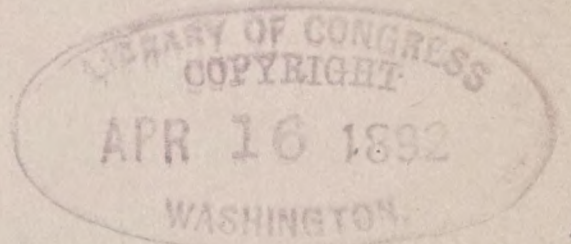
OR, HOME AGAIN

A STORY OF TO-DAY

BY

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"IN HIS NAME," "TEN TIMES ONE IS TEN," "LIFE OF
WASHINGTON," "LIFE OF COLUMBUS," ETC.



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SYBIL KNOX;

OR, HOME AGAIN.

CHAPTER I.

“IS it really the last time?”

“It is really the last time,” said Mrs. Knox, “and you cannot think how hard it is to say so, for you have no such experience.”

The place was one of the handsome rooms of the United States Minister in Rome; the time was as one of his evening parties came to a close. The people were Mrs. Sybil Knox and John Coudert. She had made her headquarters in Rome now for four winters, and was about to return to America after an absence of seven years. He had been in Rome twice—for the Easter festivities of two years, that is. To be candid with the reader, he had come the second time because, in all his work

and all his play of the summer and autumn, his mind had run back to this charming woman, and he was bold enough to try again to find what was the secret of the fascination.

“I think,” said he, “that our people here, the Americans—the colony, as they call them on the other side—had relied upon you as one of the permanent people, the fixtures. You will be sadly missed by such people; and by the other kind, such people as I, who have tasted your hospitality.”

“You are all very good,” said she, hardly smiling, indeed almost sadly. “It is a hard business, as all good-byes are. But I do not like to have people tell me they thought I was going to stay here. I am sure I have always flown my colors. There is my father’s Loyal Legion badge, now; you see I wear it to-night, as I always do. And whenever there has been a chance I have soared with the spread eagle.”

“Oh,” said Mr. Coudert, “no one thinks anybody is going to stay here more than one more winter.”

“And then next year never comes, any more than to-morrow comes. But I—I almost went

last year.” Then she paused, and said, rather resolutely, “I wish you would say to anybody and everybody that, while I like Italy and have enjoyed it to the full, I have stayed here really by accident. First—well, you do not know—it seemed every year as if Mr. Knox were getting better, and he always thought one more year would establish him. Then, when it was all over, my mother came; then, you know, my sisters came. But I have always been beating my wings against the cage, though it is so large and so pretty. I shall let the girls go to Naples with your party, and when you come back the last strap will be tight around the last balla, and I shall be waiting on the steps of the palace. I shall not suffer them to come in to look for a lost handkerchief. ‘Over the seas and far away,’ ” and now she succeeded in smiling.

“Are you quite so sure you will like it at first?” said he doubtfully.

“Can you say that? Everybody else has said that, and I am fairly angry. As if I were a girl when I came away! If anybody knows America I do.”

“Very likely,” said Mr. Coudert. “But nobody does know America. The New Englanders hardly know New England, and they do not know what a ranch is, or a prairie. They believe in nothing ten miles beyond New York. As poor Lord Salisbury said, the scale of the maps is so small. The New Yorkers think they know New York, and do not know even that. Far less do they know the South, or what is to come from the Pacific shore. The other day I saw in a ‘leading newspaper’ a great head-line about ‘Smoky Pittsburg.’ The man did not know that for four or five years the sky above Pittsburg has been like the sky above the Campagna. Indeed, if you know America to-day you do not know it to-morrow.”

“That is why one wants to live there,” said she proudly, and looking, as he thought, more charming than ever in her enthusiasm. “And why one wants to be there before one is quite hoary with age. You see I must go soon.”

“You will find it hard to choose another Rome,” persisted he.

“They tell me there are sixteen on the list

of post-offices," she answered, laughing, "besides Roma and New Rome. But I shall not try any of these. I have no choice to make between cities."

"If you had, you would choose Washington. After Florence and Geneva, Washington is the most charming city in the world."

"Seville?" asked she; "or what's the matter with Damascus?"

"They are not in America," said he, catching her own tone of the minute before. "But if you are not going to any of these, where is it? You do not mean to be a ranchera, or the Lady Bountiful of a bonanza farm in Dakota?"

"No, I shall not, though I have thought of that and thought seriously. For I should like to be of use somewhere. And really, Mr. Coudert, I am not quite a fool. I do know enough to—well, I can draw a cheque and I can sign a receipt for my dividends. Before my father died he called me his confidential clerk. And I am one of the women who would really like something to do."

He told her that he remembered she said

something of the sort before, one day, when they had all made a party to Tivoli together. He knew in his own heart that it was this sort of ability to enter into affairs, as one who was of them and could be in them, which gave something of the charm which so many men found in her bright talk. And, at the same time, he shuddered when he compared her mentally with two or three "women of affairs" whom he had seen in his own country or in England, trying to show men that they are not fools, and hardly succeeding—the women who move "to lay on the table," or to "refer to a committee of the whole."

"Life is life," he said. "Of course the whole thing is comparative. I have put as much work on the slicing the section of the cell of a fern, and mounting it on a slide, as Mr. Gladstone puts into a treaty with Russia. And the good God cares as truly for the one as He does for the other. I suppose the Dakota bonanza farm does not much astonish Him."

It was John Coudert's willingness to talk seriously which had interested Mrs. Knox in

him the first time she saw him ; and which, indeed, distinguished him from the average of travelling Americans who stopped to do Rome, before they went on to do Pompeii and Sorrento. She was not unused to that habit of talk of his, and she knew it was genuine.

“ You have it precisely,” said she. “ My principality is larger than the Prince of Monaco’s, I believe. It is smaller than a Dakota wheat farm. It is ‘ two hundred acres of woodland, be the same more or less ; two hundred acres of pasture-land, be the same more or less ; and one hundred and five acres of arable land, or meadow, be the same more or less ; together with the homestead and barns and offices.’ ” All this she drawled out with admirable Yankee intonation, as if she were about to offer it for sale at auction. “ If it were described in an English novel they would say it was ‘ all in a ring fence.’ For the truth is that it was a military grant made to one Gershom Wood and his brother, after Queen Anne’s War ; and so it came down to my father. I could have told you the boundaries once, they are so simple : ‘ Beginning at

a stake and stones on the south side of Powder Horn Hill,' and so on.

“The homestead is to be my palazzo. The arable land will give me my duty, and the woodland will be my burden. You must all pray for me when you go to St. Peter's, that I may not die land-poor.”

“I am not afraid of that,” said he, without restraining a tone of admiration. “Somebody in the next town will develop a factory of hair-springs for watches, and then you will show that the charcoal from red oak is the only charcoal for their temper, and when I next see you you will be a bonanza queen in Madison Avenue, who has developed a nabobry from unknown qualities of carbon. No fear of being land-poor. But——”

“Always ‘but,’ Mr. Coudert.”

“But,” he went on, “I have lived in such a place. I have seen my mother fight with beasts in such a place.” He was even bitter now. “Have you really asked yourself what it is to be alone in the centre of six hundred and forty acres, ‘be the same more or less,’—to meet no one for a month who does not

ask you if Mrs. Barrett would not be wiser if she turned the skirt of her frock, and who does not wonder why the doctor paints his buggy green when it was black before?"

"And why not?" she replied a little fiercely. "The Countess yonder was discussing with me just now the shade of the Princess's velvet, whether ashes of roses was as becoming to her as Parma violet. Gossip is gossip. I am very tired of it here, and I do not believe it would be worse at Washington, or Cranberry Centre. At all events, I mean to try."

She was so eager, even so angry, as she spoke, that John Coudert knew he had struck home, and that he had touched the raw spot of which she herself was conscious. For himself, he believed that the eternal gossip which he satirized had brought his mother to her grave. He knew perfectly well that the reason why his sisters and he had agreed, with one consent, to sell [their fine old home, was that no one of them could abide the daily drizzle of that gossip, its summer showers, or its winter hail. Because his sisters were

afraid of it, they were spending winters in what he called disreputable attics in Paris—which were really rooms in elegant French pensions—and they sometimes spent summers, taking their chances of the gossip, at Elberon or Long Branch. He had not probed Mrs. Knox's wound without some memory of other wounds, and of what had come of them.

And so it was, in less than a fortnight from the time when she had been talking with John Coudert at the Minister's, Mrs. Knox found herself on the after-deck of the fast steamer *Tropic*, on her fourth day out from Queens-town, on her way to America. This time she was not talking with John Coudert, but with another pleasant man, Judge Kendrick of Wisconsin. His wife, poor soul! was lying in her long chair, wrapped with rugs, speechless, and almost without sight or hearing, as she courageously bore her half-recovery from seasickness. Mrs. Knox's young people were all below in their wretchedness. For herself, she was as well as ever, was happy that the thing was one-third over, and glad to renew her acquaintance with the Kendricks, which had

begun a year or two before, on the slope of Vesuvius.

“Yes, the world is a small world, in a way,” said she, and then, hardly expecting to be answered, “it is in a way a very big one.”

“So small,” said he, “that when you meet a man once you may be sure that you will meet him again—yes, or a woman. I met you at Vesuvius, *ergo* I meet you on the *Tropic*.”

“I like to believe it,” said she, “and let us hope that the spell may last after you have looked in on Milwaukee and I on my woodlots. But I suppose there is in the notion a little of the Cæsar’s boat element. It is like my Aunt Huldah’s aphorism.”

“I know Cæsar and his boat, but I had not the pleasure of Aunt Huldah’s acquaintance.”

“No? What a pity! I thought everybody knew Aunt Huldah. Aunt Huldah said she had observed that if she lived through March she always lived through the year. It was like Cæsar’s saying that his boats never up-

set. He was in a leaky one on the Ides of March."

"Yes, he was; but Aunt Huldah does not laugh me out of my certainty that all things are double, as it says in the Bible——"

"If you buy it in Oxford."

"Yes, or at the Queen's printing-house. Tell me, if all things are not double, why I put down a letter from General Knox to George Washington the minute before I came on deck to meet you."

"Or why I ate one of Kendrick's biscuits in my stateroom before I came up to meet you."

"Excellent!" he said. "I confess I was astonished that you remembered our names so perfectly. It cannot be that you will succeed so well in New York. How long since you have seen the Battery?"

"Do not tell any one, but it is seven years—seven years and more. And sometimes it seems a thousand," and she sighed.

"Are you prepared to be interviewed? Five boats lying at quarantine, with the reporters of the *Argus*, the *Tribune*, the *World*, the *Herald*, and the *Ring-Tailed Roarer*, to

inquire how Mrs. Knox bore the passage, on what train she will leave, and whether she is favorably impressed by America.”

“I shall shelter myself behind you and Mrs. Kendrick. They will be writing as fast as they can the answers to the questions, whether you approve of the original package decision, whether you stop at the Saratoga convention before going home, and whether you mean to offer yourself for the Presidency, or to wait for a nomination.”

“No,” he said, with pretended sadness, “I shall not be interviewed. I am one of themselves. Foxes do not talk to foxes, nor newspaper men to newspaper men.”

“No? That is new.”

“As true as new. Mr. Blaine would have been President long ago had he not began life as an editor. As it was, not an editor between thirty and seventy but said in his heart, ‘Jim Blaine President? I might as well be President myself.’”

“How natural that is! And how fortunate for women that they do not have to think of being President. To tell you the honest truth,

Judge Kendrick, there are a thousand things in which women's talk and their thoughts differ from men's."

"I have always said so," said he, "but I have never heard but two women say it. You are one, and the other was twenty years old; I was very much in love with her."

"Mrs. Kendrick, your husband is telling tales about you."

"No, my dear Mrs. Knox, I hear him. He is talking about Bertha Angevine. It is not safe for him to tell how much he was in love with me."

"What insight she has," said her husband, in a stage whisper, "when I gave her such a mere hint to guess from. It was Bertha Angevine, long since Mrs. Dr. Abernethy, or Louis, or Camomile. I said that men had very little chance to think things out. It was only at church, when the sermon was long, that a man could carry out a line of thought. She said she had noticed that, but that women had lots of time, when they were sewing."

"It was true," said Mrs. Knox. "It was true—then. But now, alas!—now, they do

not sew much. They 'put out their sewing,' and it is done by steam or electricity, and they——”

“Go to weddings, my friend Haliburton tells me.”

“Do what?”

“Haliburton says that if his church is opened for the wedding of a little mouse of a button-hole maker, married to the third assistant of the fourth clerk of the bottle-washer—two people who have not lived a week in Boston, and are married in church only because they hate the woman who keeps her boarding-house—Haliburton says that even at such a wedding as that, though it were Monday morning at eleven o'clock, his large church would be crowded. And Haliburton's inference is that the average American woman, after 'her education is finished,' has nothing in the world to do.”

“I don't know,” said Mrs. Knox doubtfully, after a moment; “I should have said that the trouble was the other way. The American girls, after they have left school, have seemed to me to be 'on a drive,' as the

lumbermen say. I have not seen them in their homes for ten years. But they have talked to me when they were in Rome. What with their lessons, and causes, and Saturday clubs, and their charities, and their voting for the school committee, and their helping dear papa, and helping dear mamma, and at the same time going to Newport, and maintaining their relations to society—germans in the evening, and going to whist classes in the morning—I should not think they had much time to go to any weddings but their own.”

“All I can say is,” he replied, “that Tuttle told me the other day that all the street-car connection of the West End of Boston was deranged because a pretty girl was married at Trinity Church, and that things did not come to their bearings till an hour after Dr. Brooks blessed them. Perhaps that is Boston. I always heard that Boston was founded by church people, only I thought it was of another kind.”

But Mrs. Knox did not listen ; so soon as she could speak without interrupting him, she pointed with her closed parasol at the cold sun,

which was making a wretched effort to peer through the fog. "Why in the world is it there? Why is the sun in the west at ten o'clock in the morning?"

Sure enough the sun was on the starboard quarter. The ship was—not aiming at it, but going that way, somewhat to the left of the sun.

"Is it the sun? It must be the sun," said the Judge. But a queer, creeping feeling came over them all, as if for once the sun in these foggy days had risen in the west. He ran forward to find an officer and inquire. He came back blank enough. Something had happened to the screw, or its connections. It was not thought wise to go on. The ship happened to be governed by a captain, and not by a caucus. She had, therefore, been headed back to Ireland without consultation of the passengers. They would be notified in good time. Meanwhile this information had been given to the Judge, because there was no reason why it should be hidden.

"A week more!" groaned poor Mrs. Kendrick.

“A week more!” said her husband, in a tone quite as abject; “and what will become of the meeting of the Full Bench, I am sure I do not know.”

“A week more!” said Mrs. Knox, more wretched than either. Here was her brother waiting for her in New York; here were twenty appointments with trustees—nay, here were invitations which she had given, and which had been accepted by friends, at the re-established home. “A week more!” she said dismally. “The bottom is out from my tub. All my calculations are out of order.”

“And what will they say when the *Tropic* does not arrive?” said poor Mrs. Kendrick.

All the same, all parties had to accept the universe, whether they wanted to or no. In this case very few of them wanted to. There were one or two waifs of fortune who were glad to have the Tropic Steamship Company feed them for eighteen days instead of nine, for the same sum of money. There were two pair of young lovers who thought moonlight on deck “perfectly splendid,” and who, in a false astronomy, supposed that, while they were at

sea, the moon would not change. For the rest, it seemed impossible to adapt themselves to the new conditions. But it was not impossible, and somehow or other they adapted.

Four days brought them back to Queens-town Harbor, and, as it was ordered, as they came to anchor in the bay, and the first officer went up with his tidings, the *Antarctic*, of the same line with them, came in, anchored opposite them, and sent for her American mails. She was on her outward voyage. A boat was at once sent across to her to know what chances there were for passage. But the reply was unpromising. The captain would give up his stateroom to any party of four. There were two berths for two men in staterooms only half peopled. "That is the whole!" This was the doleful reply of the surgeon. With absolute promptness, savoring of the western side of the Mississippi, Judge Kendrick claimed the captain's stateroom before any one else had begun to think about it. Two travelling salesmen took the two berths in the same way. The Kendrick girls ran downstairs to tell their mother, and to pack their stateroom luggage.

All else, as they knew, must come by another vessel. Before the tug with the mails had delivered them, the boat was ready, and the Judge's party were bidding good-bye. As Mrs. Kendrick took her place, somewhat shaken by the descent of the landing-ladder, she found, to her amazement, Mrs. Knox seated there already.

“Not a word,” whispered Mrs. Knox. “I am a second-class passenger. Never fear. In the second class there is always room for one more.”

A half-sovereign in one place and a sovereign in another had settled all this while the others were packing. Mrs. Knox was sitting on the extensor which held her worldly goods, and trusted in the officers of the *Tropic* that the rest would follow. She ran upon the deck of the *Antarctic* with the Kendricks, and disappeared.

She was wholly right in her surmise. For a second-class passenger, as for one in the steerage, there is always room for one more.

CHAPTER II.

A FIVE-DOLLAR gold piece, well bestowed in the hands of the woman steward who had the oversight of second-class women, gave to Mrs. Knox a quiet berth, where her neighbor overhead was a frightened German woman, who became, as we shall see, her fast friend. For the rest, if it were not for the name second-class, which nobody likes, she was as well off as is the average traveller on any steamer of any line. She could not order a Welsh rarebit at midnight. But she would not have ordered one had she been a first-class voyager. The table was not very good, nor would it have been very good under any circumstances. The bed was clean, thanks to the five-dollar piece, and, as Mrs. Knox observed, it was a little larger than hers had been in the stateroom of the *Tropic*. The people whom she met at meals were all women, and all spoke German. As she spoke German, too, this did not in itself so

much matter. In fact, she was tired to death by the rush of the last week in Europe ; she knew she should spend fifteen hours of each twenty-four flat on her back, and, as it happened in this particular case, she had more air and bigger quarters in this part of her enterprise than she had before.

It would have been quite impossible, as she well knew, to make this second-class passage tolerable for an instant in the eyes of any of her large party excepting herself. Indeed, there were too many of them for any movement which required such promptness. But, more than this, her nieces looked forward to the voyage home as one more lottery in the experience of travel. It would not be fair to say that they looked forward to a week of mild or exciting flirtation, after their seasickness was over, but, at the very least, it was—well, let us say, an untried adventure : who there might be, whom one might meet, with a clean deck, long walks, and chances, by the hour, of talk in extension chairs. It was easy enough for Mrs. Knox to charge the escort men with the removal of her trunks in the hold, which, of

course, could not be found now. For herself, her stateroom "plunder" must answer her purposes till all should come together again in America.

Bertha Berlitz, the frightened German woman in the upper berth, who had been terribly seasick already in the little experience of the sea since she sailed, was going to America in that sad search for a lost husband which repeats itself so often, in the romance of two continents. The sympathy and experienced kindness of Sybil Knox worked their inevitable way with the forlorn woman, and on the second day she was persuaded to sip a part of a cup of tea, to take a few spoonfuls of oatmeal porridge, and, at last, to try her feet again upon the deck. The experiment was a joy to her little girl, a nice, jolly little mädchen of six or seven years, who had vanquished her seasickness, child-fashion, in a couple of hours, and had been won over to absolute confidence in Sybil Knox by that lady's skill in creating paper dolls, and by the dramatic interest of the conversations which she made them maintain with one another. The mother

was, of course, grateful for such kindness to her little girl, though she was more shy than words can describe; she yielded slowly to absolute kindness, and told to her new friend her history and her hopes.

It had been a pure love-match, that was clear enough. And, until he left for America, there had been no break, there was no rival, there was no falsehood. A handsome boy and a pretty girl in a village in the Hartz Mountains—all just like a scene in an opera, or a story by Grimm. He was a forester in the government employ, but he was of the kind of forester which is at the bottom, and not the kind which is at the top. That distinction reigns in forestry as in all the other vocations of feudal countries. That is to say, there is one sort of people who do the hard work and have poor pay. And there is another sort of people, who wear a little or much gold lace on their clothes, who ride about on horses, tell the other people what to do, though they don't know so much about it, and have good pay. After their dear little Rudolph died Gerhard had said he would have no more of it.

He said the boy was the same as if he had starved to death. This was not true, as poor Bertha explained volubly. But it was true that Rudolph had not had the same food or the same comfort as he would have had were he a baron's son. Nay, the baron's son, a sickly boy, was alive when Bertha told all this sad tale. Any way, Rudolph's death had made Gerhard unhappy and discontented. He said he knew all there was to be known about forests, and that a new country where there are forests was the place for him. So he left her and Clärchen with the grandfather and grandmother, and with two hundred thalers he went to America to make ready for them to come.

And there had been letters—five letters—all which poor, half-widowed Bertha had, wrapped up in a piece of parchment, and then slipped all together in a red-flannel bag. Not on the first, nor the second, nor the third day, but before the voyage was over, these precious letters were entrusted to Mrs. Knox, that she might, if she could, solve the mystery why there were no more.

Alas! there is always one solution, when there are no more, in such cases—the solution which, of course, poor Bertha would not state in words, nor, indeed, would Sybil Knox. First, there were two letters from New Bergen, a little place not far from New York, where he had found work, at what seemed marvellous wages, as a gardener. Then there was one from New Pfalz, in the State of New York, more inland. Then he had worked his way to Rochester, and was at work in a nursery. There were enthusiastic stories of the peaches and pears and plums which Clärchen was to eat when she came over. There was no hint of declining interest. There was nothing from which that “other woman” could be suspected, who is so apt to appear when an ocean has come into a drama. But the second Rochester letter spoke of an engagement to go to the West, with yet another nurseryman. She was still to write to Rochester, for he would be back when her letter came. Then there was one letter written on the train, and dated “Liberty”—just a line to say that he was well. Of this letter, alas, the cover and

postmark had been lost. And these were all.

Mrs. Knox sighed a long sigh as she half-explained what she did not dare express wholly—how many Libertys there were.

Such was the clew by which a husband was to be discovered, who himself gave no sign where he was. Was he dead, alas, or was there “the other woman”?

CHAPTER III.

JUDGE KENDRICK evidently leaned to the impression that the "other woman" had carried the lost Berlitz off. If so he doubted whether any pursuit would avail. "He has only to change his name to Brown or Jones—they all do," he said, "and it is all over."

For Judge Kendrick had, at the very first, after his household was established in the captain's stateroom, come down to offer his berth to Mrs. Knox. If she said she was comfortable, she gave him new reason to say that he would be as comfortable, and she would be such a comfort to his wife. There was more than one first-class passenger of her old friends of travel ready to make the same proposal, as soon as it was whispered, in the New England section of the three hundred first-class passengers on the *Tropic*, that that nice Mrs. Knox, who received so pleasantly in the *Via Sabina*, was

in the second cabin. There were half a dozen gentlemen, who had enjoyed her hospitality, whose wives sent them to her with the same invitation the Judge had brought to her. But she was steel to their entreaties. Wild horses should not drag her into the first cabin, she said. No; the captain was not to be asked if she might not sit on the upper deck with them. Discipline was discipline, and she was well pleased with her German and Yorkshire friends. She always had been tempted to take a steerage passage. This was not that. But, if a word more were said, she would go into the steerage, and then none of them could find her.

All the same the Judge used to make a call on her every day and take a constitutional with her. She would give him this hour. And, of course, she consulted him about Bertha Berlitz's chances.

"Poor enough, you would say," said he. "Still, if the man were alive, or if, as I say, the other woman were not alive, they would be ninety in a hundred. You say he was in Rochester. That means he is in the nursery

business. That means he is in or near some large town. Now do you know that so perfect is the administration at Washington——”

“Are you laughing?” said she, a little annoyed.

“Laughing? Not at all. The administration at Washington is the despair of Europe. It is only our own habit of finding fault that has taught you anything else. Do you believe that in Russia, or even in Paris, there is a staff like what there is at Washington, of accomplished men and women whose business it is to find Gerhard Berlitz? If you drop a letter into the post-office the day you land, addressed Gerhard Berlitz, America, and it have anything of value enclosed in it, this staff will work on it. If he is alive, if he have not changed his name, if he live in a large town or city, they will find him. I mean that they have a library of directories, one from each large town and city, and that somebody will turn up ‘Berlitz, Gerhard’ in every directory, and that each man with that name in those cities will have a chance at the letter. Unless, indeed, one of them is so mean as to take it from

the office and not return it for another trial.”

“You give me good hope,” she said, “for I have Bertha’s confidence in him. There is no ‘other woman.’”

“But always——”

“Yes, always,” she said sadly. “Why should he live when so many others die? I have tried to recall what railway tragedies there were that year. He—it is fifteen months ago.”

“Yes, well; hope if you can; make her hope. *Quien sabe?*—it may yet come well.”

And such was the modicum of expectation with which Mrs. Knox took Bertha Berlitz’s affairs in hand. What would have happened to Bertha Berlitz if the *Tropic* had not turned round, she never inquired. As it was, the *Tropic* had turned round. And as she had, Sybil Knox had shared Bertha Berlitz’s bedroom. And as she had, their destinies seemed to flow as one.

Yes, when they were in the long shed on the pier in New York after arriving, the shed where people identify baggage, and give their keys to custom inspectors, Mrs. Knox’s baggage

almost passed itself, it was so little. Blessed are they who have no luggage, for they do not have to wait for the custom-house. This is a true proverb. But she would not desert Bertha—no, not though she were wild to go to Macy's and to find something which she could wear within and without. The day gave every promise of being one of the tremendously hot days of early spring. Mrs. Knox had met her welcome to America in the shape of a note from her near friend, Mrs. Lagrange, to whose house she was going at once. One of the children was poorly, and the doctor had sent them all to Lenox earlier than she expected. Still the house was open. Mary Connor would see that all was comfortable, and here was John with the note, to be of any service. So was it, that at the first instant of return to her own country Mrs. Knox found herself alone in New York—alone, but that she had attached to herself a German woman, who could not speak a word of English, and her child.

Now there was absolutely nothing which she would not do with Lucy Lagrange, or which Lucy Lagrange would not do with her. Had

Lucy telegraphed from Lenox : " Send me your diamond bracelet by express," she would have done it. She had not had the least question but that she could take Bertha and Clärchen in the carriage with her to Lucy's house, keep them there while she stayed, and carry them with her. But, before the name of this unknown Mary Connor, she trembled. She did not dare carry Bertha to her. She looked at the faultless John, in his matchless livery, and she was a good deal afraid of him. But she did not let him know this. He did know already why she had no luggage, and he understood very readily why she did not go with him uptown.

What would the poor Frau Berlitz have done were there no Mrs. Knox? This question presented itself to that lady, and to Judge Kendrick and Mrs. Kendrick, all of whom were trying to solve the problem.

There was a grave, business-like looking man on one side of the shed who had a party of twenty-odd Norwegians in hand. They were sitting on their trunks till a lost trunk should be found, and waiting his command to move.

Mrs. Knox had noticed them on the voyage as decent people, among the steerage passengers, who kept very much to themselves. Would not their leader perhaps take Bertha and Clärchen to a decent boarding-house, where she could stay for a day or two? Judge Kendrick made the inquiry. Alas! the man was a Mormon elder, and the people were Mormons. "If only we had been Latter Day Saints we should have been provided for," said Sybil Knox afterward. And all three of the councillors wondered why the Mormon corner of the Church of Christ was the only corner that seemed to care for this business of taking strangers into a new land.

"It is all nonsense," said Mrs. Kendrick, under the impulse of this wonder. "Fred, we will take them with us to Harriet's. They may just as well stay at New Rochelle, till something turns up, as be poking about here in this ideal German boarding-house which none of us know how to find." To this her husband agreed willingly, Mrs. Knox unwillingly. But she had to give way. New Rochelle is not an hour from New York, and Mrs. Kendrick had

been at home there till she was married. Bertha's big trunk should be stored at No. 999 West Fifty-second Street in Lucy Lagrange's palace. Bertha should go with the Kendricks to New Rochelle, and Sybil Knox should stay in New York as she had proposed, while she refitted for her summer adventures. So soon as the custom-house people were satisfied, John, in all his grandeur, was told that the coachman might take Mrs. Knox to Arnold & Constable's. Judge Kendrick, who called himself from that moment a Mormon elder, took his wife and the German contingent across to the Forty-second Street Station, and Frau Berlitz's enormous chest was confided to an expressman to carry to Mrs. Lagrange's. There it was to remain till Mrs. Knox should be ready to go to her own home.

By this time it was nearly eleven. By this time, therefore, it was certain that they took their lives in their hands in these adventures. The people in the streets seemed to know that something was in the air, such as was not always expected. There was not the smart tread, the "I-care-for-nobody" swing, properly in-

dicative of the cross streets in lower New York. Rather there was a doubtful and even slow movement, unlike the laziness of Burgos, unlike the indifference of Messina, but unmistakable. Even the impassive coachman, as he took the order for Arnold & Constable, deviated so far from the statutes of his profession as to ask if Mrs. Knox would need the horses long. Whether the danger of a hot day to the horses were in his mind, or whether he doubted how long he could live in that livery coat, he did not say.

For it is what in local dialect is called a "peeler." It was one of the awful days when the "hot wave," which has been long predicted and failed, delivers itself, all unannounced, on the wretched dwellers in cities. Higher and higher the thermometer; more and more muggy the air! Within the great warehouses you felt for the moment cooler, but even there the lassitude of Southern India was on everybody. Mrs. Knox herself felt that it was madness to attempt thought as to temporary costume. She withdrew from the grandeurs of her first plans immediately. She ordered

the great coachman to take her to Macy's, "Where, my dear, I was able to get some things I could live in, till my trunks came," and then, to the undisguised joy of the great coachman and the greater John, gave the order for "Home."

Home, indeed! What a satire! Is this home? To a woman seven years from home, is this what she has earned? Somehow the memory of "seven years" brought back to Mrs. Knox a scripture recollection. As she went up the steps, as John opened the door with a pass-key, as her eyes fell on linen covers in the drawing-room, which was dark with close-drawn curtains, she said to herself, "He bargained for Rachel, and lo! it was Leah." Mrs. Mary Connor appeared, respectful, but so limp. Had Mrs. Knox had any lunch? There should be something in fifteen minutes, only John had telephoned that they should lunch downtown.

"Yes—no—really, Mrs. Connor, I think a bath is all I need. Perhaps—yes, a little beef-tea after it. You see, Mrs. Connor, I am not quite used to the climate yet."

As if any one were ever used to a "peeler"!

And this was her welcome home! Poor Sybil Knox!

But the bath did its perfect work. No, she knew that she could not have had these perfect appurtenances in Rome. There were new devices for faucets. There was a new invention for a sponge-basket. There was ingenuity, and prettiness, and nicety everywhere, and there was water, cold water, and Mrs Knox was herself again.

And the lunch was not confined to beef-tea. Mrs. Connor was on her mettle, if the day was a "peeler," and gradually a little appetite developed itself. And so at two o'clock Sybil sat at the front window, wondering how she was to kill the afternoon, but feeling as able to kill it as if it were Hercules. Inspiration came, and she rang.

"Mrs. Connor, it is so hot that I think I will go by the afternoon train. When the expressman comes with the great box I told you of——"

And at that moment the cart drew up before the door.

“I will speak to him myself, Mrs. Connor,” and she rushed to the door.

“Could you take that trunk right away to the Forty-second Street Station?”

The man looked amazed. He had just come from that place. But his hand closed on what in some languages is called a silver cart-wheel,—the dollar of the modern coinage. He was then certain he could return.

“And may I go with you—on your seat, you know?”

The man was amazed, but had no objection. Mrs. Connor was more amazed. The great John was most amazed of all. But he brought down Mrs. Knox's extensor.

“I will write to Mrs. Lagrange myself. I shall be just in time for the train. Thank you ever so much, and good-bye.” So, to the horror of the great John, she stepped lightly to the teamster's seat, even took the man's whip from his hand as he mounted beside her, and drove in triumph down the Fifth Avenue to the station.

She amused herself, as she went by, wondering what any of her elegant Roman guests would say should they meet her. But at such an hour as this, on such a day as this, none of them were visible. The teamster was pleased with her readiness, and she with his. She had done the impossible. Frau Berlitz's huge chest was checked for Bennington County, and Mrs. Knox had twenty minutes left, to find Frau Berlitz herself. As she had expected, that excellent woman, with her child, was sitting in the corner of the station awaiting the arrival of the Kendricks. Sybil Knox explained to her that all plans were changed. She left a note for the Judge with the parcel man in the corner, and at three o'clock all three were off to try to be at "home again."

CHAPTER IV.

MRS. KNOX had not seen the interior of a day palace car for eight years. She had seen nothing like one in crossing from Rome to Liverpool.

As for poor Frau Berlitz and her little girl, they were too much dazed to be excited or surprised about anything. But Mrs. Knox was amused and interested. She had lived in a palace before—if “palace” be the English of “palazzo”—and she pleased herself by an analysis of her surroundings, which showed how much she had here which she had not there—how much she had there which she had not here; and, in short, how little the two palaces were like each other.

The P. P. C. man came and told her how much was the rent of the palace for a day, and she paid her part of it. It occurred to her that for her apartment in it, and the frau's and the little fräulein, she paid at rather higher rates

than she had paid in Italy for the same period in the larger apartments which she occupied in a larger palace there. And then she pleased herself with comparing the P. P. C. man with the people who attend to the daily needs of the Italian palace ; and that question recurred, so curious to all travellers just returning from Europe, how is it that a P. P. C. man does not bid good-bye, but is the person to welcome you, perhaps on your first experience of palace life.

The company was a day company—that is, it consisted mostly of women. A few gray-whiskered men came into the car, before it started, and kissed the lonely daughters, who were to go forth unescorted and alone to the journey of life. Then there was one quartette who were, most clearly, a bride and bridegroom, with the attendant best man and first bride-maid. The lavishness of flowers showed this—the lady's absolutely new boots showed it. No woman except a bride travels in boots fresh from the shop. If these signs had failed, it would have been certain that these two young people had been only just now married,

because the husband never left the bride on any pretext. He feared that some Sabine rape would capture her if she were out of his sight for a moment, and would take her to some new-built towers of some unnamed Rome.

All these details Mrs. Knox gradually worked out as they rode, and as the peerless view of the Hudson, more beautiful to her than ever, unrolled itself before her. No, the news-boy could not tempt her with his books. They were of names unknown to her. The paper was thick with lime which had been wrought into the pulp. A special sort of paper, very thick, is made for just that sort of literature where it is supposed that you want most for your money, and also supposed that you will not see that salesman again. But at the first, Mrs. Knox did not care to read.

The boy offers you books first, because if you take a book it costs at least thirty-five cents. He offers you magazines on his second visit, because you may buy *Lend a Hand*, which will cost only twenty cents. Not till his third round does he offer you *Harper's Weekly* or the *Bazar*, because these are cheaper still.

She did buy a pretty child's book for the younger of her companions. She found in her bag a copy of "Grimm's Fairy Tales," elegantly illustrated, which she had borrowed from Mrs. Lagrange's house for just this emergency. The news-boy, changing his occupation, now became the purveyor of fruit for the palace, and Mrs. Knox bought bananas for the amazed German mother and her child, who had never seen such fruit before, and began to believe that the wonders which they had heard of, incredulous, were all likely to prove true.

Mrs. Knox threw off all her "things" which could be dispensed with. Men have no such extra "things" in summer, unless the etiquettes permit them to sit in their shirt sleeves, as in Western cars you sometimes do. But women always have some extra, which, if their balloon were sinking, could be flung away. The air was hot, but not so hot as the street-car in New York had been, nor as Madison Avenue had been, when she sat at the teamster's side.

She did not want to read; yet she pleased herself with going to the palace library, which

she had noticed as she entered, that she might see what was provided for crowned heads on their travels. She had taken, at random, a volume from the "Little Classics," and was just returning to her seat with it, when a lady stepped out from the little "drawing-room," so called, and raised both her hands: "Sybil Furness—it is certainly you! or Sybil Knox, I ought to say."

The traveller, seeking for home—disappointed to this moment—felt now that she had found it.

"My dear Jane, is it really you?" and the two kissed each other, with kissing which was real kissing. No obtrusive veil, or coy cheek, but the kiss of four lips which means affectionate joy of meeting.

A seat was found big enough for both in the little cabin, where were Mrs. Wildair and her daughter. The daughter, after she had been shown to Mrs. Knox, was sent to occupy her seat. And the two old schoolmates, who had not seen each other for ten years—not since they left Miss Porter at Farmington, with all life before them—now plunged into the

Odyssey and Æneids of their adventures and wanderings since those days.

The joy of Sybil Knox at the meeting was indescribable. Till now, indeed, she had not known that she was disappointed in her arrival. But she had been disappointed. Something had weighed on her which she would not analyze. The truth was that, though she had not expected to be interviewed, and had not supposed that the same people would be waiting on the pier to wave handkerchiefs, who waved them when she sailed—ah! in other days indeed!—though she had not expected this, she had thought somebody would know her. But nobody had known her, and she had known nobody. Even the Lagranges' servants had been new people. There was a nice girl, in old times, at one particular counter at Macy's, but that girl had gone.

“Really, my dear child, I have spoken to nobody since I left the ship, except porters, and tide-waiters, and shopkeepers, and the people at Arnold's and Macy's.”

“And you just home after a century! Well, now we have all the afternoon—you are

going to Atherton, of course—and we shall be together all the way to the Junction. Poor, dear child ! you shall do all the talking. You know I never say a word.” And then they laughed at the old joke, for Jane was the most incorrigible talker of her year.

She, too, had married, and as she had never seen Sybil’s husband, Sybil had never seen hers. He was a prosperous director of marble quarries, not a hundred miles behind Rutland. She had just seen her sister and her new husband sail for Germany, and was now going home to preside in the vacation revels of the girls whom she had summoned from north, and south, and east, and west. “ I have to bring them together to wake us all up. We should be the least bit rusty, you know, if every summer some of them did not come in and show us the last sweet thing about tennis. John’s brother and his wife, whom you will like, always have a party of young people. And it helps along if I fill up the old house—one of the old Yankee palaces, you know—nine rooms on the ground floor and three in the ell, and the whole three stories high, with attics in

the gambrel. No, we shall not be crowded. I do wish you would stop a week and see how we go on."

"I am not sure but I had better," said Sybil Knox, with the least touch of sadness this time. "I ought to learn how. You know I have to sweep and dust mine. I have to drive out the ghosts, and, I suppose, to change the carpets. I do not know that I shall find a curtain to the windows. I find a letter from old Mary Chittenden, and she says that there are potatoes in the bins, and that Micah Straw does not know but what perhaps he can let us have milk. So I am sure I shall not starve. But for the rest, I must get things in order."

"What fun!" cried the jubilant and enterprising Jane Wildair. "I wish I could go over with you. We will drive across some day and help—it is only nine miles. But I am sure Mary Chittenden would not approve of me. My Mary Chittenden—the woman who runs me—is named Tryphosa. She frowns severely on my extravagances, though she is really ten times as wasteful as I. And she scolds the

young folks all the time, and always ends in letting them have their own way.”

“Shall I feel lonely, Jane?”

“No; you will not. Some people would; but you will make friends. You will meet people more than half-way; that is all they want. Proud as Lucifer is every man and every woman. And good as gold is every woman and every man, when you need real friends. No; you will not feel alone.”

“But, Jane, everybody says that I shall be killed with gossip; everybody says that I shall have to talk of Mrs. Green’s blue ribbons, and Mrs. Black’s white cow. Now, I am not grand. Least of all am I ‘cultured.’ If I thank God for anything it is that I was brought up by people who did not know what ‘culture’ was. But for all that I do not want to talk all day about cows and ribbons—and, in general, other people’s affairs.”

She saw, before her sentence was half done, that she had struck on a chord whose vibrations grated. The irrepressible Jane was, for once, repressed, and when she spoke she spoke slowly.

“You have hit home,” she said. “That is the danger of life, where five hundred people see each other, and do not often see any one besides. But, my dear Sybil, was there any act of Parliament which said that you and I should not meet some trials? Is it not your business, as it certainly is mine, highly to resolve that people shall not talk about black cows and white ribbons where you and I do the listening? I know I have made this the law in my house and in Lysander’s. And, Sybil, the hardest people to bind down to keep the law, are these gay girls from New York who come up to play tennis in summer.”

CHAPTER V.

HOUSEKEEPING proved easier than Sybil Knox had dared to hope. Mary Chittenden was no fool, and the substantials of life, and many of its elegancies, had been well provided for. She found she should have enough to do in putting things on a "peace establishment," as the old books used to say. But, if she had had any fear that she was to be starved, or in any way physically uncomfortable, that fear soon gave way. None of the neighbors had promised any more than Micah Straw had promised. But the physical supplies were, in fact, ample. And, although she had no Fulton Market, she soon found that in a region where she had within a half-mile eggs, trout, poultry, lamb or mutton, pease and beans, she was not going to die of famine. On Saturday her brother came over, with all messages and offers of help from his household, at the mill village of Bowdoin. They

were some twenty miles from her. He "gave her points" as to a thousand matters in the life she was resuming, and they had great comfort together in going back over old memories.

She found, to her grief, that the old meeting-house of the village was closed. It had been voted that it should be painted, within and without. A vacation to the minister had also been voted, and the church was in the hands of the carpenters and painters. But Sybil said she must go somewhere for worship. And it was easily arranged that this somewhere should be at the new meeting-house, as it had been called for twenty years, some four miles away, at the Quarry village.

As it happened, the last service in which she had taken part was in Notre Dame in Paris. Her party had sat there in a gallery above the chancel, where the whole movement of priests and of people went on below them, and the noble music of the ceremony rolled in upon them from one side, without their seeing choir or organist. Here, at the Quarry meeting-house, they were, and they felt that they were, a part of those ministering servants of the Lord,

who were, in whatever feeble fashion, trying to join with angels and archangels, Cherubim and Seraphim, in His praise. "So much gained, at least," Sybil Knox said to herself, and for so much she thanked the good God, as she bent in silent prayer.

For the place itself the contrast was even more distinct. There was a distinct chancel, separated by a rail from the part occupied by the congregation, and carpeted, as their part was not. It was one step higher than the floor of the church. Two steps higher, in a semi-circular recess, which ran farther back than the rest of the church, stood a mahogany pedestal, shaped like the drawings of a Greek altar, on which was a desk, on which was a large Bible. This was both reading-desk and pulpit.

The church itself was ceiled with the rich unpainted pine of the region from bottom to top, and on both sides of the sloping roof, which was not shut off from the rest. The various colors of the wood gave a rich tone to the interior, far more effective, for architectural or æsthetic purpose, than any painting but the

very best could have been. But the native eagerness for colors had shown itself also. For every pane of the large windows had been masked, so to speak, by pasting over the glass some tawdry paper print, which, in crude colors, represented what some one, who had never seen a stained glass window, supposed such a window to be. The moisture of the air had detached some of these papers, so that they hung in ragged festoons from their stays. But most of them remained to give a wretched suggestion of "dim religious light." That there might be something for children to look on and admire, when the words of the speaker did not interest them, twenty or thirty very large colored prints of scenes in the lives of David and Solomon were nailed upon the walls. The decorations of Christmas had triumphed over any suggestions of Lent which had ever been heard there, and the nails which held these pictures were still hung with wreaths of holly, though it was almost summer.

When the party from Atherton entered the church, the people assembled were singing. This was not as part of the regular service, but

as a sort of friendly exercise in music among themselves, and this singing of one and another familiar hymn went on until precisely the time of service. Then the leader of the singing laid down his book and walked up the central aisle, up the steps to the higher platform, opened the Bible, and marked the places where he meant to read. For it proved that he was the preacher.

He was rather awkward in movement. His face and hands were those of a man a good deal exposed to the weather. His dress was of simple black, his necktie was black, and there was nothing in all his costume to suggest any difference between his occupation and that of any other man dressed in black whom you might meet in a shop or on the train. Mrs. Knox fancied that he was almost aggressively "secular" in his way of moving his chair when he sat down, and of throwing his great-coat on another chair. But here she was wrong. He had never associated the idea of ritual with his movements at or near the pulpit; indeed, he had never seen any one who had. Simply, he meant to do what was to be

done before the service began, and he did it in what was the most natural way.

He read a hymn—the congregation found it in their books as he did so, and rose. When a young girl, with a face of a saint, which Mrs. Knox thought one of the sweetest she ever saw, walked quietly to a reed organ which stood in front of the pews, took her seat, and began to play the tune. Fortunately, as these visitors thought, the girl faced the whole congregation, so that they were able to watch that sweet face without rudeness, and to enjoy the shades of expression which passed over it as she tried, with the wretched whine of the reeds, to give some dignity to Lowell Mason's music, and Oliver Holden's. The people sang promptly and heartily. Mrs. Knox joined with them, and had, by this time, well forgotten Notre Dame. She knew that she was ordained herself to certain services in the business the good God has in hand, and it was a comfort to her that the ceremonial in which they engaged recognized her ordination. All parties stood while they sang; then all sat down suddenly, and bowed their heads upon their hands, rest-

ing upon the seats before them, but no one kneeled, if, indeed, kneeling had been physically possible, as the seats were arranged. Mrs. Knox heard no invitation to pray, but the minister, without book or audible invitation to the people, addressed "Almighty God, our Father in Heaven"; and in words at first broken, and perhaps a little disconnected, came more and more to a plea with God that He would reveal Himself then and there, and the hope that they who were addressing Him might come into the consciousness of such presence of His. So earnest and so eager did he become that he even shouted at times, and poor Sybil Knox was startled from her devotion to a wish, almost angry, that the man was not there. Then the reality of his tone gave her the certainty again that he was not acting, or pretending to anything not real, and she fell back more humble and less critical. Still, as she said afterward, it was all a series of surprises. She was tossed high, or she sank low. What she did not say in words was still true, that there were moments, which she could not count nor measure, when she was

wholly lost in her certainty of our Father's love.

At the end the whole congregation joined, audibly, with the minister in the Lord's Prayer.

At once, as soon as he had said "Amen," the minister read the nineteenth Psalm, and then a lesson from one of the Epistles, and at once, again, he gave out a hymn. All this celerity of movement jarred on Sybil, used so long to the gravities of European rituals. The question even passed through her mind, was there a horse waiting outside, and would the minister mount and ride to another "station" as soon as this service was ended? She asked herself if she had not heard of such things in the lives of missionaries or other pioneers. Here, again, she was quite wrong. This was merely the indication, in an affair of ritual, of the national eagerness to get on and not to lose time. The people had never asked their ministers to hurry. Nor had the ministers, in any convention, voted that they would take as little time as possible. But in everything that they did in daily life the habits of two cen-

turies had required haste. The distances to be travelled were large, the forests to be hewn down were dense, the work of all sorts to be done was immense. And two centuries of facing the duties thus involved had bred in people and minister alike this habit of haste, to which Mrs. Knox did not readily adjust herself after the *far niente* of Italian life.

They sang another hymn, sitting this time. Why they sat Mrs. Knox did not know, nor did any one else. The nervous, quick, sad-looking minister opened the Bible while they sang, to find his text, as if he and they must not waste time. So soon as the hymn was ended he announced it, and addressed them.

If she had hoped, from the simplicity of the rest of the arrangements, that she was now to hear any frank statement of eternal truth, made with the freshness and vigor which had marked the addresses of the "rally" of the week before, she was sadly disappointed. Up till this moment the minister had been unaffected. He had read the Bible respectfully, thoughtfully, and naturally. He had sometimes mistaken the sense, she had thought, but

he was seeking for sense, and what he had found he had expressed. He was not like a priest she had once heard, who, reading from the book of Numbers, read, "The Lord said MOREOVER, unto Moses," as if *moreover* had been the oracle addressed to the great leader. But at the instant "the sermon" began all naturalness ceased, and the poor man entered on a function which he believed to be important, and which he had been taught by some one else to perform in a purely mechanical and almost unintelligent way.

"Did you see me writing?" said John Furness, as they rode home. "I know the law of the instrument so well that, so soon as we came to the word 'Physical,' I knew that the next head would be 'Mental,' and the next 'Spiritual.' I thought it would amuse you if I jotted them down then and there on the paper. Here they are. Then I knew the second main head would be the man's duty to *himself*, and here it is. You know the poor things have to have three heads always, like Cerberus. I was out on the third head. If I had preached the sermon I would have said

something about God Himself, and His help in carrying on this affair. But he made that contrast between Death and Life instead. Still, you see I was right six times out of nine ; I mean I had two heads right, with three subdivisions to each. Is not that almost up to Cuvier ?”

She said that she had been comparing the functional character of the whole address with the vigor and life of the speeches she remembered at a “rally” to which, in old political days, her husband had taken her. “It would be hard to say that this is because all this is specially religious. But what is the matter ?”

“Partly, I fancy, that this is full-dress, if you will let me say so. After all is said I doubt if the talk of a grand party is up to the talk of a hotel-piazza where the men are in their shooting-jackets and the women in yachting-dresses. At church everybody is on his best behavior, and if you will have company manners, why, you must have the dullness and dumbness which come with company manners.” But after a pause he added, “I do

not think that is so much to blame as the seminaries and the newspapers.”

“Seminaries?”

“Yes. I never forgot what Dr. Wayland used to say of them. ‘They give us excellent mediocrity. We no longer hear “them is,” in the pulpit, or “I be,” but, on the other hand, we no longer hear Edwards or Hopkins.’”

“It would be better, I suppose, if we did not look at our watches, and insist on thirty minutes precisely,” she persisted. “Thank you; I want to defend this good fellow. I do not know his name, but I do know that he speaks my language in my country. I have heard no other preacher for several years of whom I could say that. And I shall not believe that the man is insincere who offered that prayer.”

“It must be hard to make your doctrine come out precisely within so many seconds of last Sunday’s doctrine,” said he, in reply. “St. Paul does not seem to have measured his letters so.”

CHAPTER VI.

MRS. KNOX had not expected any visitors Sunday, nor did she receive any, except two old friends of her mother, who lived hard by, and who ran in each to see "how she was getting on." Saturday had been assigned to her, in the general council of the neighborhood, "to get to rights," and although one or two old family friends stopped in driving, and inquired for her at the door, she had had no formal visits—no visit to be called a visit, but her brother's. She had opened her relations with a good many of the people on whom she would be dependent for one and another matter in the day's supplies, and she had exchanged greetings with the nearest neighbors. She did not herself feel in the least "at rights," or at home, though she tried to, still wrestling with herself, and, be it said seriously, with prayer. But, alas! every reminiscence of the house was of people who were now in another

world. She welcomed her brother, when he came over on Saturday, and parted with him almost in tears on Monday morning, after they had both risen early, and she had given him his coffee and breakfast-bacon, before he drove to the train. Monday began for her at half-past six o'clock with the saddest sense of loneliness. Yes, she would have done better to fill the house with young people, as Mrs. Wildair had done with hers. Anything better than this houseful of ghosts, whom she almost heard and saw even in the daytime.

But she need not have feared to be alone. She was on her knees on the floor, trying to make a refractory key govern a rusty lock, when she heard a step on the piazza, and a knock at the front door. But the knock did not wait to be answered, and he who knocked came immediately into the room, entered briskly, and with that air of confidence which the privileged man of a village is apt to show.

“So glad to see you home, so glad to see you home. They said you were coming, but I didn't believe it until you came.”

It was impossible for Mrs. Knox not to show some cordiality of manner, when she met so much. She was by no means a reserved person, and was willing to accept the great law of social order, which directs us to go a little more than half-way. One should sing C sharp, and not D flat; one should not accept the minor tones in life unless there be some visible and pressing reason. She did not offer both hands to Horace Fort, but she did not in any way snub him. She thought afterward that she should have snubbed him a little. But one cannot snub the Samoset or Squanto of the country, where one is a little afraid at landing, if Samoset or Squanto comes forward and says "Welcome, Englishmen!" Horace Fort had said, "Welcome, O thou Italian, who hast appeared here so suddenly from Rome!" And the Italian, eager to register herself as a Vermonter, welcomed him cordially.

"You are hard at work, I see—hard at work. You will be, for weeks to come. It is not easy to translate one's self from continent to continent. I have come round to give my help. I do not say to offer it, because you will

have to accept it, whether you mean to or no. I shall just look out and see how things are in the stable, and if you need a man you must call me. But tell me how they are on the other side. Tell me how you left your nieces, and why they are not with you.”

And so they sank into the outside and formal discussion of the journey. She explained about the first voyage, and the return to Queenstown, and the second voyage, wishing all the time that Horace Fort would make himself of use, and not sit and use up her forenoon and her unpacking. Whether her manner showed it or not, after a lost half-hour she was well rid of him, and was permitted to return to her knees and her experiments on the key. In these experiments he might have helped her, but in the volubility of his offers of assistance, he had neglected to do so.

This was, however, only an index, or, as the children say, a “taste-cake,” of what was to happen all through the morning. Some of the visitors who came with offers of assistance rang the bell, and some did not. Some walked up into her own bedroom without being an-

nounced, and some did not. It was quite clear that she was the lion of the neighborhood for the day. Some of the neighbors wished to domesticate the lion and make her a useful member of society; some of them wished to see the lion, as they might have gone to the Zoölogical Gardens. And thus, with one motive or another, seven or eight people of the neighborhood came in. One or two were old school friends of Mrs. Knox. One or two were newcomers in the village, who did not even know her by sight, but who wanted to extend hospitalities. Monday morning, in the duties of life, was not a convenient morning for the visits; but the sense of the town had been that it would not seem kind to leave Mrs. Knox alone, now Sunday had gone by, without offers of assistance. It ought to be said in passing that even if these offers did annoy her a little at the moment, they were not only well meant but well planned. Almost each one of them was accompanied by an intimation that ice or butter or bread or poultry or milk or eggs, were at her service till her regular supplies were adjusted. Or, if she would like to

come over to dine, to sup, to breakfast, or to sleep, half the houses in the village were at her service.

It was with one of the elder caciques of the village—or caciquesses, if there be female caciques—one who, to all appearance, might have been there when Champlain first came up the lake from the St. Lawrence, that Mrs. Knox was holding her own as well as she might, and discussing the social order of the years which had intervened since she left her home, when Horace Fort reappeared, after his explorations in the cellar, in the stable, in the barns. By this time he had accepted the law of a summer day, and made himself at home in his duties, so far that he had thrown off his coat and left it upon the clothes-line behind the house. He had in his hand a hammer with which he had been driving some nails in the barn-chamber, and so entered into the best parlor, where Sybil was entertaining her guest. He came in with the same indifferent habit of one at home which had annoyed Mrs. Knox on his first appearance, but, to give him his due, he was wholly unconscious that any stranger

was there. He was really trying to be of use, and, as his habit was, he forgot how many years had passed over him, since he and Sybil Furness were pupils in the academy together.

“I say, Sybil,” he said, “there are two panes out in the back window in the barn-chamber, and I told Heman, that when he went over to the Crossing, he might take the measure and bring up the glass. I can show him how to set it.”

He had advanced as far as this, in the eagerness of his message, before he saw that Mrs. Edwards was glued against the wall behind the door, in the chair which she had selected for herself. Even his impertinence was a little dashed, while Mrs. Knox herself was towering with rage. Rightly or not, she did not choose to make a scene, by administering to him any rebuke. He had not meant any offence ; that was clear enough. He was taking airs upon himself in managing her business ; that was clear enough. He had no right to call her Sybil ; to prove that would be easy. But she certainly did not mean to begin her occupation of her new home by quarrelling with her neigh-

bors upon trifles. She saw that he wanted to get out of Mrs. Edwards's way quite as quickly as she wanted to have him, so she simply said :

“ Oh, Mr. Fort, I have quite as much as I can do to get this house into order. Do leave the barn and stables to take care of themselves.” And so she dismissed him.

But Mrs. Edwards had taken in, or thought she had taken in, the whole position at a glance. If nobody else in the village recollected that long before Sybil Furness had ever seen Judge Knox, Horace Fort used to take her off on sleigh-rides and to dancing-parties, Mrs. Edwards remembered it. Mrs. Edwards remembered similar things of Horace Fort's mother and Sybil's mother, not to say of the grandmothers and great-grandmothers of both, and so she departed with the satisfaction of having made a great observation—that something was on again between Mrs. Knox and Horace Fort, for Horace Fort came into Mrs. Knox's best parlor in his shirt-sleeves, and he called her “ Sybil ” when he did so.

Accordingly Mrs. Edwards occupied herself

for the rest of that week in going from one house to another, in the village and in the neighborhood, to repeat this observation, with such color as it gained from her imagination, or from the improvements wrought by her memory, from day to day.

CHAPTER VII.

IT was interesting to watch the delicate signs of the curiosity with which Bertha Berlitz and her little girl regarded their new home. Mrs. Knox had been a good deal disappointed, as they made the land of Long Island, that neither mother nor daughter had seemed to care anything about it. She had herself rushed from point to point of the vessel, wherever any one saw anything or said he saw anything. But these two—a female Columbus, with her daughter, if only Columbus had had any daughter—were wholly indifferent. It seemed as if they regarded the great ship as much more their home than any cloud-bank on the horizon could become.

But now and here this first indifference gave way, slowly and coyly, but certainly. There was the air of condescension observable, as Mr. Lowell says so well, in all foreigners. But for all that, there was certainly curiosity.

With Frau Berlitz herself, this was wholly second to that eager hope, always disappointed but never crushed, that every man whom she saw would prove to be her lost husband. With the little girl, there was the full sway of children's infinite power of observation and eagerness to see everything. Once at the Vermont home, the pigs and chickens and the mysteries of the stable and the barns introduced her to this "brave new world which hath such wonders in it." In a long, set battle with the child's mother, Mrs. Knox frightened her rather than persuaded her. She told her that she should not do what she wanted to do—namely, go from place to place through America, on foot, if possible, enquiring whether any one had seen Gerhard Berlitz. As far as could be seen, this had been the plan—not unlike the customs of mediæval knighthood—with which the Frau had sailed for her new home. She was not deterred from it now, by any of the arguments which Mrs. Knox presented. But she gave way, partly from the necessity of things, partly under the sway of her gratitude to one who had been

more than kind to her in her wretched seasickness, and partly from the homage which she could not but render to one who clearly understood the position so much better than she did. She was glad, meanwhile, to be occupied. Sybil explained to the other women of her somewhat miscellaneous household, that the little girl was to be made generally useful ; and that Frau Berlitz herself would do some sewing which would be necessary, and help in the washing, while they were finding her husband, and while she was learning to speak English. A person who is to help in the washing is always popular in a New England household. A person who could be talked about in her own presence, without knowing what is said, is always a subject of interest; and so in a day Mrs. Knox found, to her satisfaction, that these new feudal retainers of hers were to be permitted to remain on a satisfactory footing in the establishment.

That day did not pass without her beginning on the search for Gerhard Berlitz—more doubtful, not to say more difficult, than Ponce de Leon's search for the Fountain of Life. Judge

Kendrick's advice was the basis of the whole line of operations.

First of all, she wrote to Boston for the United States list of post-offices, a book which every postmaster must have, and which is a convenience, be it observed, in any private family. With less difficulty than she expected, she interested Frau Berlitz in this cyclopaedia of geographical knowledge. She showed her the alphabetical list of post-offices. She showed to her excited gaze the column which contains the names of Liberty, Liberty Centre, Liberty Corners, Liberty Falls, Liberty Furnace, Liberty Grove, Liberty Hall, Liberty Hills, Liberty Mills, Liberty Pole, Liberty Prairie, Liberty Ridge, Liberty Springs, Liberty Square, Liberty Town, and Libertyville. There the list ceased, and the one modest town of "Library," in Allegheny County, Pennsylvania, took its place.

Mrs. Knox then took Frau Berlitz into the hall, where was a large map of the United States, somewhat prehistorical, but large enough for the purpose. She showed to the newly-created American, who was quite intel-

ligent enough to understand a map and its scale, how small a portion of the map they had traversed in their journey from New York to the village where they were. Then, with some difficulty, she located Ouachita County, in Arkansas, and told her that one of the Libertys was there. She bade her imagine that the other fifty-one were scattered over the whole territory at distances not dissimilar from that which parted her from Ouachita. She told her, for the hundredth time, that they had no evidence that her husband was in either of these. She explained that if he were, or if he were not, he could be found out better by the post-office machinery than by any methods which the Frau could herself pursue, even if she had seven-leagued boots to travel with. Then as an earnest of her convictions, she enclosed a dollar bill in a letter written by herself in German. In this letter she told Gerhard where his wife and daughter were. She addressed this letter simply to Mr. Gerhard Berlitz, Liberty, put a stamp on it, and sent it to be mailed at the county town. She did not mail it at her own village office, because the

postmaster there would have sent it back to her. She told Frau Berlitz that this letter would eventually turn up at Washington, and that there, in the Dead Letter Office, were two or three accomplished women, whose business it would be to try one Liberty after another till they secured some answer. They would do this, because the dollar bill made this a "valuable" letter.

Meanwhile, however, she took the shorter course of addressing herself directly to the department or bureau, from which this information was to come. She wrote to this tracing bureau in the Dead Letter Office, and threw herself on the charity and kindness of the intelligent women who direct it. She stated her case to them. She told them of the valuable letter which she had started on its way. And she asked them to teach her how to go to work in hunting up this broken straw, which had disappeared for the last twelve months from the surface of the ocean of American life.

CHAPTER VIII.

A WEEK passed in such cares and pleasures as belong to bringing an abandoned house to order. It had its joys and it had its griefs. The house was in good enough repair. There was nothing serious for James Thor to see to when, in answer to a postal, he came over from Malden to survey the place. His grandfather had built it for Mrs. Knox's grandfather. He had built it "on honor," probably without the assistance of any architect. Still, there it was—comfortable, well-proportioned, and with a certain harmony and fitness about it which were the despair of the young architects who came on summer visits to Atherton, to play tennis, to catch trout, and, in general, to enjoy their holiday. The house was twice as large as any one would build now in the same place. Clearly, there had been no lack of timber, "hard" or "soft." There were endless conveniences—

some, which a ship-captain might have suggested. The wainscot of the parlors was perfect, and queer little arches in them defined inexplicable alcoves. Sybil Knox was more than pleased that her memories had not deceived her. The house was wholly unlike the palace she had lived in in Rome, and three times as comfortable.

After the week, and after Monday and Tuesday, she passed the ordeal of inspection by all her neighbors. The new people, in general, had not thought best to call. The old people, as has been said, had been ready, even prodigal, in their offers of service, and in their personal visits. By "old people" no one meant that these people were aged. Some of them were much younger than Mrs. Knox. Some of the "new people" were much older than they. The old people, in this sense, were those who descended from the people who came to Atherton when the first emigration was made from Essex and Worcester counties in Massachusetts. It was about a century before the time when Sybil Knox returned there. These people had created the town. In later

days, since the quarries were opened, since the railroad was built, and since the factories began, other people, known in village dialect as the new people, came in. They were just as good people, and as grand as the old people. They ranked on perfectly equal terms with them in the social hierarchy. But they had come since Sybil Knox left, and therefore none of them made these first visits of welcome, excepting Mrs. Huntington, who had known her in Rome when she spent Easter there.

It fell to the lot of Mrs. Carrigan to give the party in which Mrs. Knox was to be introduced again to her new and old neighbors. Mrs. Carrigan was one of the "old people," and they called each other Sybil and Ellen when they met, having, indeed, been born within six months of each other, having gone for raspberries and blackberries together, having studied their lessons from the same primer, and worked their way along through life side by side, until almost the time when each was married. It might or might not have happened that Mrs. Carrigan would have had the

sewing-society at her house on this particular Wednesday. But she was a person who could do much what she chose with the sewing-society, and she thought, and thought rightly, that a meeting of that body, a little out of time, would be a favorable occasion for Sybil to meet new and old friends.

The church was closed, so that no invitation could be given from the pulpit, and they thus lost that central place for news, which, in the arrangements of New England, frequently serves a convenient purpose. But a bended bow was sent round to all the nearer members of the sewing-society, they were requested to communicate the information to those whom they loved, and these in turn communicated it to those who loved them. So, in fact, nobody was uninvited, though nobody knew how anybody was invited.

The sewing-society always met at two in the afternoon. They sewed or knit or wound yarn until six. Then a high tea was served. In the evening somebody read a paper, and by eight or nine o'clock the people went home.

The day proved to be a lovely day in June.

Mrs. Knox sent over for Ellen, to consult her as to the costume in which she should appear. She had heard, through some ill-natured friend, that she would find it impossible to suit the neighborhood. If she went in a dress which showed any state it would be said by somebody, or so she was told, that "Mrs. Knox was trying to show off her grandeur to poor people." If, on the other hand, she went attired as she would have been in her own house of an afternoon, it would be said that "Mrs. Knox didn't think that Atherton people were worth dressing up for."

Mrs. Carrigan showed a little displeasure at Sybil Knox's question. "My dear," said she, "I do not believe that we are any bigger fools than people are in Rome or in Washington. Come as you like."

And when Mrs. Knox laid out upon the bed a perfectly new dress from a Parisian dress-maker, of a thin, white woollen stuff, her hostess said it would do perfectly well. She did not believe any one would think it was too grand, or that any one else would think it too simple. She was sure it was very pretty, and

she wished she had just such a dress herself. So Mrs. Knox went clad in the nun's veiling.

As it happened, nobody else was clad in nun's veiling. Every variety of costume showed itself, but hers was a pretty dress and the dressmaker had fitted it well, and Atherton was by no means above rejoicing in an opportunity to study the last devices of Paris.

Perhaps not a single person in the room understood with how much feeling Sybil Knox came into that company. Really, she felt that she was on trial, that Atherton was on trial. She almost felt that it would be determined before six hours went by whether she had or had not made the great mistake of her life in coming back to her father's home. In truth, she overstated all this. Any such supposition that life hinges on a single moment is apt to be morbid. In truth, if, after six months, she had found that her experiment was an unfortunate one, there was no act of Parliament or of Congress prohibiting her from going away to the Samoan Islands, or to Yokohama, or to Timbuctoo, or to Paris, or to any other capital. But she was still so young that

she had still a great deal of that gospel taught in poor novels, which makes people think that a single decision generally determines absolutely the conditions of their lives.

It was delightful to meet with the "old people." Some of them were as cross as they were in the old days, but, on the whole, most of them were more good-natured even than she had expected. Some of them were very shy; some of them were terribly undemonstrative, and managed to greet her as if she had been away from church for a single Sunday; some were very proud, and were afraid to express the interest that they felt in the arrival of a person who had not been in America for ten years; some of them gushed, alas, for in all circles there are a few people who will gush. But, on the whole, Sybil Knox found herself well received. She was well pleased with herself that she remembered so many as she did. In the cases of her worst mistakes they were made with persons who were good-natured, and had not expected their personality to assert itself absolutely in all conditions.

Then, for the "new people," Sybil Knox

had just enough of the pride of being herself one of the "old people" to get along very well with them. She did not know the distinctions which they brought with them from their old homes, she did not know who their fathers and mothers were, she did not know whose husbands had been to college, and she did not care. She took, unconsciously—and perhaps it was as well that she did—the position of being one of the old people, and found herself, somewhat to her amusement, welcoming to the town persons who knew it a great deal better than she did. It was impossible for her, after a little, not to feel that she was quite at home, and that she had a certain duty about making Mrs. A. or Mrs. B. or Mrs. C. understand Atherton as well as she did.

As it happened again, they got launched upon a discussion of this matter of gossip, which had been forced upon her, as the reader knows, more than once as she was considering her plan of returning to her father's house. The worst threat which had been made was that she would find the littleness of village life absolutely insufferable. She had boldly said

once and again that she could not hear worse gossip than she had heard in palaces in Rome, and then she had been told once and again that she must not say so till she had tried it. She had been told that she could not tell how well she could stand it till she had been exposed to this sort of mosquito-bite day in and out, week in and out, month in and out, for year after year. This thing had been said to her with so much earnestness, that she was well aware that she had become morbid about it, and of course she had read enough about the necessary relation between tea and gossip to suppose that, at a great tea-party like this, she and the mosquitoes would be in the closest conceivable relations. Whoever heard of a sewing-circle that was not a nest of gossipers?

She reported for duty, and had her choice given her between work on flannel and work on cotton, work with knitting-needles and work at crochet. She made her selection and joined herself to a little circle of old school-friends who sat around a little straw table, on which were their work-boxes and other bits of machinery. There were perhaps half a dozen

such groups, in different parts of the large parlor in which they were, while some of the young people were out on the piazzas, and others were congregated in a room on the other side of the entry. The whole party consisted of fifty or sixty people, of all ages from sixteen to six-and-eighty.

Sybil and her friends were soon talking of just the things that they were talking of before she was married, and she fairly forgot the terrors with which she had gone into the house, as she found that the talk of five or six old school-mates was very much the same when they were twenty-six years old as when they were seventeen. More was said about babies than would have been said then, but there was the same comradeship, there was that pleasantness which always comes where people use their first names in talk, and there was no lack of subjects for discussion.

All of a sudden, however, she heard the sharp cling of a bell, and then a burst of laughter through the whole room. She looked up with surprise, and the friends around her laughed perhaps more heartily than any one

else, when they saw how little she understood what they were laughing at. Then it was explained to her.

It proved that two or three years before, at some season when it had been necessary to revive the sewing-society from some gulf into which it had fallen; on occasion of a new organization and a new constitution, the most stringent rules had been adopted for the check of this same gossiping of which Sybil Knox had been forewarned. It had been determined in solemn conclave that, whatever people talked about anywhere else, at the sewing-society their conversation must be restricted. It had been voted that no person should say anything to the disadvantage of any person in that county, while the society was engaged at its monthly meeting. If any person did say anything to the disadvantage of another person in the county, that person was to be fined five cents, to go toward the purchasing fund of the society. For the collection of these fines there were owned by the society fifteen little money-boxes made in imitation of barrels. These boxes are generally used for missionary funds,

but in the present case they were used simply for gossip-fines. There was no judge or jury who awarded these fines; the conscience of the offender was relied upon, if her attention was fairly called to the question. So soon as she had decided against herself she must rise and walk to the nearest box and put her five cents in, and it was said that no person ever went to the society without a few nickels in her pocket in case she should transgress the rule, which was now one of the fundamental rules of the constitution. In the present case it proved that a certain pretty Blanche Wilderspin had been the culprit. She was one of those jolly, bright girls, universal favorites, because they live with all their might, and are not thinking of themselves. Her exuberant glee had run away with her.

“ You never heard of such things, and you never saw such a party—or such a set of parties. Why, the President of the Grand Panjandrum was there, and the fireman on our train was there, and I saw a very nice black man, who was either a waiter without an apron or the night porter on the New York

train. And just as they were all wondering whether they would have 'a few remarks' on the book of Ezra, or would let the Grand Panjandrum waltz with poor me, in came Lady Spitzka, I call her—she is the wife of the Arcade man or of the Howe Railroad man, I do not know which. She had diamonds on her hands and diamonds in her ears and diamonds on her neck and diamonds on her breast, and where there were no diamonds there was onyx and jasper and chalcedony, and all the beautiful things in the book of Revelation.

“I really thought the Four Beasts would come in next. Oh! we were very swell, I tell you. I saw in two seconds that I had no chance of waltzing with the Grand Panjandrum. He left me with his wife to pay his court to the Lady of Golconda, and he said:

“‘I am so glad you came. It is a pleasant evening.’

“‘Wall, yes,’ she said. ‘I says to dad—you know the boys calls him dad—says I, “Dad, et’s not goin’ to rain,” says I,——’

And when the bright story-teller had come

as far as this, she saw a twinkle in Huldah Wadsworth's eyes, and she stopped herself.

“Pure gossip,” she said, “and in the county, too.” So was it that she resolutely stopped the story. “I had better bite my tongue out and be well done with it.” And then, with a good stage walk, she crossed the room, put a nickel in the nearest barrel, and struck the signal-bell.

As she came back to her seat she said, “Jane, what was that you were telling us about cumuli?” And all the girls laughed again.

Some of this was explained to Mrs. Knox, and for the rest she guessed it out. “The rule works well just now,” said Mrs. Carrigan, “and will till we forget it. It makes us give a little too much time to analyzing talk, and finding out what gossip is.”

“As I told you,” said Mrs. Knox, “every human being warned me against the terrors of it.”

“I do not think they talked much gossip when they came to sew for the soldiers.”

“No,” said Jane Grey, shuddering. “Somebody sat and read about capital operations,

and the need of ether, and the terrors of the dead line.”

“Well,” said Mrs. Carrigan, “I do not think they talk gossip at the Chautauqua Circle.”

“No, indeed. You know Dr. Primrose’s story. An excellent old lady took him aside for a private conference. Dear old man, he thought she was anxious about the state of her soul. When they were alone she said, ‘Doctor, what do you think was the most important result produced in Europe by the capture of Constantinople by the Turks?’”

CHAPTER IX.

LET us hope that the reader has not forgotten Mr. John Coudert, who talked quite seriously with Mrs. Sybil Knox in that other palace in Rome ; for John Coudert had not forgotten Mrs. Knox, and, when her life in Europe was over, it was not very long before he found that his business in Europe was over for the time. Men like him do not count the passage across as the obstruction which it seems to gentle people like this reader, who has never tried the experiment, or tried it but twice, and with a certain difficulty. John Coudert readily persuaded himself that it was necessary that he should be in America again, as he had before persuaded himself that it was necessary that he should be in Rome. But he was not a fool, and, having at heart a matter which was lifelong, he did not believe that he could achieve his purpose by any sudden dash. He had not any very high estimate

of his own value ; had he been more conceited he would have been more rash. Not thinking of himself more highly than he ought to think, he did not, at the moment of his arrival in New York, follow Mrs. Knox to Atherton to ingratiate himself with her in the fancies or occupation of summer life. Indeed, he had matters of importance to attend to in America ; he was glad to be on the same side of the ocean with a person of whom he thought so often, and he knew that the chances were better that he should hear of that person in America, than if he must be looking out for her name in the columns of Galignani's, or must be leading up to Vermont and Atherton in the conversation of the Beau Rivage.

Fortune favors the judicious. On the first morning after his landing it was his business to go to the New York office of Judge Kendrick, whose promptness we saw in that matter of crossing the ocean. John Coudert was to go at once to the West, to get what a good national phrase calls "the bottom facts" with regard to a certain railroad corporation, which either had been "wrecked," would be

“wrecked,” or might be “wrecked,” to meet the plans of the avarice of a certain local magnate. John Coudert was the trustee of many people whose incomes depended on the success of this railroad and the steadiness of its business, and he did not propose to see their property ruined—or, indeed, his own, which was in the same securities—for want of some personal information better than what he could obtain by the reports which were permitted to be printed for the benefit of the stock market. Judge Kendrick had been an old personal friend, and often his adviser in business affairs, and Coudert therefore went up to ask him how the truth was to be found in the matter of the wreckage, and if there were anything that an honest man could do, in order that the ruin which was so coolly proposed might be averted.

Perhaps it is as well to stop for a moment to tell the unwary reader what it is to wreck a railroad. It by no means supposes that the wrecker is going out with heavy sleepers or stones to lay them upon the track and throw a train into the abyss. This is to wreck a train.

but not to wreck a railway, which crime, for dastardly meanness, is, perhaps, the more atrocious of the two. The rascal who proposes to wreck a railway secures for himself in its management a position so far confidential that his word is relied upon, and that all men who have anything to do with it suppose that he is managing it for the best. He pretends to manage it for the best. He has a certain flamboyant way of doing business, as if he were thoroughly skilled in such affairs, and were going to lift this particular road into dignity and success which it had never attained before. But meanwhile he takes his own measures so that this probable success shall not be gained. It is quite in his power, from his position in the management, to see that freight does not go over the road which it should go over, that passengers do not go over it who should go; it is even in his power to see that the returns of receipts are not properly made at headquarters, and, indeed, when the time comes for a semi-annual or an annual report, there are a thousand ways in which such a report can be made, and it is in his power so to bring for-

ward the figures that, to the horror of all people concerned, it shall appear that the road is running backward. Perhaps his whole object will be attained if the stock falls several points in the market ; he may be satisfied by buying in when the stock is low, then by publishing another set of reports, and carrying out such an exaggerated statement of its value, that, at the end of a few weeks, he can sell the same stock at a large advance. Fortunate, indeed, for the people who have placed their funds in that railroad, if he is satisfied with such enterprises as this.

But perhaps he seeks larger game. Perhaps he is determined that he will himself become the manager of this whole property, and is not satisfied until he have made the property bankrupt and compelled somebody, perhaps the indignant public, to ask that it all may be transferred into the hands of a receiver who shall carry it on where the stockholders have failed. In this case all such people as those whom John Coudert represented, who have placed their money in the railroad in good faith, find that they have lost everything which

they had. But the man who has wrecked the railroad for thme takes an early occasion to be present when this worthless property is sold under the hammer, becomes the proprietor of what is called a controlling interest in some new concern, and just as likely as not, he is praised for being the intelligent and active manager who knew how to take care of a ruined property and carry it forward to success. It was precisely one of these schemes by which an honest, well-to-do railroad was to be wrecked for the benefit of a sharper, that John Coudert had determined to counteract if he could. That he might counteract it he had gone in to see his friend, Judge Kendrick.

Judge Kendrick still had an office in New York, though his legal residence was in Wisconsin. He heard his friend's story with even more interest than John Coudert expected. As soon as the story was done he said in reply: "I am more interested in this than you think, for a near friend of ours, I have a right to call her now—she crossed the ocean with us—has a large investment in this Cattaraugus and Opelousas. It is only three days since I found

this nastiness was brewing, and I have been wondering what could be done about it. I shall be glad to help to the very last, and I can call upon Robert and Horace, and our old friends, and Flanders will be interested as well. But what we must have is a reliable and decent person—just such a person as yourself—to go out to Franklin, place himself at the centre of affairs, and find out what is what, that we may know what we are to do.”

Coudert, of course, was pleased to find he had so vigorous an ally, and asked, not unnaturally, who was the travelling friend. And it required more than his old steadfastness of training to keep the blood from flashing into his face, when Judge Kendrick said that this innocent shareholder, who was to be ruined, was no other person than our friend Mrs. Knox. Naturally enough, he told the story of their adventure, told how pluckily she took her place with the second class, and then spoke of the romance of the German woman, her child, and the lost husband.

To his surprise, now, John Coudert took much more interest in this detail than he could

have imagined possible ; but then, Coudert was always looking out for an adventure. He saw at once that the fortunes of the Berlitzes were of much more interest for the moment than was the danger of the C. & O. He told the story in the evening to his wife as an illustration of how a man like Coudert found romance in everything, and wanted to push an adventure to the end.

Coudert was not satisfied till he knew everything that there was to know about the Berlitz family. In fact, Judge Kendrick knew this detail quite as well as he cared to, for he had himself been so much interested in the matter that he had copied all the names upon his own note-book, and had made such inquiries as occurred to an ordinary working lawyer as being enough to make. That is to say, he had put into the *Allgemeine Zeitung* an advertisement saying that if Gerhard Berlitz would inquire at his office he would hear of something to his advantage. His own office clerks wished that Gerhard Berlitz had never been born, so many of that name had already reported, expecting to receive ingots of gold,

who had no wives in other countries, and no daughters, and who were much disgusted when they learned that all that was to their advantage was the arrival of a penniless woman with her child. But John Coudert was ravenous for details. He heard all these stories of failure with utter indifference. He laughed at Kendrick for not having gone to work more sensibly. He devoted a couple of pages of his own note-book to the facts which were known. He said he did not doubt that he should stumble upon the proper Liberty, and that he should bring home the lost husband in triumph.

“If only ‘the other woman’ has not carried him off and changed his name.”

In reply to this cynical sneer John Coudert only laughed. He said that Kendrick was always a pessimist, and wanted to have the worst come out. “I, on the other hand, am an optimist. I believe in my own race. Especially I believe in my own sex. And you shall see that I will bring back this honest workman—not rich, indeed; I do not expect that—but virtuous, and happy in the prospect of seeing his Bertha and his child.”

And so they parted, John Coudert more willing than ever to give up the present pleasure of a visit to Atherton, because he had now the chance which might show to Sybil Knox that he was more than she had ever seen him. He did not suppose he had been very successful in the tournaments of the piazza at the Beau Rivage, or in the conversations, however serious, of one or another palazzo in Rome. He did not pride himself particularly on his success in conversation, and he did not choose to have this woman regard him simply as an American who was fooling away his time in European travel, if he could show her, by such a success as would be involved in bringing home Gerhard Berlitz in triumph, that he had some sense and some determination. In that event he thought he should score one in the rather difficult siege which he was pressing forward. Still more he knew, should he score a point worth scoring, if, in one of the tournaments of modern life, in a real shock of arms against this Brian de Bois Guilbert, who was proposing the ruin of thousands of shareholders, there was such an opportunity as the

knights of old time did not know, to recommend themselves to the ladies of their love.

With a little new wonder, not irreverent, be it said, at the "fine connections and nice dependencies" which had revealed to him this Berlitz business, John Coudert went across to the particular clerk who, only five minutes before, had been interviewing a man who, he declared, was the seventeenth Berlitz already. He was outraged at the philanthropies of his chief, and amazed that a man as intelligent as Coudert cared one straw. Glad enough he was to give up this quest into his hands, and took with eagerness the memorandum of the New York office where Mr. Coudert's clerk would take the whole set of the Berlitzes in charge. "You will have to endow a hospital for them, or a House of Correction," he said, as he gladly gave up the file of papers.

And Coudert himself, far from spending that afternoon or the next day in the palaces of railroad magnates, to determine what could be done, or what could not, with the C. & O., and with the wreckers, took the West Shore Railway to a quiet little way-station. Here he

found an old Dutch village, which in ten years had hardly found out what a railroad is, or what a time-table means. From house to house, from doctor to minister he went, to inquire about Gerhard the lost, and what had been known of the "honestest, most steady fellow that ever lived." This was the general verdict, and as Coudert returned to New York it was with a certain sense of a mysterious connection between his own life and that of this lost waif. What is it Fichte says? Coudert wrote it in the calendar he was making.

"But I know not thee. Thou knowest not me. What is time? How certain it is that, as infinite ages pass away, I shall meet thee, thou wilt meet me, as each to each renders some needed service in the infinite interchanges of eternal love."

And having written this he wound his watch and went to bed. "All the same," he said aloud, "all the same, Brother Fichte, if you please, the good God and I will hurry up the infinite ages. What is time?"

CHAPTER X.

JOHN COUDERT went on his Western travels with much more heart after he had seen people who had seen Gerhard Berlitz. He was surprised to find how his interest in this man had grown. He had before heard nothing but good of him ; that was well. But now he was sure of his personal existence ; he was no longer a myth of the post-office—that was better. From the good Dutch woman in whose house the errant gardener had boarded Coudert had obtained a photograph of his face, which he had left as a sort of keepsake, but which she readily exchanged for a half-dollar. Coudert did even come round to belong to the party who did not believe in the “other woman.” He did not yet belong to the party of two who were sure that Berlitz was alive. But clearly he had been alive when this photograph was taken.

What he learned of Berlitz interested him

He had always seemed happy when a letter came from his wife. He never drank, and spent neither time nor money at the grocery, which was the drinking-place of the village. From some whim, which no one understood, he had soon given up that first plan of learning English. "German was good enough for him; there were enough Germans everywhere." The good Frau, with whom Coudert talked, thought he was a little cracked about this, but in truth her own English was of the poorest.

She wondered why the photograph, representing him in his best clothes, was of any value, till Mr. Coudert dropped the hint that he might see Frau Berlitz. Then she yielded gracefully to the silver arguments he offered.

Somewhat the same experience renewed itself at Rochester, where, by good fortune, it was necessary for him to stop to make inquiries as to the C. & O. Railroad. Not that the reader need take the map of New York to find the route of that railroad. Has not the Western Union telegraph lines in Southern Florida? And the West End of Boston runs its cars in Southern Dorchester. Whatever the hopes of

the founders of the C. & O. may have been, it has never yet reached Opelousas, nor has any train on it ever departed from Cattaraugus. It was seized by the locks, when it was drowning, by a brave young man, who hauled it above the flood, some thirty years ago, and compelled it to do good service in uniting a Northern and a Southern system of transportation. A measure of signal humanity, begun by him, first called attention to it; and afterwards the honesty of its legitimate work—a sort of “twenty-five-cents-to-the-quarter” quality—kept its stock well above par. The Northern system with which it was connected sometimes tried to buy it. The Southern system often pretended to try. But, in reality, it had been an independent company—a sort of brave little Switzerland between the Germany and France of railroad-dom, till the drama of this year began. And now John Coudert was its William Tell.

About the wicked Gessler, who was to work its ruin, he learned things at Rochester which amazed him, even after what he knew already. He made an appointment there, with some large

stockholders, for the next day, and then, leaving the attraction of one of the best public galleries of art in America, he went out of the city to hunt up traces of Gerhard Berlitz. Another portrait—this time a full-length miniature—and new anecdotes of his steadfast probity, and of his occasional eccentricity, repaid this enterprise.

All of fact that Coudert really learned was that the nursery-man with whom Berlitz went West, the year before, seemed a very decent sort of person, and that Gerhard Berlitz, with a sort of infatuation, perhaps homesickness, had never learned ten words of English. He had always kept in “Dutch company.”

As to the wrecking of the Cattaraugus and Opelousas, the more John Coudert learned the more serious did he feel the adventure on which he had committed himself. Most fortunate, indeed, was it that Judge Kendrick had maintained his connection in New York, so that, in the office where he made his quarters there, they could watch the New York end of the devices of the enemy, while, at the West, it was possible, perhaps, to meet them. Coudert

was in correspondence with both ends of the line. The gentlemen whom he met in Rochester were in despair. They knew, by old experience, the force and craft of the enemy he was now first studying. "When you know this man better, Mr. Coudert, you will let him alone." "Mr. Coudert, you need a long spoon if you sup with the devil." "Do not throw good money after bad, Mr. Coudert. I had fifty thousand in the C. & O., and I bade my bookkeeper sell and charge it off last January. I will not deal with such a knave."

But the more men said such things to John Coudert, the more he said that somebody must do something. He had begun because he had his sisters to protect. Then he had found that he had his Alma Mater to protect. The Martin Pinzon University, where he was educated, had two hundred thousand dollars in this C. & O. stock. Then, to his dismay, when he got hold of the stock-list, which Judge Kendrick's old partner in New York had secured, he found that Mrs. Knox was in almost as deep as the Martin Pinzon University. If there was justice in America, he would not

stand that. He had asked Judge Kendrick, before he went to Wisconsin, to see if she had in any way secured herself, and to let him know. And, with this triple responsibility, he went westward, to receive at once the cold water which the best men in Rochester now threw upon his enterprise.

The most crafty speculator in the older West was determined that the C. & O. stock should be ruined in the market, and had well-nigh succeeded.

Here was a stock which Coudert had himself commended to his sisters, and to friends in Europe, only two years ago. It stood then a solid, well-established enterprise, working on perfectly legitimate lines, without a real rival. The stock sold at one hundred and thirteen easily, even when the market wavered for other securities. This was hardly two years ago. But now, for twenty months, this stock had steadily fallen. There had been no visible attack on it; there had been no unfriendly legislation; there had been no "hated rival." But, every month, it had dragged on the market when it was offered for sale. At the end

of each month the quotation would be lower, by three or four points, than at the beginning. And now it had passed two dividends ; it was said it had not earned the next. It was quoted at thirty-three to thirty-four, and the offer of any large quantity brought it down to a lower figure. And if you asked the shrewdest and most intelligent men in the market what was the reason for this decline they shook their heads and said that nobody knew. But they added that the greatest rascal who went unchanged in our time, wanted to have that stock fall, and that it would fall till he wanted to make it rise.

John Coudert made it his first business to find out what were the tactics of his enemy. He went to the reading-room of the Young Men's Christian Association in Rochester, and introduced himself as president of the society in Wentworth. He made himself at home there for a week, receiving his mail and writing his letters there. He burrowed in their old files without saying why. No one asked any questions, and he consulted nobody.

In these studies he made it his business to

read the money articles in the *Pinzon Advocate* and the *Functionary*. Pinzon and Function, as this reader ought to know, are the two points between which the C. & O. now runs, awaiting that completion which has been referred to, between Cattaraugus on the one hand and Opelousas on the other.

If you have ever seen the *Pinzon Advocate* and the *Functionary* you know that they are printed in close imitation of the *London Times*, probably because the circumstances and needs of their readers are absolutely unlike those of the readers of that journal. It is therefore necessary, for instance, that each journal shall have a daily article on the money-market, and four leading editorials, in leaded bourgeois type, because the *London Times* has.

Mr. Coudert engaged himself for a week in the reading-room, in studying these money articles for two years back. He was thus enabled to fix the days when his new arch-enemy had called at the offices of the gentlemen who wrote these articles, and had offered each of them enough passes, thousand-mile tickets, or what-not to make it "worth while" for him

to represent the C. & O. as unfavorably as possible. It was clear enough, also, that neither of these intelligent gentlemen had any acquaintance or correspondence with the other. What one said often contradicted what the other said. But, all the same, the general impression was given by each that the C. & O. was playing a losing game.

Each journal, up to the fatal July 11, or July 12, which Mr. Coudert took note of, had been eager in extolling the management of the curiously well-regulated corporation. After these dates, however, each journal, without once alluding to its former convictions, had detected gross rottenness in its affairs.

After the study of these two years of history Mr. Coudert visited Pinzon. He had not been there since he graduated, and he was glad, he said, to be there as Commencement came on. He appeared in time to hear the president's baccalaureate sermon. He gladly accepted his old chum Professor Stillman's invitation to his house, and he stayed till the last guest had left after the Delta Chi Sigma Convention, even after the last mother had left who

was furnishing the room of her freshman son.

It was so pleasant to see how John Coudert kept up his love for the college.

Alas! If the truth were told, John Coudert was not all the time in the Delta Chi reading-room, or looking over the old census reports in the college library. He was in the counting-room of George Miller, the old founder of the town. Or he was sitting smoking with the commercial travelers at the Hotel Pinzon. He made acquaintance, by remembering one of his old flames, with the family of Converse, the head of the freight-yard. He gave a supper party one night to a commercial traveller, whom he had met just once in Duluth, and asked him to bring in a half-dozen of the best business men he dealt with.

The pretence was that it was desirable to interest these men of affairs more in the college. But, before the evening was half over, the whole company was talking C. & O. politics, not to say C. & O. sociology. And so, when John Coudert bade his friends good-night, when the friendly Duluth drummer shook hands last of

all and parted, the two laughed, and Philbrick said, "Well, Mr. Coudert, I think what you do not know of your railroad now is not worth knowing."

The middle of that critical July seemed to have brought with it events more fatal to the C. & O. than the changed tone of the newspapers. At that time there had been two most expensive wrecks of freight-trains, which were directly traceable to the neglect of a drunken car-inspector, who, Coudert found, had never been drunk before; and who, on his discharge, was "taken care of" by a railroad controlled by the arch-enemy. At about the same time the C. & O. lost practically all its grain-trade and most of its coal-trade. It had turned out afterward that this was from high rates quoted in error by a confidential clerk, who had suddenly left the road the next month. Coudert feared that he had no evidence that would pass a court of law, but his eyes were being opened to the tactics he must guard against.

CHAPTER XI.

SYBIL KNOX was always haunted with the dread of the "mild police" of a small country town. From the moment when she had said she was to live in her father's home, her worldly acquaintances, and, indeed, many of those who lived in the Kingdom of Heaven, were putting her on her guard on the terrible restrictions of the Liliputian cordage with which, in such a home, she was bound. She was, therefore, specially interested when she found at the sewing-society that its chiefs were awake to their danger. And specially was she pleased with this nice, hearty Blanche Wilderspin, who had so loyally lent herself to the cause of order and good sense, and who brought so much life and humor into the whole concern.

Mrs. Knox, therefore, took an early opportunity to ask Miss Blanche to come up to the house to tea, and, in a quiet way, arranged

that she should suggest her own company. The other girls were glad of the chance to see the newly-opened house, and Mrs. Knox's pictures and other pretty things. And so, when the day came, she found herself the centre of a jolly circle, who thought her a hundred years older than she was, but who seemed to her but very little younger than herself. How soon, in their lives, would they take on the dust, the bit of crape, the sun-burn, or the other tokens of experience which made the difference between her and them?

Supper was served on the large eastern veranda, with its lovely view of the Sans-Oreilles intervalle, and the sharp mica-slate mountain-peaks beyond. "When hunger now and thirst were fully satisfied," the tables were carried off and the girls stayed where all was so cool and pleasant, watching the last glow on the eastern hills—some on the piazza-floor, some on cushions, a few in sea-chairs, one or two in hammocks—and "the conversation became general," as the journals of clubs say.

"Dear Mrs. Knox," said Blanche impetuously, "never you believe them. Atherton is

as big as London when it pleases ; and it is another Cranberry Centre when it pleases. And, if you will permit me to say so, I suppose that when My Lady the Duchess of Dragon-tail talks gossip in 'Er Majesty's Drawing-room, the Drawing-room becomes Cranberry Centre. And also I suppose that when Cranberry Centre discusses the good, the beautiful, and the true," and here the girl struck an attitude, "then Cranberry Centre rises to become, with Florence and Geneva and Damascus, one of the great æsthetic centres of the world."

These last words the girl delivered with abundant gesture, as if she were an elocutionist from the Tamworth "School of Oratory," to the great amusement of all the others.

"That is all very fine," said Mary Stiles, "and I say amen to it. But what I should like to know is this. Suppose it rains all day like fury. Suppose no one has gone out of the house, or means to. Suppose, in the hardest shower of all, the sun breaks out in the west. Suppose there is a magnificent sunset and rainbow.

"Now all the authorities will say—Miss

Edgeworth, Mrs. Farrar, Miss Sedgwick, Margaret Fuller will say—that one may leave the *Woman's Tribune* and *Epictetus* and go to the window to see the rainbow. That is granted.

“But at that fatal moment, under the rainbow, you see Dr. Albert driving the calico mare like mad along the wet road. You cannot help seeing him. While you look you see Mrs. Knox's carryall, with the span, all buttoned up against the weather. Say what you please, it is impossible not to wonder why she chooses that moment to drive. Before she is gone the gypsies come along, tether their horses, and make a fire at the end of Mrs. Knox's avenue.

“In the evening Blanche Wilderspin walks in. Am I expected to say, ‘Dear Blanche, all day I have waited for you to explain to me the method of the denudation of the hills in the Southern Tyrol?’

“Or have I any rights? May I say, ‘What under heaven sent Mrs. Knox to ride in all that rain?’ and ‘What will she say when she finds those gypsies by the gate when she comes home?’

“Dear Mrs. Knox, you are fresh from the Pope, you are infallible. Tell us, oh! tell us, in this wilderness, what we shall say.”

Mrs. Knox was delighted. Whatever else was to happen to her, she was to have two bright girls at her right hand and her left, and in their companions she saw other possible friends, who would meet any social demands of winter evening, or loitering springs. She did not refuse Mary's challenge. She had thought too much and talked too much about gossip and the danger of it not to have a good deal to say. Those bitter words of John Couderc's about his mother, and that life of exile of his sisters in the “disreputable attics” of Paris, often came back to her.

“My dear child,” said she, “all this is perfectly admissible. Gypsies! Why, I might talk with a Cardinal of Rome, or with Prince Bismarck, about gypsies. I might pull the sleeve of Sir Frederick Leighton at an opening of the Royal Academy and ask him about the color of a gypsy's cheek.

“It is not there that danger comes. But

how will it be when dear old Dr. Moody has ridden over from the Institute to see me? He has been sure that there was a volume of Bayle in my father's library, and he is sorry to say that in the Institute library there is not a complete set. But it is very curious that there is not, for he remembers distinctly that in 1842, or possibly it was in 1843,—no, it was certainly in 1842, because John Gilpin was living then,—at the meeting of Phi Beta at the Yale Commencement, old Dr. Hammersley, the same whose brother was defeated when the Federalists ran him for the Senate against Mr. Goodrich, told Dr. Parsons, who had gone down to Commencement, that he had seen a copy of Bayle, in the Latin, for sale at a New York auction, and that he had meant to buy it for the Institute, if he got back in time and had any money, but that unfortunately, when he came to the auction the sale had taken place the day before, and he had forgotten his catalogue; also that he had no money, because in paying his hotel bill he had offered them a twenty-dollar bill which proved wild-cat—wild-cat being a name which perhaps I do not re-

member, which was given to bills from the Western States——”

And then, as she ran on with her really admirable imitation of Dr. Moody, she saw the aside glance which Florence Carrigan threw on Mary Stiles, and, of course, broke off on the instant.

“Where is the treasury? We must have a treasury on the piazza, and I will pay this Italian scudo for the first fine. But, girls, it is as I say. The danger comes, not with gypsies or rainbows, or the doctor’s calico horse. The danger comes when Dr. Moody comes.”

“People are so very entertaining. Dear Mrs. Knox, I think they are a great deal more entertaining than the Silurian system or the fall of Constantinople.”

“Jenny dear, have the goodness to go and find the brown and black vase you were looking at, on the mantel-piece. Etruscan, you know. It has a small enough neck, which is big enough. That shall be the treasury for this house, and here is my fine.

“To think that at my first tea-party I should be the first sinner!

“Yes, Clara, I hear every word you say. People are very entertaining. And you and I will talk a great deal about people yet. But we will not speak ill of them except on the witness-stand. That was my husband’s rule, and it was a good one.”

“But you did not speak ill of dear Dr. Moody.”

“Nobody could speak ill of him. And I will send the Bayle over as my present to the Institute to-morrow. But, I am afraid, my dear, that if Mrs. Moody had been here I should not have gone into quite as much detail.”

So they swung into the whole great question—and all the collateral questions. Was Atherton worse than Rutland or Castleton or Bennington? Was it worse than Buffalo or Philadelphia or Chicago? Was it worse than London or Paris or Rome?

Mary Stiles said that her mother said that Atherton took a great step, upward and forward, two generations ago, when the foreign missionary work came in. Mrs. Stiles said that it did no end of good to have a map of

India hung on the wall of the vestry, and to have letters from Burmapootra Jab, or Jaba-pootra Sim. She said that even if people talked scandal about Tippoo Sahib and the Brahmin Chunder-Blunder, that was better than talking it about Mrs. Pettingill and the Horsfords, and that just as soon as the school-girls were sending out clothes and playthings to some twin children Dr. Scudder had baptized, they were less censorious about each other's bonnets.

Another girl trumped this remark by saying that she thought Chautauqua deserved credit for doing the same thing, and the King's Daughters. She said that John Everard, whom they all liked, said he was glad to meet a woman with a purple ribbon in her corsage, because he could suppose, at least at the beginning, that she was a woman of sense and not a fool. He could begin with talk about Walter Besant, or General Booth, or the Congo nation, or Mr. Letchworth's book, or something else sensible, and need not begin on the mud or the dust, or the color of the meeting-house.

“I do not want to talk forever about Long-

fellow's birthday. But I had rather start with Longfellow's birthday than with the color of Miss Naseby's ribbons."

"We seem to come out with St. Paul," said Mrs. Knox.

"I am glad we do," said Harriet Wood, "but I did not know it." For she had been trained in that great gospel, "Confess Ignorance."

"'Overcome evil with good,'" said Mrs. Knox, rising. "I begin to feel cold. Come into the parlor and interpret Beethoven to us, Miss Hatty. Do you know that story?"

No; the girls none of them knew the story.

"It was a favorite story of Mr. Knox's. They were at a very grand dinner-party at the finest house in Buffalo. They were talking of grave social themes, as bright men and women will, and one of the most distinguished guests said, 'It will be long before the sister who makes such good tomato-soup for us will interpret Beethoven when we ask her to.' Well, the dinner went on, so bright and cheery that they did not like to leave the table. But when the last almond was eaten, and the last

grape, their host, a prince among gentlemen, said :

“ ‘ Well, we will go into the music-room, and the sister who made the soup shall “interpret Beethoven” for us.’ She was his own beautiful daughter, one of the most accomplished musicians of our day.”

And they went into the parlor and Hatty Wood “interpreted Beethoven.”

CHAPTER XII.

IT was not wholly as a matter of piazza-joking, that Sybil Knox was to test the capabilities of the gossiping of Atherton. She was the last person to know what Atherton had to say about her. But there were those who were interested in her—yes, and were interested very tenderly, who had to study the questions of gossip and its consequences much more practically than she. Such a person, for instance, was John Coudert, far away on his travels.

The reader has forgotten, perhaps, that Mrs. Edwards, on her first visit of inspection at the Knox house, after Sybil's return, was surprised by the entrance of Horace Fort in his shirt-sleeves, and observed the familiar way in which he called the mistress "Sybil." Mrs. Knox had forgotten the incident. Indeed she had hardly known there was an incident. Mrs. Edwards had many other incidents of

equal importance to attend to. But she had attended to this, in its place and time; she had planted the seed in fit soil, and the fruit of this planting was now planting itself all over the land. Had Sybil Knox given a hundred thousand dollars for a public library, that gift would not have been known in the State of Kentucky so widely as the greater fact that, on the Monday after her arrival in her old home, Horace Fort had come into her parlor in his shirt-sleeves and had called her "Sybil." It may be added, even with some sadness as one writes, that if Horace Fort had made a new invention which would enlarge the physical force of the world ten per cent., it would have taken ten years before so many people, in any community, would have heard of it, as did hear that he was in his shirt-sleeves that morning. And if he had discovered a truth in education which would have lifted up a million children to stronger lives and better knowledge of God and of man, why, he would have been obliged to start a periodical, to organize a society, and to travel up and down through the land as an apostle for ten years, before he would dare to say

that as many people believed in his discovery, as there were people in America, who, within one month after he entered Sybil Knox's parlor in his shirt-sleeves, believed and said that he and she were engaged to be married.

Such is the interest which the world takes in marriage. It cares for marriage much more than it does for the multiplication of physical force, or for the elevation of personal character. Or, it would be better to say, it cares for it more constantly.

The man who writes a story of six thousand words well, ending with a happy marriage, is well-nigh sure to have it accepted by a magazine-editor, and read by sympathizing thousands.

As for the other man, whose short story of six thousand words turns on his improvement in school discipline, he will have but little chance with any editor—except the editors of **LEND A HAND**.

For this excursus may this writer be forgiven!

What is important in the course of this story is that, thanks to the general law which

has thus been laid down, and to the particular result of it in this instance, John Coudert's first news of Mrs. Knox, after he left New York, was received at a hotel dining-table in Memphis. In the course of his Western business he had to spend a day in that city. He was at the Old Hickory Hotel, and at breakfast he met a gentleman and lady whom he had not seen since he was in Florence. It was a minute now, before he recollected who they were, so difficult is it to recall a travelling-acquaintance when one sees him under wholly new conditions. But after a minute they were back again on their Italian experiences; and so it was very natural for Mrs. Marvin to say to him, "And so our old friend, Mrs. Knox, is to be married again?"

To poor John Coudert, who carried the thought of Mrs. Knox among his most sacred memories, and would hardly have spoken her name aloud without a certain care and tenderness—to him to hear it pronounced in this off-hand way, as one might speak of Jim Mace, or of Tom Cribb, was in itself something horrible. To be told that she was to be married was to

be told that the dearest hope of his own life was vain. And to learn this from a person whose name he hardly knew, in the midst of the clattering of forks and the provision of omelettes and Lyonnaise potatoes, was one of the most cruel blows which the incongruity of fate had ever inflicted upon him. He knew perfectly well that his face flushed with color. But Mrs. Marvin was not looking at him, had no reason to think that he cared more for Mrs. Knox than he cared for Mrs. Cleveland or for Mrs. Harrison ; and she went gabbling on.

In a minute more she was talking about the freshet on the river, about the arrival of the *Judge Marshall* steamboat, about the queer Italians of whom they had bought bananas the day before, and of other matters of interest equal to the engagement of Mrs. Knox.

But John Coudert recovered himself so far as to call her back to Atherton and her news. She had almost forgotten that she had spoken of it. It had seemed necessary that she should speak, because, by the law which has been alluded to, people must talk of marriages. But, having spoken, she had relieved her

mind. With a good deal of difficulty she recalled the information. She was not sure whether Mrs. Knox were yet married, she believed she was ; then she believed she was not. She did not recollect the name of the gentleman to whom she was to be married ; only she was quite sure that it was some one Mrs. Knox had known in her youth. On second thought she was perfectly sure that this was an early attachment which had been smothered, and which now had suddenly revived again. Any way, she was certain that, in a letter which she had received from Rutland, this matter was spoken of as quite taken for granted.

It was with such comfort as this that poor John Coudert, who had been worshipping Sybil Knox in the absolute secrecy of the inner shrine of perfect homage, was obliged to go on his farther way, and, among other things, to conduct the inquiries by which he hoped to save her property from destruction.

When the matters which led him to Memphis were adjusted, out of sheer bitterness of heart he took a steamboat up to St. Louis, as he might have done forty years ago, instead of

going more rapidly by land. What difference did it make to him now whether he arrived at St. Louis a few hours earlier or later? What difference did it make to him, in fact, whether he arrived anywhere earlier or later? He had nothing for it but duty now, and he could do his duty at St. Louis as well on Friday as he could on Thursday. With this despairing feeling of the worthlessness of his own life, John Coudert took his passage on an upward-bound steamboat. It need hardly be said that there was hardly another passenger on board, excepting a few people who meant to stop at landings by the way.

Among these people, as it proved, were two German farmers, who talked all the time, in the security of their own language, of their own affairs. Coudert did not think it necessary to tell them that he understood them as well as if they spoke English; he paid but little attention to what they said when they sat at table, he did not consult with them as he walked the deck in taking his solitary exercise. But it happened that, at supper on the night of the voyage, they left their talk of the

ruling prices of honey, wax, and queen bees, and indulged in more general considerations.

The talk fell on a contrast between the jurisprudence which Frederick the Great had bequeathed to Prussia and that which has grown up under the chances and changes of self-governing republics. They were willing enough to grant that, in some matters, the rough-and-ready methods of the American courts worked as favorably for the poor man as the dispensation of justice, from above below, in Prussia. But the younger of the two men pointed out, with a good deal of bitterness, the injustice which could be done, under the systems of the Western States, to a man without friends and without money. And, by way of illustrating what he said, he referred, with a good many more oaths than it is necessary to put upon this page, to the case of "that poor dog who was sent to prison for knowing more about the railroad fire than anybody else knew." The words "railroad fire" caught John Coudert's ear, and from the sad wandering of his thought back to Vermont and the life of the American colony

in Rome, he came to listen with all his ears to what the critical German had to say. The other was stupid and did not understand, so that it was necessary for the cynic to go into some little detail, and it was clear enough that they had both been present, waiting for a case of their own to turn up, at a trial in the court of their own county, in which two men had been indicted for arson. The building burned was a railroad station; one man had been sentenced for five years for setting it on fire, and the other had been sentenced for two years. He had been the man who had first charged the other with the offence, but the district-attorney had come to the conclusion that they were accomplices, and this second man, who was a German, had been included in the indictment, and had been sentenced to the shorter term of imprisonment. According to the cynic who told the story, he had been sentenced, only because he had no money to pay a lawyer, and because there was nothing else to do with him. According to him, the real criminal would never have been detected but for the information of the poor traveller. But what

was more important to John Coudert was, that the name of the poor fellow thus unjustly handled was Berlitz.

The name Berlitz is not as common as the name Schmidt, and John Coudert believed implicitly in that doctrine which makes a man follow out the lead of what is said to come to him by accident. He addressed himself to the Germans in his best Berlinese, rather to their surprise. He had time enough to pump out from them all that they knew of the story, which he found, alas! vague and imperfect. None the less, however, as soon as they arrived in St. Louis did he take his traps across to the railway station, and, by a night train, return to Pittsburg, that he might follow out the clew which was thus given to him.

For, though Sybil Knox must be nothing to poor John Coudert, from this time forward, he did not mean to abandon the one commission which he had considered that he had received at her hands. And so, unconsciously to her, he rode all that night at forty miles an hour in the pursuit of this will·o' the wisp.

CHAPTER XIII.

TO return to Atherton for a little. Mrs. Knox was wholly unconscious all this time that she had been married to Horace Fort, or that anybody had said she had been married to him. Even Atherton itself had forgotten, that, for a week, the story had grown hotter and hotter of their engagement. Atherton itself had forgotten that it had selected the groomsman and the bridesmaids. Atherton itself had forgotten that it had speculated on what the fee to the minister would be, and where the wedding journey would take the bride and bridegroom. It had forgotten as well all its speculation as to the wedding-dress which Sybil Knox would wear, and whether the wedding would be in the morning at her house or in the evening at the church. It is quite true that Atherton had, in the week after the story started, given a good deal of attention to these particulars. Its

views on these points had trickled out and gone as far as Rutland, as the reader knows, and from Rutland they had been conveyed on the wings of the wind to different parts of the world interested in such subjects. But none the less had Atherton wholly forgotten the importance which the matter had once assumed in its eyes.

The truth was that Horace Fort had been given to understand, by some pretty sharp language on the part of Mrs. Sybil Knox, that he took unnecessary airs on himself, and assumed too much intimacy in the house which was reopened. He sulked a little under this treatment; he had then been invited by a friend to go off on a fishing-party in the north of Maine; he had gone on this party, and had been away all summer; and Atherton had not only forgotten his wedding, but had forgotten him.

And Mrs. Knox was wondering more and more why her friends in Rome had said such discouraging things—not of Atherton, of which they knew nothing, but of places which they supposed Atherton resembled. To say

the truth, she had struck her old home at a particularly favorable time. Had she arrived at Thanksgiving or a little after—had she been obliged to take it first in the blockade of the winter storms, and then in the worse blockade of the mud and necessary slush of March and April, she would have known better what they talked about, when they spoke of the tyranny of what, in another page, has been called the “mild police” of such a town, but which they did not consider mild in any sense. As it proved, for June, July, August, September, and October, Atherton was alive with parties of visitors, and was at its very best. It ought to be named in the history of the nineteenth century as the town famous for picnics. In the geographies, where it says, “Lowell, Lawrence, and Holyoke are great points of manufacture; Lynn and Worcester supply large quantities of shoes; Cambridge is the seat of a university; and Plymouth is the oldest town in New England,” it should say, “and Atherton is celebrated for its picnics.” I have been in no place where the method of the picnic was so well digested, and where it

was so completely taken for granted as a part of civilized life. By which I mean, that these people had attained that height, rare indeed to the New Englander, in which one knows, in the very fibre of his life, that all is well when he is in the open air, while he suspects that which he cannot prove—that indoors things are apt to go badly.

In Atherton, we say, as the sun begins to go down, “What a nice afternoon for a picnic!” And you send over a note to Jane, you ask the doctor to stop at Mary’s, you run up a little flag, which is a signal to them at John’s, and, without a word of other preparation, three or four families of you find yourselves, at five in the afternoon, either on a hillside, overlooking half the world, or in a mica-slate gorge, where such a cascade is falling as would be marked with a double cross in a hand-book of Switzerland, or under the shade of the apple trees on the old deserted Griswold place, where the orioles and robins are tamer than they are anywhere else in the world, and where, but for the apple trees, it would seem as if the foot of man had never stepped before.

And for this operation all that has been necessary is to say to Asaph Mears that he may harness the carry-all, and to Bridget that we are going to take tea out of doors, and then to step into the carry-all and to go there. There are baskets in every house planned with absolute precision for the picnic's adventure. Every Bridget knows precisely how the coffee is to be arranged, and how many sandwiches and hard-boiled eggs, and provisions without a name, will be necessary for the party in hand. Every one of the families to whom the signal has been sent knows, by a divine instinct, what it can furnish best for the occasion, and infallibly there is on a visit at one of the houses somebody, from the other side of the world it may be, whose presence is enough to make the occasion a different picnic from any that ever met before. I do not care how old the inhabitant is who attends on this joyous occasion, he always feels as if he had never been at that place before, and as if there had never been a picnic at Atherton before. And yet, in point of fact, as the summer goes by, these excellent people spend three days

out of four, in some such enterprise in the open air.

So it happened that as Mrs. Knox ordered her carriage for an afternoon drive, rather doubting, in her own mind, which of four or five possibilities she should select for her guests, she saw a white flag run up a little spar above the barn of the Carrigan house. The ready opera-glass showed that the flag carried the figure 5.

Mrs. Knox went to the foot of the stairway in the hall and called to the girls above :

“Mary, tell them all that the Carrigans have a picnic at five, and we will go with them. You will want to be ready to start ten minutes before five.” And then she bade little Clärchen Berlitz run up the blue flag in answer. The child was signal-mistress by this time, and was delighted with all the enginery of cords and bunting.

And so it was that, with a promptness which would have delighted Von Moltke, within a minute of the stroke of five of the clock, there gathered by the little green patch, where the county road crosses the new road to the

station, four different carry-alls, two young gentlemen and three bright girls on horse-back. Mrs. Carrigan, from her own carriage, welcomed each arrival, and gave her orders. They were to rendezvous, by whatever route they liked, at the bars beyond Gershom's barn. She had bidden her own boy ride forward that the bars might be taken down, and little Cephas Gershom be ready to put them up again.

“So good-bye till then,” said the hospitable lady who had so suddenly assembled the party. “I am glad to see your banjo, Will.” And, by different routes, they drove to Gershom's.

Our particular party, which means Mrs. Knox's, consisted of herself, and two Soames girls, with a friend of theirs, Mary Saville, from Elmira. She had known these girls in Rome, where they had spent a winter together, and she had sent for them to make her a long summer visit. Among the other young people there was a theory that Harry Spaulding and Ned Walker, who were two of the cavaliers, had a special interest in the Elmira party.

But nobody really knew. The young men said, and perhaps thought, that they were at the Chittenden House in the village because it was a convenient centre for their fishing. All parties were away from home, meant to have what Dryden and the vernacular call "a good time," and, in literal fact, were having it. Cephas Gershom had both sets of bars down, and beamed, with a well-pleased smile, as Mrs. Piper threw him an orange, and as Mary Soames found for him a cream-cake. The cortége worked its way under a magnificent grove of hemlocks, and then the gentlemen of the party, with Alonzo and Nahum Gershom, saw to the horses. A waterfall on one side, a green grass sward for nymphs to glory in on another, shade for those who were warm, and sunshine for those who were cold—there was nothing more to ask for.

Had never naiad such a bath,
Nor dryad such a fane !

The party resolved itself into its elements, or, as Charles Fourier would say, divided according to the attractions. Certain lads and

lasses, preordained to such industries, spread a cloth under some old apple trees, and brought out as much and as little china, as much and as little Bohemian pottery, as many olives and as few, as much and as little cake, cold beef, and warm coffee, as the precise fitness of things required. Between them and the brook, with their backs against a log which still bore George III.'s broad arrow,—which had been cut for his navy while the Hampshire grants were his, but which never bore his flag because Stark beat Baum at Bennington—with their backs against this log, I say, sat Will Piper and Ned Walker thrumming on their banjos. On the sward before them, to the time of their sharply accented music, were waltzing three or four couples of the other young people. And, under the hemlocks, just above, where you command that wonderful vista down the little valley, which is only shut in by the faint blue of Mt. Marcy, a hundred miles away, sat, or lounged, or lay on the ground, three or four of the elders, well-pleased with the beauty, the harmonies, and the simplicity of the little

drama, and the scenery in which it was going on.

“Yes,” said Mrs. Carrigan, the same who had set this pretty ball in motion, “you may say what you choose, it is better for people to be under the sky.”

“That is what the dominie says every Sunday. His ‘fourthly’ is invariably like this, ‘And would it not be well for us, dear friends, in consideration of what has been said, to leave these prisons which we call homes, and under the open arch of God’s temple’—and so on, and so on.”

“I wish all dominies had half his sense,” said she, “whoever he is. Mrs. Knox, you worry yourself about gossip. If people are pressing ferns, or are looking at the spores of mares’ tails, they will not be discussing your dress or mine.”

“I wonder if people discuss dress in Southern California. Mr. Hale says they are out-doors there from seven in the morning on the 1st of January till eleven at night on the 31st of December.”

“Do not fret yourself about gossip, my dear

Mrs. Knox. There are worse misfortunes than the friendly interest of your neighbors."

"I call it the mild police," said Colonel Carrigan, coming in from an inspection of the Gershom live-stock.

"Mild police, if you please. The same interest which makes Miss Ann Stiles wonder why I turned my barège dress in October, rather than November, made her send in better beef-tea than any of us knew how to make, when John was on his back in December. Take it for all in all, I am glad I am not Mrs. Robinson Crusoe."

"But," said Mrs. Knox, "we are not discussing that question. I do not want to be Robinson Crusoe. What I want to know is, where does one live in this world, among other people, and hear the least petty talk about what his neighbors are doing? Where could I live, for instance, where I should not know that if I wore my last dress by Worth the neighbors would say that I was showing myself off because they did not have such nice gowns, and where, if I wore a plain cashmere, they would not say 'Mrs. Knox does not think

we are grand enough to see her fine things from Europe?' Is there any such Happy Valley, or any such oasis in a desert, or is there any place called Washington, where this should happen to me? Or where shall such rest be found?"

"As for that," said Colonel Carrigan, "I should say promptly that people talk as much gossip in one place as another. But if you happen to live in as small a place as Cranberry Centre gossip comes back to you, while if you live in Washington or New York you are so much engaged in other things that you do not happen to hear of it.

"I could make you an excellent illustration from the laws of sound. You may be in a small place, where your voice is flung right back on you. You may be in a large hall, where your voice is not flung back upon you, but is flung up and down and right and left over the people who sit before you.

"You go back from speaking in that hall, and you say to the architect, 'There are no echoes in your hall, Mr. Wren,' when the

truth is that there are echoes enough, only you did not happen to hear them.”

“That is all very pretty,” said his wife, “and I suppose there is something in it. At the same time, I think Mrs. Knox would say, if she ventured to speak, that she found, after they had been a few hours in one of the Roman galleries, that they had some things to talk about, which they did not have after they had been ten days shut up in a gale in the ladies’ saloon of the *Germanic*. Now, for precisely the same reason, it will happen that, after we have spent a week or two by ourselves in Atherton, the newspapers all shut off because there is a snow-storm, all life shut off because the ground is five feet under snow, we are a little bit more apt to talk about Mrs. Goodchild’s chickens and guinea-hens than we should be if we were just coming home from the Vatican.”

“Somebody once said that

“The proper study of mankind is man,
and a good deal of respect has been given to
this somebody. His name was Alexander
Pope.”

“Yes, and he was a sad gossip, I am afraid, from all that I know of him. Indeed, I should suspect, from the very poem from which you quote, that he knew as much of the imperfections of his fellow-creatures as most people do, and that he was not disinclined to speak of them.”

“That may be; still, I do not think that Mr. Pope, or anybody else who likes to discuss human nature, would have told us, in good classical measure, that ‘Mrs. George Cobleigh presented a large and bountiful wedding-cake,’ and that ‘her work in that line is such as few may venture to surpass’; that ‘Mr. C. P Davenport gave a greenback V. to his minister,’ or that ‘Mr. and Mrs. W. K. Farr gave a pair of the same value, and Grandma Emerson gave a carving-set;’ or that ‘Miss Ida Miner, a sister of the bride, gave her a crocheted afghan.’”

These facts he read from the county newspaper, which he took from his pocket, quoting its description of an ecclesiastical party in the neighborhood.

But here Mrs. Knox interrupted him. She

said, "Let us do one thing at once, Colonel. We are not discussing the press or its shortcomings, which are many in most countries. We are discussing the conditions of gossip, and I am trying to find out—what I have been trying to find out in three or four different circles—whether there is any more of it in Atherton than there is in Rome."

But at this moment they were all summoned to partake of the picnic, and all had the satisfaction of eating something which they had never seen before, while each had provided something for the hunger and thirst of the others. The charm of Atherton in its picnics showed itself here. The real charm of a picnic is that the lady of the house, while she prepares a supper, as she should do, eats a supper which she has not prepared. There are certain traditions in each Vermont household as to what can and cannot be done, with the maximum of eggs, the maximum of sugar, the minimum of flour, and the maximum of cream. There is also a well-defined certainty that man does not live by cake alone, but by certain food more sustaining; so that there were

various provisions on the cloth, which was spread upon the sward, more satisfactory to persons who have passed forty years of age, and far better fitted for the machinery of their internal system, than these elegancies which have been described.

Under all these agreeable circumstances the conversation turned. They certainly did not discuss people ; they did not talk a great deal about what they ate ; least of all did they say that they were sick, or tell what was the matter with them, or with what medicines they hoped to be cured. But in the wholesome and natural way, in which talk will run on where there are pretty girls and unaffected boys, where there are men off duty and women without care, they told stories and trumped them, they passed "from grave to gay, from lively to severe," till a black thunder-cloud made its appearance along the southern sky.

Colonel Carrigan pointed his long finger at it, as he saw it first through the line of locusts. Every one sprang to his feet. The table-committee in a moment had emptied cups and saucers, and in a magically short time had

wiped them somehow and had packed them. The boys had put the headstalls on the horses, backed them into the carriages, and brought the carriages round. And, in half an hour from the time when the senior party was discussing the laws of conversation, and the junior party was waltzing on the green, the whole company, almost at a 2.40 gait, were rattling along the Vernon road, with the sides of the carriages well buttoned down, so that, before the shower had pelted on them more than five minutes, every horse, every carriage, every boy, and every girl, were under shelter.

We are most interested in Mrs. Knox. There had been a covered way arranged at the side of her house, so that she stepped from the carriage, without so much as a drop of rain falling upon her. She did not even have to change her shoes, and if there had been forty grandmothers in the house they could not have persuaded her that she would take cold. She was able at once to turn to the mail, which had been brought in since she went away. She ran over the half-dozen letters before opening them, and being quite

alone, she selected, as that which she should read first, one of which she knew the handwriting perfectly, though she did not know why it was mailed from St. Louis.

When she read it she was astonished, more than she had been astonished for years, nor could she understand it. The reader will see why if he has the whole letter laid before him:

John Coudert to Mrs. Sybil Knox.

“ST. LOUIS, August 4.

“MY DEAR MRS. KNOX: I still address you by this name, because, although I have heard of your marriage, I do not know who is so fortunate as to have changed it. It was only by accident that I heard, at Memphis, of an event so important to you and your friends, of which, by some chance, I had not heard before. But the world is not large, it seems, although we try to persuade ourselves that it is. You have here my excuses for not being earlier in sending my good wishes, and my apology at the same time for addressing you by the name under which I knew you. I think I may presume so far upon our acquaintance—I wish I might say our friendship—as to feel that I am among those who are privileged to

express high hopes for your future. (I never permit myself to congratulate a lady on the occasion of marriage. I remember, when I was a boy, I said to one of my girl friends, 'Congratulation implies effort.' I am not sure if this is so, but I have held to that scripture ever since.) I certainly send my congratulations to your husband, and I beg that you will do me the favor to offer them to him.

"May I also ask that you will have the kindness to send to me your new address?

"Lest you should think that I am presumptuous in preferring this request, I will venture to tell you on what enterprise I am engaged. I am afraid it is a somewhat hopeless one.

"When I was in New York I had occasion to examine the present condition of the Cattaugaus and Opelousas Railroad property. At my advice, some of my relatives have invested a very considerable part of their property in these securities, and, on my return, I was dismayed to find that the depreciation in their price was still going on. I had thought it a mere accident of the stock-market, and that, with returning good sense and the true prosperity of the country, this property would attain its former standard. As I was the adviser of my sister and other friends, it is my

duty to see that my advice is justified if possible. I have therefore come to the West, clad with a good deal of authority from holders of the first and second bonds, and am trying to make an investigation into the condition of that property.

“It was thus that, without in the least interfering in other people’s affairs, I learned, almost by accident, in New York, that at one time you had a considerable investment in this property. I allude to it now that I may venture to advise you and your husband not to be induced too hastily, by any counsellor, to sacrifice the property at its present market rates. I am in possession of information which must materially affect the market, when it is known. I cannot but hope that it may be so used as shall be for the benefit of all of us. I am probably not at liberty to say more now; but if you will tell me in whose hands you may place your interests, if at any moment you entrust them to any one besides our friend Kendrick, I shall be glad of the opportunity of advising with him confidentially.

“There is another matter in which you are interested, in which I have interested myself as well. It is as to the present position of a man named Berlitz, of whom, I think, you know something. Judge Kendrick (what the

newspaper people call our 'mutual friend') gave me some particulars of the 'curious romance by which you and he were mixed up with the affairs of Berlitz's widow—if she be a widow. I fancied, I hardly know why, that I might unravel that mystery. I have, almost at this moment, possessed myself of another trail or clew, and, if I follow it to any advantage, I will certainly let you know what are the results. Perhaps you will be so kind as to tell me where Mrs. Berlitz is now living, that I may communicate with her.

“Pardon me, dear Mrs. Knox,—or I should say, Madame l’Inconnue,—for taking so much time from a season which must be crowded with pleasure. Our little correspondence always gave me much pleasure, and I should be sorry to think that it must be interrupted now. My address for some time will be Pittsburg, Pennsylvania. This does not mean that I am to live there, but it is a central place from which I can easily order my letters.

“With my best respects, and renewed congratulations to your husband, I am,

“Very truly yours,

“JOHN COUDERT.”

Sybil Knox could hardly believe her eyes. Her first thought was that John Coudert had

gone crazy. If he had gone crazy, however, there was method in his madness. Then she had that curious feeling that he had folded the wrong letter, and put it into an envelope intended for somebody else. But of course she saw that this would not do: she was addressed by name on the inside of the letter, as she was addressed on the outside. Who in the world had told John Coudert that she was married? To whom in the world had that person said she was married? Or, rather, if that person had not said she was married, to whom in the world had that person thought she was married? Where had she been, what had she done, what had she said, which should make her the victim of other people's talk? Or what should have given the slightest foundation for so absurd a story? Could it have been that she had come into some "society newspaper" without knowing it? Or possibly that there had been an account of the marriage of some other Mrs. Knox, or Miss Knox? Had some reporter mistaken an actress for her, or her for an actress? And what freak of destiny was it which had sent

across the world this mish-mash of manufactured intelligence, as absurd as the announcement of the wedding of Semiramis to Benjamin Franklin, so that poor John Coudert should read or should hear ?

CHAPTER XIV.

DORCASVILLE was the county town in which was the building which answered for Jail and House of Correction, which John Coudert, for other men's sins, was now to investigate. Dorcasville had been left on both sides by the railroad engineers of that region. It had been erected fifty years ago, when a network of canals was stretched through and over the State—canals which exist now only for the benefit of boys who wish to fish, and, in a few cases, for a wretched water-power which they created and still maintain. The gay and lively stage-lines which once stopped for breakfast, for dinner, and for supper, at the Dorcasville Eagle, long since ceased to run or to stop. The Dorcasville Eagle, even, suspended his operations, and his inn was closed. Boards were nailed across the windows to save them from the missiles of boys. And the proud bird himself, taken from

the post which he adorned, was carried to a museum as a relic of the past. But the inconvenience to the officers of the court and other antiquarians, who still had to come to Dorcasville twice a year, and perhaps oftener, had compelled a public movement by which the old "Tavern" was reopened. A veteran of the war was placed there to live without rent, and to keep it for what he could get. Thus were accommodations secured for the justices on their circuits, and the immediate danger averted that even the county records and the jail, which were the last relics of the grandeur of Dorcasville, should be removed to Homer, where the B. & J. crossed the line of the A. & Q. roads, a smart village, which "claimed" ten thousand inhabitants, and had, by actual census-count, six hundred and seventy-one.

In this shelter, which maintained the traditions of hospitality with as little of their substance as is possible in those Ohio-washed States, where no man was ever hungry, John Coudert found himself laid by to rest, after driving across on a buck-board from the junction at Homer. Never was a more dismal wel-

come. He had taken the one-armed proprietor by surprise, the wife of the one-armed proprietor was indignant at the arrival of a stranger after she had cleared up for the evening, and it was clear that he was not welcome. In his most engaging vein, however, he assured the lady of the house that he did not want a hot supper after his drive. He asked her if she could not give him some bread and milk, to which she answered that she could not, but that "there was crackers." In a little, he found himself at a dirty, India-rubber-covered table, with a plate of crackers which had been left by some baker as a specimen of his craft some weeks before. But there was a great flagon of milk, which had neither been salted nor otherwise preserved, but was fresh from some Dorcasville cow. John Coudert was too old a campaigner to be dissatisfied with this provision. He made himself comfortable with his supper, and then went out to be inspected upon the piazza of the house. He found here, as he expected, two or three loafers of the neighborhood, who had not yet outlived the customs of the days when Dorcasville was more alive. He seated himself

in the midst of them with a “good-evening,” offered a cigar to one and another, which was accepted, and, before the evening was over, he knew the gossip of the place, on the subject about which he had come to inquire.

The next morning he called upon the keeper of the prison. To his relief, though hardly to his surprise, he found an intelligent dreamer, who, in the queer lottery of public appointment in those States, had been put in charge of the county prison. The man was not surprised that a visitor should come to inquire after one of his prisoners; he would not have been surprised had this visitor had two wings to cover his head and two to cover his feet and two with which to fly. He admitted Coudert into the great room where the prisoners were making harnesses, under the eye of a contractor; called Berlitz from his work-bench, and left the two alone. Coudert had been well aware that his difficulty would be in overcoming the shyness or the pride, which all persons had told him was a characteristic of Berlitz. He had provided himself, with some sense of theatrical effect, with quite a parcel of German

newspapers, some pictorial papers, and even one from Berlin itself. But his man was evidently cowed and discouraged. The sight of portraits, even of persons whose names he had heard all his life in German talk, did not seem to be much encouragement to him. When Coudert produced some short-cut tobacco, and asked him if that came into the prison ration, he took more interest in his companion, and after a little the suspicion which he showed at first gave way. But the real theatrical stroke was given, not in the presentation of tobacco, nor in the cold glancing at newspapers, but when Coudert mentioned, as by accident, the name of his wife and of his child, and told him that they were in America. At the instant the man was transformed. He had been too proud to write to his wife from a prison; he had, of course, received no communication from her. But from that instant John Coudert was sure that those had maligned poor Berlitz, who had made the ready suggestion of "the other woman." He had already been sure that he had struck the right man.

Poor Berlitz's story was but an amplification

of that which his countrymen had talked over when Coudert saw them on the steamboat. He was crossing the country, not very far from the place where they were, when, at a junction, it was necessary for him to sit up five or six hours at a railroad station to wait for a train. One would say, there was, of course, no provision by which he could even lie at length. As he said, if he could have gone to sleep, he should not have been in prison. He was forced by the regulations of the place to sit bolt upright on a seat, which was provided with arms, apparently with the fear that anybody would lie down in a station-house, which was built for the purpose of travellers spending half the night there. Bolt upright in this way he sat, and from the window he saw lights moving in a way that would have arrested any man's curiosity, for he saw that whoever was handling them was trying to conceal his motions, and that for no good end. To tell very briefly the story, which he told Coudert at great length, when he was sure that Coudert was his friend, he saw that there was an attempt made to set fire to the wood-yard of the

station. At once he went to communicate what he had learned to the ticket-master, to find that there was no ticket-master on hand. It proved, indeed, as the story went on, that the ticket-master himself was the person who was engaged in starting the fire. Then Berlitz ran out to give an alarm in the neighborhood ; but at that moment the sudden blaze seemed to make it necessary that he should give more practical attention to the conflagration itself. Then it was that he had been suddenly knocked down, had lost his senses for a little, and, after he recovered, the firemen of the village were beginning to assemble, and Berlitz was no more than anybody else was.

The upshot of it all was that when, on the next morning, he told his story, he found himself arrested as the man who had set the building on fire, and at the trial his own asseverations of innocence had gone for but little. There being, however, no practical evidence against him, except that he was found on the ground with a heavy bruise on his head, the judge had made his sentence shorter than that of the real incendiary, who had been sentenced

to five years, while Berlitz's sentence was for two only.

Coudert now made it his business to ascertain, as well as he could, what could have been the motive with which the real incendiary had addressed himself to his work. Why should the ticket-master of a station undertake to burn down the property of his employers? All his attempts to draw anything from the man himself were perfectly futile. He evidently did not mean to "give himself away." Coudert talked with the amiable idealist who managed the prison with absolute nicety. But he found in him a man who regarded all persons as equally criminal and equally innocent. He spoke of them all, as if they were the subjects of disease, and as if this attack of incendiarism might have come upon this man as a nervous headache comes upon a woman, or an attack of colic upon a child who has eaten green fruit. He hoped that both the prisoners would recover from their illness, before the terms of their imprisonment were over, and for the rest it was hardly worth while to inquire as to their particular

symptoms or what had aggravated them. Coudert left the prison, promising Berlitz to correspond with him, and disposed himself to go to the seat of government of the State, to have some conversation with the attorney-general, whose services, as he was glad to find, had been called in in the prosecution of persons arrested under circumstances so remarkable.

CHAPTER XV.

MRS. KNOX was more annoyed than the occasion would seem to demand, by the intimation in John Coudert's letter that she was not Mrs. Knox, but was Mrs. Somebodyelse. The girls who were visiting her observed that she was silent that evening. She did not join them in the morning when they read aloud, and in the afternoon she let them go to drive without her. Instead of going to drive, she walked down to Mrs. Carrigan's. Between the two there had been gradually growing up a real friendship—a friendship which was more than an accidental intimacy, and more even than a concurrence of tastes. But this was the first time that Mrs. Knox had fairly tested it. She did so now with great reluctance, but she felt that she was, so to speak, "in for it." If she lived in Atherton, she must have the absolute confidence of some one in Atherton, and she felt sure of Jane Carrigan. She must tell some-

body about her annoyance, and she would trust this new friend.

Mrs. Carrigan, of course, was not alone. Who had ever found her alone? There was a great group of the guests and the guests' friends and the friends of the guests' friends, sitting on the piazza or lying in the hammocks or on the grass, some of them pretending to watch a lawn-tennis party which was immediately below. The Carrigan house was one of the wonders. It had been said at one time, that if anybody went to tea with Colonel Carrigan, he built an extra room at the end of the house, so that he could ask them to make a long visit. The house had that look of growth which makes a country house so charming.

Mrs. Knox sat for a little in the shade, watching the tennis-players, and took the cup of tea which Mrs. Carrigan had ready for her and for forty other people; but as she went across for a second lump of sugar she bent over enough to say, "I want to see you alone." Accordingly, in a little they were alone, without anybody missing either of them, in that nice corridor which runs out at the side

of the north L. Then Sybil Knox told her friend, in as few words as she could, what she had heard—namely, that she was married to somebody, she did not know whom, and she did not know how the story had started.

Laughing, but with the tears running down her face, she said, “I heard all this twenty-four hours ago. I slept very little last night, and I have come to you. Everybody knows more about my affairs than I know myself. What am I to do to contradict it?”

But, to her real relief, she found Mrs. Carigan as much surprised as she was. She sat up in the hammock in which she had stretched herself, almost rose to her feet, and simply said, “An enemy has done this.” Then in a flash she added, “That is impossible, my dear child, for you have not an enemy in the world.”

“That is just what I should have said myself,” said Sybil Knox. “I am not in the habit of thinking I have enemies. I do not know how anybody could have started such a rigmarole story. But this gentleman who writes me—I may as well tell you who he is; he is a Mr. Coudert, an intelligent Pennsyl-

vania man whom I saw a good deal in Italy—he is not a fool. He would not have written as he did unless this story were quite well started. This man heard it at Memphis. I do not so much as know where Memphis is. I did not suppose that anybody in Memphis had ever heard my name. Do you really think it was in the newspapers?”

For Sybil Knox still had that exaggerated sense of the importance of the newspaper, which people are apt to have, who have lived in Europe.

“Oh, my dear child, you take it quite too seriously. Suppose it had been in the newspaper? Suppose that the newspaper had said that you had set fire to Atherton, and that Atherton was burned down? This would not have been a nine days' wonder. Half the people in the world would not have seen it. Half the remainder would not have read it. Half those who read it would have forgotten it. Half those who did not forget it would have disbelieved it. And by the time that the next newspaper was printed, it would not have been even worth the while of those

leaders of public opinion, to mention the fact that the facts that they communicated the day before were all untrue. I do not think I should be annoyed if it were in the newspaper.

“But probably it is in the mouth and at the pen’s end of some first-rate letter-writer. Who can there be within a hundred miles of here who would have started any such story?” and for a moment there was silence.

Sybil Knox broke it. “Has there been any such story here? Tell me that. Has anybody said that I have been flirting with anybody? I may as well say that. Whom is there to flirt with except your husband and Dr. Moody?”

“My child,” said the sympathetic lady again, “you are quite right there. How could you flirt where there is nobody to flirt with? That is one of the minor advantages of New England life at this time. Every boy goes to Yokohama or to Duluth or to Callao before he is seventeen years old, and the women are left to flirt with each other. In this town we have had no man but Tom Grin-

nell, who is crazy, and Ethan Allen's grand-nephew's brother-in-law, who is in the poor-house, and Dr. Moody, as you say, and poor Horace Fort. We have had nobody else to flirt with for years."

As she said the last words her voice wavered, and Mrs. Knox knew that it wavered. Mrs. Carrigan felt it, too, and her face flushed; so that, instead of answering this jesting speech as she would have done, Sybil Knox said, "What are you thinking of? What do you mean?"

"Murder will out, my dear. I had forgotten it entirely; but the first day that you were in Atherton, Horace Fort came into your parlor in his shirt-sleeves."

"To be sure he did," said Sybil Knox, "and if nobody ever taught him manners before, he got a lesson from me which I do not think he forgot. Anyway, I have seen Horace Fort but twice from that day to this day. And on neither of them did he ask me to marry him, and on neither of them did I go to the altar with him, as your friends of the newspapers say. You do not think that

I am Mrs. Horace Fort without knowing it?"

Mrs. Carrigan laughed, and it was an unconstrained laugh. Still she said, "You are so quick, you saw that my voice broke when I spoke his name. It must be confessed that, in the two weeks after your arrival here, Atherton talked, in the select society of the place, of your old school acquaintance with Horace Fort."

"This is what they meant," said poor Sybil, "when they told me at Rome that I could not live in Atherton, or in any other country town, for three months. I did not believe them. At the worst, I supposed that such talk would handle the dresses I wore, or the subjects I talked about. I did not think that I was actually going to have my name changed for me without being consulted."

"Do not be too hard on us," said Mrs. Carrigan. "I must say you have been worse treated than ever I was. I believe they did say that my grandfather was a Tory and tried to betray George Washington to be hanged by somebody. But before they had got that story

well started, it turned out that my grandfather was a pirate and had been himself hanged at Tyburn or somewhere else ; and before I could look up the executions of the last century they doubted whether I had any grandfather. But I never gave Atherton the credit for this, and after a little I settled down into a staid inhabitant of the place, and I get along here quite as well as I should get along in Washington or in Rome.”

Mrs. Knox hardly listened to this rather exaggerated talk of her friend, who was really only trying to divert her. “Do not let us bother ourselves about how it happened,” she said. “What in the world am I to do to contradict it? Shall I ask Colonel Carrigan to put a notice in the newspapers to say that Sybil Knox has not been married and does not propose to be?”

“My dear child,” said her friend again, “my husband says he does nothing. He has been in public life now, as you know, for nearly forty years. He says he has never replied to anything in that time, and he has found that a good rule. He puts all anony-

mous letters into the fire without reading them ; he does not look at the marked newspapers which ill-natured people send to him ; and if anybody in the Legislature says he is a swindler and a murderer, he does not call attention to that remark by bringing proof that it is untrue. I think that his rule will be a good enough rule for you.”

And with such half-way comfort did poor Sybil Knox return to entertain her young friends.

CHAPTER XVI.

MRS. CARRIGAN had assumed a lighter tone than her friend expected, and it represented much less than she felt. For Mrs. Knox had more than once spoken of the danger of gossip in such life as theirs. “She has it on the brain,” Jane Carrigan had said, “and it is a shame that some snobbish, travelling fool, who knows as little of New England as I know of Thibet, should have frightened her.” More than once she had resolutely declared to Mrs. Knox that the gossip of Atherton was as harmless—nay, as infrequent—as that of Washington or of Paris. And now, in the face of such declarations, here was her friend wounded—and no wonder—wounded by a story which would make her think that Atherton was another Little Pedlington or Eatonsville.

She took a night to sleep over the story, as Sybil Knox had done. She said nothing of it

to her husband nor to the council of her children. But the next morning, when her dinner was ordered and her maids encouraged for the day, when she had had a chat with her butcher, had said something pleasant to Mrs. Peth, who brought round fresh corn and Lima beans, had praised Cephias Gershom, who came with the eggs, had consulted Oliver about the weather, when he brought her a string of fish, after she had been recalled to the side door twice to say how many quarts of berries she would have from the Ames children, and to thank Mrs. Coram, who had stopped with a fine bunch of cardinal flowers, she retired to her own room, called Florence, her oldest daughter, and sat at her davenport. Florence came, looking a little frightened. She knew that something was the matter, and she and her sister Maria had vainly tried to guess what. Her mother told her briefly, but with incisive indignation.

Florence was quite as angry as her mother could wish. Here is the advantage of taking youth into one's counsels—you are sure of sympathy, and it does not hesitate in its ex-

pressions. But it was clear enough that Florence was taken by surprise as much as her mother. She expressed bitter and hot indignation. But she did not pretend even to guess where that indignation should fall.

“No,” said her mother, after a little; “I do not see that we can do anything. If I asked your father he would say I could do nothing. I do not think I can. All the same I am going to tell the girls. It will be a warning another time. And I know I can rely on them.”

Florence’s face flushed with pleasure. “I am so glad you say that: I wanted to propose it, but I did not dare do it.”

“No,” said her mother; “and nobody but you and I would dare to do it.” Then, after a pause, she added fondly, “Nobody knows the girls as well as you and I do. We will at least have the pleasure of seeing that there are nine women in Atherton who are not fools, even if they are women. And our secret will not burn us to death, if the others help us throw back the coals into the fireplace.”

So Mrs. Carrigan took from her desk a quire

of paper stamped with a silver cross and the words SEND ME. She wrote this note :

DEAR HULDAH : It is I who want you this afternoon if you can come. Thimble.

Truly yours,

THE CHIEF.

Of this note she made two copies ; Florence made three, all directed to different young friends. But Mrs. Carrigan signed all, and with her own hand made a Maltese cross at the bottom, and wrote the letters I. H. N. The six notes went to the post-office at once, and so each of these girls received her summons when the day's mail came up, the arrival of which was the event of the day for every one in Atherton.

And each girl reported in the afternoon with her thimble. The order of "Send Me" is an order of women, of which the several societies number five in some places and fifty in others. It means work and not play, and its members are pledged to go where they are sent, if the Grand Master seems to need their services. The girls were punctual at Mrs. Carrigan's,

and they masked, sufficiently well, their curiosity as to the cause of the summons. More than one of them had given up some promising plan for personal pleasure, that she might come.

“We will finish the flannels for the dispensary,” their hostess said, so soon as she had welcomed the last comer, and as they had all sung a hymn. “Huldah, dear, give me that petticoat. I had it last week, and I can talk better when I sew.”

Then she told to them in substance what she had told to Florence. She did not pledge them to secrecy. She knew perfectly well that no word spoken in that room would be repeated elsewhere, if by any possibility it could give any pain to any one, and that nothing said here would be repeated for the mere sake of talking. These fine young women had not been under her eye in Sunday School, in summer amusement and in winter study, and especially in the somewhat serious talk and work of “Send Me,” without her feeling sure that she could trust them as she would trust herself. “And now, girls,” she said, “I have

sent for you because I do not want to suffer as much mortification as I have suffered since this time yesterday, without telling my best friends of my sufferings." And here she had from each a tender, perhaps a tearful, smile, and, from each of the two girls who sat next her, the touch of a hand interrupted the somewhat perfunctory stitching of the flannel. "Yes, dear girls, I was sure of your sympathy. I knew that a good object-lesson like this would help us in our determination to keep our tongues clean ; but I did not think we needed that. I did think, besides this, that perhaps we might find out something, and do something to check this mischief. Does any one of you know anybody in Memphis? Can any of you guess if Atherton has a private correspondence there?"

No ; none of the girls could do that. But Laura said, with a certain simplicity which was especially her own, "I had just as lief ask Mrs. Edwards if she has any friends there."

They all laughed. For every one of the nine—Mrs. Carrigan, her two daughters, and the rest of the order—knew that the first step

in this bit of annoying gossip was taken by Mrs. Edwards, when she reported Horace Fort's presence in the Atherton house. And every one believed that this same Mrs. Edwards had done, for this poor, naked little anecdote, other things in the way of providing for its growth, and of clothing it and setting it on its travels.

They all laughed. But Jane was the first to speak, and she spoke seriously. "Poor Mrs. Edwards! You will not find her."

"Where is she?"

"She has gone to Montpelier."

"Montpelier! She told me she expected friends, those Chisholm girls from Painted Post."

"I do not know whether they are coming. I know she has gone to Montpelier. She came to see my father about it."

"About what?" Then Jane looked, as if to ask permission from the president of the order. Mrs. Carrigan repeated the question, and Jane took this as permission from her chief to go on.

"Her son is in jail, waiting a meeting of the

grand jury. She came to my father to ask him to give bail for him ; and he went with her yesterday morning. But, of course, I said nothing. It must be in the paper by this time."

And then it appeared that this poor Mrs. Edwards, who had started the Horace Fort story, had started one story too many. This boy of hers had been at home on the Fourth of July, and he had talked, in his grand way, about what the firm was doing, and what the cashier of the bank said, and what the teller replied, and what the president had done. And Mrs. Edwards repeated much more than she understood, very much more than she knew. The same Russian scandal, which had married Sybil Knox, had now made so much of this story that the bank commissioner had pounced on the bank itself, when no one expected him. Nothing was the matter, probably, but officials and all were made angry, and the only result of the investigation had been that this boy Jairus and his employers had been called to account for certain transactions of the head of the firm, who was at this

moment in Oregon. The boy had contradicted himself in his cross-examination before the magistrate, which was, indeed, very cross, and now he had been arrested on a charge of perjury.

All which was due directly to Mrs. Edwards's improvement of one of the boy's braggadocio stories. He had, alas! been brought up in the habits of his mother. He had told some things he had seen, and some which he had guessed. His mother had repeated these to friends of her own sort, who had repeated them with advantage to theirs. The story had then fallen into the hands of one of the "reportorial staff" of the *Spread Eagle*, who was engaged in reporting a base-ball game at Atherton. He was also a "space writer" for a "Metropolitan Journal," one of those papers which tell you that the Emperor William has been impressed by what the *Notary Public* has said about his Catholic policy, and has taken its advice.

Among them all a fine story had been got up for the benefit of as honest a set of directors as you could find in Vermont, which is to say

in the world. The bank commissioner had done his duty promptly, and the upshot of it all was, that Master Jairus Edwards now had an opportunity to lament his indiscretions, and to relate his adventures, within the four walls of a jail.

Mrs. Carrigan drew these particulars from Jane, so far as she knew them, only by the closest cross-examination. So soon as she knew the facts she said, "I am so glad I made you come here, my poor child. For, with Mrs. Edwards away, I should not have known this for a week. Are you sure about the bondsmen? Do they not want two? I should do for one. I hold real estate of my own. Or my husband would, I know. Do you girls go on with the sewing. He has just come home, and I will ask him."

And then in five minutes she was back again. Jones had been sent with a telegram to Mr. Grey at Montpelier to say that Mr. Carrigan would give bonds for Jairus Edwards, if he were needed.

"So that matter is out of the way," said Mrs. Carrigan, as she came back to the party.

“Jane, dear, I am proud of my god-child. I wish I had as steady a head, or could tell a story as well as you, without telling a word too much, or without telling it when I ought to hold my tongue.

“Sad, though, is it not, that this innocent word ‘story,’ a history, should, with even little girls, come to mean a ‘lie’? Do not the children now hold up their hands and say, ‘Oh, what a story!’ What can Oscar Wilde mean by ‘the Decay of Lying’?

“Do you know what Dr. Stearns told me? He says that the old fathers used ‘fabula’ and ‘fabulare,’ our words for ‘fable’ and ‘to tell a fable,’ when they were talking about the histories in the Bible. He says it is only by a steady law of decline that a fable comes to be something untrue.”

“As gests came to be jests—something real to be something said for fun.”

“Why, yes; exactly so. ‘Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire.’ Girls, we will have that as a part of the ritual of ‘Send Me,’ to read that passage.” And she took down her Testament

and made Huldah read the sixth verse of the third chapter of James, and the verses which follow.

“ But we did not come together to take care of Jairus Edwards, though we seem to have been sent about that business. You came here to comfort me in my distress. That you have done. But, seriously, I called you to see if we could do anything about it. Mr. Carrigan says that what he calls an ‘overt act’ does a person in trouble more good, than all the respectful sympathy in the world which does not express itself. In fact, my husband has a great contempt for people ‘who cannot express themselves.’ I never say a word myself, so that I do not always agree with him. But, simply, I feel as if I should die if I could not make poor Sybil feel more comfortably about this nonsense. Why, girls, you cannot think how sensitive she is, and how much it worries her. And those hateful old Roman women had told her it would be so before she came here—Messalina, and Agrippina, and Lucrezia Borgia, and all the rest of them. I hate them, and I always did ! ”

The girls laughed heartily at her inability in the arts of expression, and Maria, repeating one of their old jokes, said, "How fortunate it is that no one can say anything about us!"

There had been three wonderful maiden ladies, whose "united ages," as the newspapers say, were seven hundred and seventy-seven years; they were the very oldest people in the world. Their deeds and their sayings had supplied Atherton with its small-talk for centuries; when, one fine afternoon, one of them was heard to ask, "What can anybody find to say about us?"

There was a moment's silence now, broken by little Mildred Dawes, who said, "Dear chief, you know my father is going to take me to Denver; I will ask him to stop at Memphis a day, if that will do any good."

This was so exactly like Mildred that the girls would have all said that they knew it was coming. They would not have known the detail; but, in general, she was always thinking of something good-natured she could do—nay, more than good-natured, of something where

she could go out of her way to help some other girl on hers.

“No,” said Huldah, more discreet, “for Memphis is only an accident. He was there when he heard it; that is all. If only dear Mrs. Knox could understand that very few people ever heard it, that nobody believed it, and that everybody has forgotten it.”

“Exactly!” said Mrs. Carrigan. “I am glad to see the good sense of ninety on those shoulders of twenty. Not in vain were you named Huldah if that means the wise.”

“As it does not,” said Huldah, laughing, “we cannot put a notice into the personal column of the *Eagle*, can we, to say, ‘Mrs. Sybil Knox, who has lately arrived at the ancestral seat in Atherton, has not changed her name and does not mean to;’ and then send that marked to Mr. Condor. Can we, Mrs. Carrigan?”

“His name is Coodair, my dear,” said that lady, who had only heard poor John Coudert’s rather unusual name.

“We could not kill that whipper-snapper who edits the personal column, could we? I

saw him at the picnic; he wears a gold chain and a satin vest and a loud necktie and patent-leather shoes?" This was Laura's question. "I do not mean 'could we.' I could in a minute with this hair-pin, and I would gladly, but for a shudder as to what would happen to him. I mean 'might one,' under the laws and constitution of Vermont? I am sure they told us something at school about prompt action in the suppression of nuisances."

"Dear child, *le mieux est l'ennemi du bon*. It is a cynical maxim, but often states the Philistine practical consideration for the hour. Atherton is not an ideal town, though Vermont is well-nigh an ideal State. We are here to consider, not what could be if we were angels in Paradise, but what we can do about it on this particular day of the week."

"If we were angels in Paradise I would wear light sandals, instead of boots with heels."

"I would have my skirts shorter."

"Would you have your wings white or rainbow-color? Now, that petticoat would be much more welcome at the dispensary if it were all the colors of the bow."

“Colors of the pit, more likely. That is where all these aniline colors come from.”

“Descend, dear angels, descend from these heights to consider daily duty. We can snub every one who talks about the Knox house or its affairs.”

“Dear aunty, they are tired of that already.”

“So much the better, my dear. Can we not start them on something else?”

“On the fall of Constantinople?” asked Hatty, laughing. She had not spoken before.

“Yes; if nothing better turns up.”

“Mrs. President,” said Hatty more seriously, “I move that Mrs. Sybil Knox be invited to take the silver cross, and to join Order No. 73 of ‘Send Me.’”

“I second that motion,” said Mary Stiles.

Mrs. Carrigan paused for a moment, as if to invite debate. She paused so long that the girls who had made and seconded the motion did not know if she approved of it. But when she spoke it was to say, “Dear girls, you are wiser than I am, though perhaps you do not know it. One way is to stop gossip; another

way is not to listen. The Sirens could stop singing, or the sailors could put wax and cotton in their ears. If this dear lady were only in a tearing eagerness about some round peg which will not go into a square hole, she would forget Horace Fort and Mr. Coodair and herself—perhaps would even forget to look at her mail; and that state I take to be the Kingdom of Heaven.

“For there ought to be a marginal reading, at least, in the Bible, where it says that about the angels, to add in italics, “they neither receive a mail nor answer letters.”

So Mrs. Knox was chosen a member of “Send Me.” The servant announced tea, and it was high tea.

“Tea must wait, dear girls, till we have done the business. The doctor says that Mrs. Winter’s eyes will do well enough, but he will have Dr. Wadsworth up to operate on Monday. For three weeks her eyes must be bandaged. Some one ought to be there every morning and some one every afternoon. Think who can go, and put down the names here.”

So the girls fell to talking in groups, and in

three minutes the list was complete, and was lying in business-like shape on the davenport.

Monday morning.—Jane Gray.

Monday afternoon.—Huldah Wadsworth.

Tuesday morning.—Maria Carrigan.

And so on, for the twenty-one days of poor Mrs. Winter's confinement.

This chapter must end with the reply to John Coudert's letter:

ATHERTON, August 17.

DEAR MR. COUDERT:

I was glad to see your hand-writing, though I was more amazed, amused, and provoked than I will try to tell you by the ridiculous story which you had heard at Memphis, but which had never come to me.

It must be some double of mine—some other Mrs. Knox—who has changed her name. Pray do me the favor to contradict it in the quarter where you heard it, or anywhere else.

I do not know how to thank you for your care about our poor German friends. I do hope something may follow. The Frau Berlitz is with me, but I do not dare tell her that her husband is in jail. And I must thank you, also, for watching the Cattaraugus and Ope-

lousas. If any one can tell me what to do I shall be sure to do it; for, indeed, I do not know.

Truly yours,

SYBIL KNOX.

And the word Knox was underlined.

This letter, written in two or three drafts, got itself finally copied. And then Mrs. Knox, who knew perfectly that her correspondent had said his address was to be at Pittsburg, for she had read his letter forty times, addressed him at Memphis. The letter went to the Dead Letter Office, and was never seen by him or by her.

CHAPTER XVII.

JOHN COUDERT was disappointed, more than he liked to own to himself, that he received no word from Mrs. Knox. It would be fair to add, perhaps, that, as the summer and autumn passed, Mrs. Knox was as much disappointed that she had no second letter from him. In such matters a man is not apt to have a confidant. Certainly he had none. Indeed, his life had so ordered itself that he had few near friends anywhere. And, while the public trusts which he held, and had held, brought him, in any Northern city, into companionship with people enough, and while his intelligence and spirit made him everywhere a favorite, he had, since his mother's death, no real home anywhere; nor was there any person with whom he was used either to boast of his frequent successes, to consult in his difficulties, or to mourn over his occasional failures.

He owned to himself that he loitered in beau-

tiful Pittsburg for two days, when his business might well have called him away. He was hoping for the arrival of this letter. There are charming people in Pittsburg, and beautiful homes. There is Mr. Carnegie's library at Allegheny, which is really a part of Pittsburg, and a man might find himself waiting in many worse places, for a letter from the woman whom he loved. John Coudert did his best, with such resources, to make the time go by; but he could not make a letter come to Pittsburg which had been directed to Memphis; and on the third day he girded up his loins for the battle, for which he had now prepared himself, with the arch-enemy of the Cattaraugus and Opelousas Railroad. He followed the rule which his friends said had governed him in all his successes, and struck high.

The C. & O. Road, as all the world knows, is not in Pennsylvania. Unfortunately for him, it does not pass through two States, or he could have tried the chances, respectable, if doubtful, of the Interstate Commission. As it was, he knew he must turn to the State authorities in

the State where his little line tried to maintain an independent existence. He fortified himself with a letter of introduction to the governor, and took such a train that he might arrive at Franklin, the capital, and make his first visit early in the day. He promised himself a good deal of interest in this visit. Governor Needham's name had been known through the whole country by the courage of his canvass and its bitterness. By some arts or methods, variously accounted for, according as you rate the infallibility of a Blue journal or a Green, he had reversed the great decision of the last presidential election, and had carried the State for himself and his party by a sweeping majority. If you believed the Green infallibles he was the lowest and most degraded criminal in the State. When he was not drunk, he was at the card-table, according to the Greens. His unscrupulous conduct of his business had enriched him, or, as the elegant Green phrase was, had "filled his barrel," and, according to the Greens, his free use of this barrel had purchased the suffrages of a community of utter purity, who had judged

everything, only two years before, by the highest standards. The Blues, on the other hand, were not in the least surprised at "Ned Needham's" success. They ascribed it to a certain *bonhomie* of his bearing with hotel clerks and railroad porters. They had from the first pointed out to the world that if his party would name "jolly Ned Needham" as its candidate, and would set aside the longer experience of Governor Vinton, or the tried statesmanship of Secretary Macon, all would be well. And as the party had taken their counsel, and had named Ned Needham, of course he was chosen. Such, severely condensed, were the two notions with regard to this gentleman, which were presented to the nation by the newspapers. For his election was really a matter of national importance. And every intelligent man had reason to be curious about the cause of what implied, perhaps, a revolution in national politics.

As for John Coudert, he was a man of too much sense and experience to place the slightest confidence in either statement or estimate. He knew perfectly well that the people of this

State never chose a fool to govern it. And he did not believe that they had chosen a knave. But he was very curious to know what manner of man had achieved a victory so remarkable.

The State House stood in a beautiful garden, laid out and maintained with care, which was, apparently, a sort of lounging place for the people of the town. Fountains were playing, and seats under trees accommodated nursemaids, while children played with their horses and wagons on the gravel. A janitor, in the great marble hall which occupied most of the lower floor, directed Coudert up to the governor's room. He had little time to examine the great paintings between which he passed, but that question crossed his mind, as it often does in such places : by what throw of a dice-box is it that one of such pictures shall be a masterpiece of art, and the picture opposite be absolutely absurd in drawing and in color? Once at the head of the great stairway, he found a negro, sitting at a little writing table and reading a novel. Coudert gave him his card, and asked him to take it to the governor, with

the note of introduction which he had received from Judge Pringle. This was the only ceremony of introduction to the governor of a State larger than Bavaria or Holland. Coudert remembered, with a certain amusement, his presentation to Leopold at Brussels the last year.

In a moment the janitor returned with a young man who proved to be one of the governor's private secretaries, and who asked Mr. Coudert to come in. They passed through a large empty room, which the young man said was the Council Chamber, and so came into Governor Needham's private parlor. He rose from his desk, crossed half-way to the door, took Coudert's hand, and led him to a chair. He was tall, rather delicate in aspect, with an elegant bearing; his features were finely cut, and he carried an aspect of care, almost amounting to anxiety, curious in a man so young. He wore a light linen jacket, for the day was one of those tremendously hot days of early September. But in this detail, and in every other detail, his costume was faultless. Such were Mr. Coudert's first, quick observations.

He felt at once a certain charm in the governor's manner—the cordiality of a gentleman to a stranger, curiously mixed with the dignity of a man who was representing a State, and showing, at the same time, an interest in knowing whether the stranger had come merely to “do the town,” or upon some errand of real importance. He asked, with evident respect and interest, after Judge Pringle, whose letter he still held in his hand, and then paused, with that air which says, “It is your turn now; remember that we are all busy here, and tell your story as quickly as you can.”

Coudert knew his own country well enough to have known, as he came up the steps of the grand staircase, that he was not going to speak to any second-rate person. But he felt a certain sense of relief—the feeling as if his battle were already half won—when he looked into the open face and saw the resolute expression of the governor. He told him, in severely condensed narrative, for which his long journey had given him hours to prepare, why he was in Franklin. He spoke of the arch-enemy—

not Satan, but that son of Satan who was trying to wreck the railroad—as if all men knew his character and his purpose. He spoke as you might speak of the cholera, of a cyclone, or of Satan himself. He observed that “Ned Needham” did not intimate, by the quiver of an eye-lash, whether he accepted this view of the man or rejected it.

He closed his story by saying, “I have come to you because I am used to begin at the top. I know you have thought of this iniquity. You may know how it is to be beaten. I do not. I wish I did. But I am here to say that, if you know, and if the State wants to do anything, here am I. Send me, if you choose. In a fashion, I represent the lambs—the stockholders and the bondholders, ‘the widows and orphans,’ as you say in legislatures—who are pushed to and fro as the baccarat counters in this thing.”

“Jolly Ned Needham” heard him from beginning to end, without a syllable, without smile or frown, and without even that quiver of an eye-lash. He looked Coudert in the face without winking, or turning his eye for an

instant. Coudert did the same by him. When his statement was finished, for half a minute there was silence.

Then the governor said, "You are the Mr. Coudert who represented New York at the International?"

John Coudert said he was.

"I thought so. Featherstone, whom you met there, is my brother-in-law. He told me about you. I have always wanted to know you." Then he paused again. "Mr. Coudert, I do not know what you believe, but I think your visit is providential. Will you look at this letter which I had just begun, to my attorney-general?" And from his desk he handed him the sheet on which he had been writing.

MY DEAR SCARLETT:

This Opelousas thing must be straightened, if we all swing for it. I am not governor of this State in vain. I know that he who fights the devil needs long tongs. I do not know the length of mine, but I do know what my grip is when I take hold. Now, tell me three things:

First. Is there, or is there not, law enough—

And this was as far as he had written. "I had come so far," he said, smiling with that exquisite smile which would have led almost any woman to worship him, but with his face still as firm, not to say as relentless, as if he had been Hildebrand. "I will tell you what I was going to say."

And then he plunged into the ins and outs of the iniquity. He discussed legal and constitutional questions as if he had been speaking before the full bench at Washington, and with full confidence that Coudert followed him in the finest speculation and by the most delicate deduction. He went over the ground which the common law gave them; he gave Coudert just a hint, but enough of detail, to show what their own courts had ruled, and how far their own statutes had gone; and he cited, as if they had been the Ten Commandments, the few recent decisions, all too few, of the English and American courts on matters akin to those in hand. "I had even thought of proceeding by *quo warranto*," he said. "What my number three would have been, in this letter, was to ask if we could not bring

before our Supreme Court, sitting in equity, all three of the corporations—yours, poor lambs,” and again he smiled, “and these your two enemies—and ask them all, in brief, to tell the people of this country what in thunder they are doing, and what reason there is ‘why sentence of death should not be pronounced on them.’ *Quo warranto* has its uses, though it has never been over-popular, Mr. Coudert.”

John Coudert could venture to smile now. And he told the other how far he had gone in the same lines. He had the best counsel in Wall Street and in Philadelphia; but, alas! their plans did not agree with each other. “But you will be glad to see the opinion I have from Thayer and from Wirt, for it is precisely your own. They are both retained for me. But if you could, and if this State would, appear distinctly in the conduct of this inquiry, of course we should ask nothing better, and we should leave the whole in such good hands. Only——” and he paused.

“Only?” asked the governor, with that air of a man used to hear the whole without reserve.

“Only I was wishing that you were your own attorney-general, or your own chief-justice.”

“Better as it is, as you will say when you know them both. I have been asking myself now whether a simple grand jury inquest, to try your arch-devil as conspiring in a case of arson with this little devil in the House of Correction, might not be the shorter way. Yes, I see you have no testimony to speak of. But there are two verdicts. There is the verdict of a petty jury in Butler County, which may go either way it chooses. There is the other verdict of Public Opinion, Mr. Coudert; and by Jove! if we can find him guilty there this country shall be too hot to hold him, and he shall finish his days in Fiji Land. That may be the best way.

“I will tell you, Mr. Coudert; let me telephone the attorney-general to lunch with us. We shall only have Mrs. Needham and the boys. One of my aids here shall take you to see the Cascades and the Museum in the meantime. You are at the St. Clair? Yes? I will call for you at one ten and take you home

with me. Meanwhile Miss Francis and I will finish this stuff." He did not so much as wait for the other to accept his hospitalities. The janitor came in. "Ask Miss Francis to come in, and Mr. Willis. Mr. Willis, have the goodness to telephone to Colonel Wayne to come over. Here is the *Tribune*, Mr. Coudert, and the *World*. Now, Miss Francis, if you please," and he began reeling off his letters to the stenographer, who had come in. When, in a moment, Colonel Wayne came in, he only paused long enough to say, "Colonel, you will be glad to know Mr. Coudert. It is John Coudert, you know." And the gentlemen shook hands. "Mr. Coudert lunches with us. Try to amuse and edify him till then. Show him the serpent-mounds and the cascades, and everything else that will make him comfortable. Does Campbell sit to-day?"

The colonel said no, that the court had adjourned over a week.

"I am sorry for that: I wanted you should see Campbell. Well, Wayne, see that you exalt the city in his eyes, and make us glorious. He may write a book, you know. Good-morn-

ing. At one ten sharp, Mr. Coudert." And they parted. And again Coudert remembered that reception by the King of Belgium, and his farewell bow there. Before they were out of the room the governor was dictating again: "cannot be supposed to imply," and so on, and so on, in that dreary business of working off the day's mail.

CHAPTER XVIII.

AT nine minutes after one, John Coudert took his place in the great crowd of loafers and travellers who sat in the shady piazza of the St. Clair, saying but little to each other, but watching doggedly the gigantic thermometer on the druggist's shop opposite, as its red column rose higher and higher.

At exactly ten minutes past one, Governor Needham drove up to the steps of the piazza. He was in a light covered buggy, driving a pair of beautiful horses. A groom, waiting under the piazza, started forth to take the horses.

“Thank you, Nathan, no ; there is a gentleman here——” and at this moment John Coudert presented himself, would not permit the other to leave the carriage, as he tried to do, mounted himself, and they were off. But, as Coudert could not help seeing, in the dozen seconds necessary for this, his companion had

recognized, by nod or glance, half a dozen of the men, who had pressed forward to speak to him. He hardly spoke to anybody, but, still, it seemed to each man that he was the one person in the whole number whom the governor was particularly glad to see. In a moment a gossamer lap-robe was drawn over their knees, and the handsome bays were taking them up the broad, asphalt-paved Franklin Avenue, which is the meridian from and on which the latitude and longitude streets of that capital are measured.

“It is easy to see why they call you ‘jolly Ned Needham,’ ” said John Coudert.

The governor laughed as he said, “What stuff they write and talk! I do not suppose a man or woman believes them. Why should not a fellow speak or nod in a good-natured way to everybody? Are we not each other’s keepers? Where in thunder should I be now, or you, if somebody had not shod these horses, if somebody had not groomed them, if somebody had not raised the corn they ate this morning? For my part, I am very glad I did not have to do these things, or to clean the

harness. I had to do it in my day. My father, who was a man of sense, swore that I should never ride a horse, or drive one, though there were twenty in his stables, unless I could groom him and harness him. I valued much more my certificate from old Dennis, the stable-man, than I did my Bachelor of Arts diploma. So, as I say, I am really very much obliged to the people who do those things for me. I know I could do it for one of them if the tide turned that way.”

Then he paused a minute and went on :
“The manners of a country where everybody feels the mutual dependence will always be different from the manners of a country governed from the top. For my part, I think they are better manners.

“And that, Mr. Coudert, is the whole of what the newspapers mean when they talk of ‘jolly Ned Needham,’ or of the ‘well-affected affability of the governor.’ In truth, I never asked a man to drink, for I do not know the taste of whiskey or beer ; and so I never offended any other man by not asking him.”

The governor’s house was, perhaps, two

miles from the State House, large and comfortable, surrounded with "a shrubbery which Shenstone might have envied"—if anybody knows what that means—and fairly covered with climbing roses and honeysuckles and vines of clematis, still in bloom, with wistaria in its second bloom. A bright boy, whom Mr. Needham called Harry, one of his sons, came running out as the bays stopped, and himself drove them to the stable. Mrs. Needham was at the door to welcome them. "Mr. Scarlett is here," she said, "and I am so much obliged to you for bringing Mr. Coudert. Is not Mrs. Coudert with you?" she said, as she gave him her hand, without even asking an introduction.

Coudert had to explain that there was no Mrs. Coudert, and never had been; he did not so far go into the dark chambers as to add that there never would be. Mrs. Needham asked him if he would go to his room, asked her husband when Mr. Coudert's trunk would come, and, in general, took it for granted that he had "come to stay," as the fine national proverb puts it. He was himself inwardly surprised that she knew him so well, but in a minute it

appeared that there was a telephone between the governor's office and his house, and that he had "called up" his wife, to tell her who her guests would be.

Precisely at half-past one a tidy girl announced lunch. Coudert observed that she spoke to her mistress in German, and that Mrs. Needham replied in the same language. They gathered at a table elegantly furnished, in a large airy dining-room, and Coudert, who had been going through the horrors of the fly-season at crowded hotels, noticed instantly that there was not one of the pests of humanity in the room. He thought they were to talk secrets, and he saw, therefore, with some surprise that the elder children of the family gathered with them. They spoke to him modestly, as they were presented to him by their mother, and all quietly took their places at the table.

In the exuberant hospitality of the valley of the Ohio and the Mississippi, there is but little distinction between what they choose to call lunch and what they call dinner. In fact, they call the same meal lunch or dinner as

they are speaking to one or another person. Needham had asked his guest to "lunch," because he knew he came from the East, and might be used to dining at six or seven o'clock. But in the furnishing of the table, and in its service, there was nothing to distinguish it from what the family dinner of the same house or the same place might have been.

So soon as they were well embarked on the business of eating, Governor Needham said to Mr. Scarlett, "Scarlett, I told you why you were sent for. Mr. Coudert, I am afraid, has not much time; certainly you and I have not; and I thought we could talk more quietly here than at the office. Mr. Coudert, you need not be afraid to say everything here; my children and my wife are used to hearing secrets, and we can go over all these matters here and now. Tell Mr. Scarlett what you told me this morning." And then, with a little laugh, "Scarlett is a better fellow than you would think, considering the company he keeps. He is attorney-general because he ran in at the head of his ticket."

And Scarlett laughed, and interrupted to

say, "As the governor is governor because he ran in at the head of his."

The governor nodded and smiled, and went on, "Yes, that is the reason why I have one of these rascals of the opposition to be my confidential adviser in law. But Scarlett and I knew each other long ago. We have met too often on the stump not to be fond of each other, and I will not say that the machine does not run better because it runs on two wheels. Now, Scarlett, you must talk your best to this man. He told me this morning that he wished I were my own attorney-general. That is a high compliment, and you must make him understand that we can go one better than that."

It was not the first time that John Coudert had seen that, in the antagonisms and mysteries of politics, the working force is often brought forward in a way that the theorists would not imagine possible. Here were two men who had denounced each other's parties on the stump, who were now thrown into co-operation for the benefit of a great State, and who knew how to co-operate. When the admiral of a

fleet and the field-marshal of an army have courage and mutual respect enough to carry on a joint operation, that operation succeeds. Such mutual confidence has not often shown itself in war, and that is the reason why most wars are failures. But in the practical affairs of a practical people, such co-operation as had been brought about here has more than once shown what it is to live under the government of a people which wants to "get the best."

But Coudert did not stop to indulge in political speculation. He plunged right into his story, which he told with the severe brevity which had pleased the governor in the morning. The attorney-general listened carefully, occasionally interrupted him to ask a question, but possessed himself of the leading facts, which Coudert had been working out for the whole summer; particularly of the information he had received at the Commencement of his college. After the story was over, the attorney-general looked across the table to the governor without saying anything.

"No," said the governor to him, "I am not going to open my plans. The responsibility

of this thing will be yours. I shall probably never finish the note to you which I began this morning. I had got so far as to say that something must be done. We owe it to the State that it should be done, and we owe it to the country. I am a governor, and I propose to do some governing. There are laws, and I do not believe that those laws are to be ridden rough-shod by Wall Street or any emanation from Wall Street. State your plans, and I will say whether I think they are good.”

Thus invoked, the attorney-general went into the detail of the matter, somewhat as his chief had done in the morning. He touched, however, naturally enough, more upon the difficulties of practice, upon the proofs to be brought for this theory or that theory, and especially pointed out, with a very sharp probe, the weakest points of the story which Coudert had been telling. There was a great deal which they knew for all practical purposes, for which they had not a scrap of evidence which could be put in in court. That the arch-devil of this transaction—call him Satan, Ahriman, Achitophel, or what you

would—was in league with all the enemies of this once well-established road, was clear enough. That he had suborned its officers right and left, that he had destroyed its reputation by every lie which he could print, was clear enough. That he had gone so far as to hire one of its own men to set fire to one of its buildings, all three of them were sure. But these were a set of terrible charges, which must be substantiated in the face of the first counsel in the country, and where there was untold wealth in the hands of the person whose purposes were to be unmasked. How this should be done was not so easy a matter.

It was at this point, undoubtedly, that John Coudert's visit was of the first value to the governor and to his able chief-of-staff in the line of law. There are many things which a person, nominally an outsider, can do, which cannot be thrown upon executive officers. Coudert intimated that he would see to the voice of the press. He gave them the evidence that he commanded the sympathy of the large proprietors of the C. & O. And they knew perfectly well that there were railroad mag-

nates of the first importance in the country who would like nothing better, were it merely in the cause of honor and truth, than that Ahriman should be flung from his throne and should plunge for nine centuries through the abysses of darkness. Exactly how the various forces were to be divided in the attack which was to be made—this was more difficult to say. It was easy to see that there were forces, and Coudert could not have asked that those forces should have a better commander-in-chief than “jolly Ned Needham,” who was presiding so gracefully at his own hospitable table.

They talked eagerly for an hour and a half, when the governor withdrew. He had an appointment at three, he said, with the school board; and they could see from the window that his horses were waiting at the door. “But you are not to go, Mr. Coudert. Mrs. Needham will keep you as long as she can, and perhaps you will let her take you to drive this afternoon. As for Scarlett here, he is a lazy dog; he never has anything to do. And he must decide whether to go with you and Mrs. Needham, or whether he will sit drinking with

the boys at the bar of the Tecumseh." And with this final fling at his old enemy, he bade them good-bye.

What really happened was, that Coudert and Scarlett sat smoking together for an hour on a shady veranda, and went backward and forward over the case in its intricacies and possibilities. Coudert ventured to express his sense of the charm which Needham had for him in all his bearing, and Scarlett most cordially seconded every word he said.

"I have summered him and wintered him," he said. "He is as pure as a woman and as true as the gospel. And at the same time he has this happy-go-lucky way with him, which, as you know, makes everybody think that he is his special friend. The fellow deserves his popularity, if any man ever deserved it. And if anybody can pull you and me through in this fight, Mr. Coudert, it will be Ned Needham."

CHAPTER XIX.

WHILE the wolves were devouring the carcass of the Cattaraugus and Opelousas Railroad, or proposing to, while the watch-dogs were doubting and consulting, the lambs who held its stock were starving. The simile is very badly mixed, but so were all the affairs of this unfortunate institution.

Started in the very beginning, created by men who worked in the public interest, with the same motive with which in those days men created savings banks or other philanthropic institutions, the C. & O. had gone through many ups and many downs. But in the hands of a brilliant and wise director, one George Orcutt, the road had long ago assumed the commanding position which its founders had foreseen. In all that immense region, half the country was, almost of necessity, tributary to it. And, as has been intimated, so large and so conciliatory was its management, as to make

friends where it might have expected enemies, or at least rivals. George Orcutt had long since left this world. But the traditions he had established were maintained, and the present management, though it could claim nothing of his genius, or, indeed, of his spirit, and though, in the modern notion, it was certainly "slow-coach" and behind the times, was still above and beyond all suspicion of dishonor or of personal motive.

Still, for this year, with a facility more fatal than that of years before, its stock fell and fell and fell in the market. No bull spasms affected the hardly conscious faintness of this dying road. How could it be otherwise, indeed? Dividend after dividend had been passed. Reports were less and less frequent, and then it was only too clear that business was declining. The most rigid economy of administration, parsimony, even, would not create a credit balance. It was clear enough that the treasurer and the directors were carrying on its movement from their own pockets, in a sort of pride which, for the moment, compelled them to keep up a losing game.

Mrs. Knox's business agent, a kinsman in whom her husband had confidence, had notified her, while she was in Europe, of the danger which threatened her. She must lose severely, even if he sold out all her interests, but his advice was eager that he might be permitted to sell. He was of the average type of what are called "men of business," and they are always eager to leave a ship which shows any signs of damage. But Mrs. Knox had been unwilling to give the permission. Her father was one of the men, in advance of his time, who had been called crazy for pressing forward the works of public improvement which make the nation what it is. The nation had forgotten him. But she had not forgotten him. She remembered his pride in the triumphant success of this particular line. And she almost felt as if her agent had asked her to change her name because it would not rhyme with Silver, or to buy a new carriage because Mr. Baal had one of a different kind from that she fancied.

The agent had no money to remit to her. All her money, he said, was needed for taxes

and repairs on real estate, and "betterments" on her city property. If the C. & O. paid nothing, he had nothing to pay her. She had accordingly instructed him to borrow some money by pledging some of the stock. Actually, by this borrowed money had she wound up her affairs in Europe and come over on. And she knew perfectly well that her income for two years had been far less than nothing.

She was not the only "lamb" thus led to the slaughter. The stock had been one of those stocks "handy for women, you know," in which trustees and guardians, and the steady men of that sort, are particularly glad to salt down the provisions left for people who, as is supposed, cannot take care of themselves. And thus, when Mr. Baal had selected this particular fold for his attacks, the lambs which were folded in it were more tender and more helpless than is even the average lamb.

As September came in Mrs. Knox's cousin wrote her a more severe letter than ever. It was simply madness, he said, to hold on. He had talked with the shrewdest and the best men in the street, and he named them to her.

They were aghast to think that any man in his senses, holding what was virtually a trust fund, had held on so long to what was really a dishonored stock. He wrote with the hardness and bitterness of a prophet who had given warning and who had been unheard. He wrote with the harder hardness of a man of business, who has said the right thing and has had a fool to deal with. Here was a property once worth more than a hundred and fifty thousand dollars, which now could not be sold for a third part of that sum, and for a mere sentiment, she was resolved, he said, that it should be sold for nothing. A bankrupt railroad—it was that and nothing more.

The letter ended by his saying stiffly, that he would have nothing more to do with the management of her affairs if she refused the permission to sell. She must select some other agent. His account was submitted as always; the keys of her safes would be placed in any hands she would suggest.

In short, the letter was as hard and stiff a letter as Convers Knox knew how to write. And any person who remembers him will

know that that was sufficiently stiff and hard.

Mrs. Knox had before her, when she received it, her August bills, from grocer, butcher, poulterer, and all the rest. She had drawn the checks on the local bank for the month's wages of the gardeners, the coachman, and her other servants. She knew how low that bank account was drawn. She knew that the next letter she wrote must be to this very Convers Knox, to bid him sell some of her "governments" to provide fifteen hundred dollars for the service of the rest of the year. And here was his statement that, unless she would do thus and so, he would throw up the charge of her affairs.

And why should she not do what he wanted?

She knew just how far this matter of sentiment went. Originally, when it was a question of pluck for a few months only, she had not hesitated; she would not sacrifice the property for which her dear father had given his life. But she would never have carried this feeling so far as to have ruined herself pecuniarily. She knew, as well as Convers Knox knew,

that that was absurd. And, just as she would have sold the house in which her father was born, if she must sell it, why, so would she sell these securities, if she must sell them. But, as she sat here this morning, she knew that she now had another reason for holding on to property which seemed so worthless. Yet it was a reason of which she could not speak—not to this business-adviser, certainly. No, she had no confidential friend to whom she could speak of it. Alas! had she, then, no friends? Was this the result of living as well as she knew how for near thirty years, that at the end of those years she had no one with whom she could consult on anything? And then came the certain answer that if John Coudert were here she should consult him, and should be governed absolutely by his wish. There came the certainty, and it was no new revelation, that she trusted him as she trusted no other man, and certainly no woman, in the world. And here she had his statement on this very point. He begged her not to do precisely what Convers Knox bade her do.

Still she could not say to any one, that she

was flying in the face of all her other advisers because he had urged her to do so. Foolishly or not, she felt that this was her secret, and it was a secret that she could not confide. None the less did she write to the friend of her voyage, Judge Kendrick, who was in New York. She asked him to see her cousin, Convers Knox, and gave him full powers to take the management of her property. She did say to him, "Mr. Knox wishes me to sell out my Western securities, but I am strongly urged by Mr. Coudert to hold them. I have written to him with regard to it, and have no answer." For that letter which she had sent to Memphis had, of course, brought no reply from him.

CHAPTER XX.

THUS far Coudert had made his inquiries as to the fortunes of the C. & O. as quietly as possible, but it was now decided that he had best consult with the officers of the road, and see if their half of evidence and conjecture would make a whole when joined to his half. It was not a long journey to Coramville, the company's headquarters, and Coudert, after a little inquiry, easily found his way to the narrow stairway leading up to the superintendent's office. There were several men coming in from the street as he came from the station. Following Rollo's rule, he also followed the crowd, and they went together up the corridor, till the man ahead opened the door marked "Superintendent," and they all went in together.

Coudert was a little surprised to find himself ushered within the rail and into the private office, as if he were one of this party. The

room was not large and he could not well separate himself from them. They were all serious-looking men of middle age, and all dressed in black frock coats, which had a look as of Sunday best, except that the leader, a stout man, with a heavy black mustache, wore a flashy suit of checked dittoes and a still more flashy diamond.

The superintendent, Mr. Martinet, was not seated. He came forward, passed the flashy leader, and shook hands with several of the sober men. Before he was done, the leader, now behind him, spoke in a voice much too large for the room :

“We come here as representatives of the Confederation of Toil to demand the adjustment of our grievances.”

The superintendent faced round.

“I do not know you, sir ; but I should be sorry to think that any of my friends on the road need come to me in any other quality than that of the employés of the C. & O. These gentlemen are working for us ; I suppose they have come in that capacity. Are you an employé of the road, sir ?”

The flashy man laid his hand on the back of a chair.

“I am Mr. J. Walker,” he replied, “past grand chancellor and chairman of the Executive Committee of the Grand Lodge of the Confederation of Toil. These,” and he waved his hand, “are the Grievance Committee of District Assembly No. 347, C. of T. I am not in your employ, sir.”

“Are you working for any one, Mr. Walker?” said Martinet. “I remember you now, but you have shaved off your beard since we dismissed you. Are you still inspecting cars? You were a good hand at that when you took care of yourself.”

Coudert started; this was Walker, the faithless inspector, whose neglect had caused those wrecks on the C. & O.

Walker's clutch on the chair-back tightened.

“I am round-house foreman on the Great Midland,” said he, with an attempt at bravado. The Great Midland was the northern connection of the C. & O., and the more voracious of the two roads controlled by that common enemy, Baal.

“I am glad to hear that you are doing well, Walker,” said the superintendent; “you have plenty of ability if you only try to exert it. But, at present, I can hardly talk to you. Some of my friends here on the road want me to arrange something for them, and it seems to me that you are out of place.” Then he faced round, “Boys, what can I do for you?” said he to the others.

Walker turned white with rage; he sprang forward and clutched the superintendent’s shoulders. “I represent the Grand Lodge of the Confederation. Do you refuse to recognize the Confederation?”

Martinet flung his arm off. “I refuse to recognize *you!*”

“I told you so!” shouted Walker; “I told you he would refuse to recognize the Confederation. We can do nothing with him, and the sooner we go the better. Come out of this. we can do nothing with a man who refuses to recognize the Confederation. Come!”

He passed out of the door. One of the men followed him, then another. One of the two left looked at him and then at Martinet. “If

we don't go he will have us expelled and boycotted," he whispered; and they passed out.

Coudert was thus left with the superintendent, who had already crossed the room to his desk and rung a bell.

"Excuse me, Mr. Martinet, for what seems an intrusion, but I am concerned in this, too. My name is Coudert. Mr. Bliven represents my interest on the board."

Martinet's look of distrust changed, and, after giving a hurried order to the porter who had answered the bell, he took Coudert's hand.

"I am very glad to meet you, Mr. Coudert, but I fear you must excuse me now. As you know, the president is sick and the manager abroad, so that I am alone, and I fear I have a little too much on my hands."

At this moment a young man came in whom Mr. Martinet introduced as his chief operator.

"John," said he, "have you spotted all your C. of T. men yet? I want that information sooner than I had expected."

"Only in the city," was the reply. "I am not sure about all the others."

“That may do,” said Martinet. “Let me see. It is now three-thirty. How many of them have you?”

“Four that I am sure of, two that I suspect. The other four operators here are all right.”

“Very well; send three of them north on the four o’clock, and three south on the four-ten. Don’t dismiss them, you understand; just send them to isolated offices where they can’t do any harm. I will give you Miller and Smith here; they are operators, you know, and you must pick up some work. And if any stranger—*any* one, you know—comes to-day with a message tell him all right, and send the message here. Do you understand?”

The chief operator had been taking notes as Martinet spoke.

“There is one man I may not be able to catch in time, but they can’t either,” and he turned and went out almost on the run.

Martinet had rung again by this time.

“That is only a temporary relief,” said he; “it will postpone the strike out of town, I hope, but Walker will get word to them tomorrow.”

“Can't you arrest him?” said Coudert.

“I wish I could,” replied Martinet; “but how?”

“Criminal conspiracy,” was the reply. “Wasn't he mixed up in those bad wrecks some time ago?”

“Yes; but we couldn't prove anything.”

“Perhaps we can now; and at any rate it would be a delay.”

At this moment the master mechanic came in.

“Mr. Frame,” said Martinet, “none of your engineers are Confederate men, are they?”

“No, sir; they are Chevaliers, all of them, but most of the firemen are Confederates.”

“I am afraid, Frame, that the Confederates will go out to-night, so you must skirmish round and get men to fire, and, Frame, tell your men to keep quiet about the strike out on the road. I hope we can confine it to the town here.”

As Frame turned to go Coudert said:

“Mr. Frame, do you remember Inspector Walker?”

“Yes, sir; he ought to be in jail now. He

killed more men by his neglect than most hangmen have by their trade. Neglect, did I call it? It was the sort of neglect that would sober most men, but, if you'll believe it, he was sober when he inspected that train and drunk afterward."

"Can you prove that in a court of law?" asked Martinet eagerly: "or could you swear to it before a magistrate?"

"No, but two of my men can," was the reply.

So Mr. Frame was hurried off for his witnesses and to get a warrant sworn out against Walker, and Coudert left the office with a real hope in his heart.

As Coudert walked toward his hotel he passed the office of the *Parachute*, the evening paper of Coramville. There was quite a little crowd of newsboys gathered for the next edition, and as Coudert looked across the street at them he saw Walker, the Confederate "leader," coming out of the office. He nodded to Coudert and crossed the street to him.

"I don't remember your name," said he; "have you been with the road long?"

Coudert told him his name, and said he had been interested in the road since he was a boy. He added that he had never been mixed up in any labor troubles before, which was probably the reason he had never met Walker.

“Well,” was the reply, “I am sorry, very sorry, I have ever had anything to do with labor troubles. People think we leaders make a good thing out of it, but it’s harder work than I care for. Look at to-day ; why, I have been running round since midnight last night and I am hardly done yet.”

“Have you sent the order out?” asked Coudert, at a venture.

“Come in and have a drink,” said Walker, “and I’ll tell you.”

Under ordinary circumstances Coudert would have thought twice before accepting such an invitation, but now he eagerly followed the man into the gaudy bar-room, and sat down with him at a small table in one corner. As they passed in he heard a policeman say to the man next him :

“There goes Walker, the labor man.”

After they were seated Walker began again ;

Coudert fancied he had already been drinking, and deeply. "I was sitting up in a car all last night, couldn't get a sleeping-car pass—blessed if I won't raise a strike among the porters—then this morning I had to run round to get a meeting of your Grievance Committee; hardly knew the men, and they had forgotten most of their grievances. I had to brace you all up and get you to go to the boss's, and then he would have soft-soaped you all if I hadn't helped you out again. Since then I have been writing telegrams to all your Assemblies, and getting them rushed, and——"

"How did you send the messages?"

"Company wire, of course. We have all the operators. I was up in the office by four-fifteen. Sent them off in cipher—seven o'clock to-night, mind. Then I have had to create public sentiment. Was up at the *Parachute* about that, which you fellows have neglected, and all to oblige a friend."

"What friend?" asked Coudert, looking at the light through his glass with a show of indifference.

"What friend? The biggest man in this

State, I can tell you. He has got me into more trouble than whiskey has," and he held up his glass, "but he always gets me out again. He always stands by his friends. He got me my job on the Great Midland after he had lost me my job on the——"

He stopped and peered at Coudert suspiciously, as if fearing he had gone too far.

At this moment a boy burst in from the street.

"Say, Mr. Walker," he whispered, in a hoarse voice, "them messages didn't get sent. The boss has them all! And all our fellows were sent off to different places out of town before you was in, and nobody knows, and I don't darest to strike all alone." And the little fellow was gone again.

Walker started up, completely sobered.

"Where's the Western Union Office?" he cried, as he threw a silver piece on the bar and strode out. "Come this way, Coudert; we can reach them by Western Union. I have money enough, I think."

He threw open the door only to meet a police officer.

“I arrest you, Walker. I have a warrant here, so you had better come quietly. It’s for your old trouble, that wreck, you know—criminal conspiracy.”

How his friends in the city of Franklin might like this sudden stroke, to which the rather slow Mr. Martinet had been roused by the exigencies of the strike, John Coudert did not know. But he telegraphed at length to Scarlett, the attorney-general, and more briefly to “jolly Ned Needham,” what had been done, and he spent half the night in writing a long letter to Scarlett to tell him what the position was. In the morning he was able to see the different witnesses whom it would be necessary to call; and, with the experience of many years, he sifted sadly out the grains of fact which could be stuck to through all cross-examination, from the wishes, fears, guesses, and fancies of these men. He then determined to try another interview with Berlitz, on whose testimony, after all, so much would depend if it proved advisable to ride two horses, and to renew the investigation possibly with another

criminal trial for that matter of the burning of the woodsheds. He crossed, therefore, to Dorcasville by a meandering route, which took in half a dozen broken-winded railroads, which were going through processes not unlike the decline of the Cattaraugus & Opelousas. In the time which it took him to cross the country thus, he could have crossed to the Mississippi Valley in one of the flying trains. But he had an object-lesson of what it is to have a road run by a "receiver" on its receipts, and a road in which the great mercantile public takes no concern.

Arrived at the prison, Coudert saw his amiable friend who fancied himself curing these people of the disease called crime, and subjected himself, first of all, to a long, dreamy interview with him. He was at the moment reading, in a French translation, one of Beccaria's treatises on crime, but, after a little, he managed to recollect who Coudert was, and after a little more he managed to go back to his diary of the first observations he had made on the patient Berlitz, who was sent to him for two years as afflicted with the disease incendiarism.

Coudert did his best to quicken him on his remembering side, and finally asked him whether Berlitz had in his possession no letters or papers, when his clothing was taken from him and he was made to put on the prison wear. The physician of crime expressed surprise at such a question, for he said these papers were all carefully locked up for the use of the patient when he should recover. For his part, he should consider it a violation of trust to examine any of them. But he remembered very well that there were many letters, and they were all under the county seal in the county safe; this with a certain threatening air to Coudert, as if to imply that Coudert himself had the disease of dynamitism, and meant to explode this safe in order to obtain these papers. This was all that at this time John Coudert got from this ideologist. But the ideologist consented that he should converse with Berlitz, and Berlitz was ordered out from the harness-room, where he was at work, into a room sacred to such interviews.

He was a different man from the oppressed, downcast creature whom Coudert had seen

before. If the physician of crime had brought this about he was entitled to great credit. But it soon proved that it had been brought about much more by a letter from his wife. This letter was the letter, which perhaps the reader recollects, which contained a one-dollar bill, and it had been working its way through the processes of the dead-letter office. The admirable women who conduct the search-department there had "gone for" Berlitz—if one may use a nice bit of slang—as a "darning-needle" goes for a mosquito. They had first sent to Texas, to the Salm Colony, where there are Berlitzes by the hundred. But the Texan postmaster, after trying any number of Gerhards, had sent the letter, with its dollar-bill, back to them. He had given them an endorsement, however, to try something else, and something else had been tried. A Catholic bishop had been drawn into the inquiry, but, after furnishing three or four Gerhards, he had given it up in despair. It was then that somebody engaged in the search, reading some old number of a county newspaper, had seen that Gerhard Berlitz had been arrested on this

charge, and the letter had been sent to Dorcasville, and there triumphantly had remained. So far as known, nobody had thanked these excellent people in the dead-letter office for this perseverance, beyond the perseverance of the saints. But, all the same, Berlitz had the letter of his wife, he had the dollar-bill, and all this within six or eight weeks of the time when the letter was written. It seemed to give him a confidence which nothing that Coudert had said of his wife had given him. He had been glad to see the picture, but now he had seen her own handwriting. And, with the joy of a young lover who had received his first letter from his sweetheart, he handed to John Coudert the letter itself.

It was in badly-written German handschrift. But it was not the first time that John Coudert had read bad German. He wanted all Berlitz's confidence, and he therefore read the letter aloud to him from end to end. As he came to the end he fairly started as he read the words, "Whenever you receive this you must write to me at once. Address me to the care of Mrs. Sybil Knox, Atherton, Vermont."

Clear was it then that on the critical day, when this letter was written, Mrs. Knox still retained her name. And, by putting this and that together, Coudert made himself sure that the statement of her marriage, made to him at Memphis, was at least what the reporters call "premature."

CHAPTER XXI.

TWO meetings of the Atherton Chapter of the Order of "Send Me" had been held before Mrs. Knox met with her sister companions of that Order. She had cordially accepted their invitation. But she was not yet used to their promptness of obedience, which was, indeed, easier to such young people as most of them were. The third meeting, however, found her present, cordially determined to do her best, but curious, after all the explanations of her friends, to know what was expected of her.

Her initiation was very simple, as she had expected. It was the custom of the Chapter to receive one new member with every second month. And at this meeting she found that a delicate young woman, whom she had never seen in their village sociabilities, was to be initiated with her.

The moment when the little mantel-clock

struck three Mrs. Carrigan clapped her hands and said "Order!" and the chattering assembly was hushed. "Hatty, dear, will you play?" said the lady president. And Hatty, who was next the piano, played Sullivan's spirited music, and the Society, all standing, sang one verse of "Onward, Christian soldiers." Then they sat, and all those who were used to the meeting bent their heads for prayer. Without any apparent lead, they all united in these words:

"Father of perfect love, we trust that love entirely. Help us to help each other, and to do something for Thy Kingdom. Father, we ask it in His Name."

Mrs. Carrigan had been till now sitting with her knitting by her at the open window. The meeting was now begun, however, and she crossed to her davenport, where Mrs. Knox had already seen an open record-book and a file of letters.

"I will read Clara's journal," she said. And she read a report, severely condensed, of the last meeting. There were notes of two or three charities among the poorer people of the town,

of the success and difficulties of a reading-room which had been established in the factory village at Lyman's Mills, an abstract of two letters received, one from Boston and one from Tientsin, and the names of the committees appointed to answer them. A note on Mrs. Edwards's difficulty, or her son's, showed that he was not only out of jail, but that the prosecution had been withdrawn.

“Is the record approved? It is approved,” said Mrs. Carrigan. She then turned to Mrs. Knox. “I believe you know every one, unless it is Miss Robideau, who is a newcomer like yourself. Miss Robideau, you must feel at home with us all, and learn the names as you work with us and talk with us. Ladies, listen while I read the charter and the constitution to the new members.” And then she read the charter.

The constitution is this :

“We join the Atherton Circle of Send Me. We will go where the Master sends. Our hope is to do some good—to bring in his Kingdom, and to grow into better life. We will try to look up and not down, to look forward and

not back, to look out and not in, and to lend a hand.”

The newcomers knew what was expected of them, and they signed the constitution. Mrs. Carrigan pinned a Maltese cross with a ribbon on the dress of each, and the ceremony of admission was thus simply finished.

“The Asney Circle open their public library next Friday afternoon. Who can go to represent us?”

Three ladies volunteered.

“Huldah, dear, about Lyman’s Mills.” The shy, slight, pretty young girl who was thus called on had a little note-book in her hand, to which she referred occasionally for dates or figures. She blushed, and spoke a little nervously at first, but, in a minute, she had warmed up to her subject, and gave a very intelligent, often amusing, account of the ups and downs of this public reading-room and library, of which, like our readers, Mrs. Knox had first heard when the report was read. The reading-room had been moved downstairs into the entertainment room. It seemed that there was a social feeling, even among boys and girls who

were reading *Harper's Monthly*, or looking at the *Illustrated News*. They wanted to be among their race. So the neat little reading-room upstairs had been abandoned, and large tables, with the picture-newspapers and magazines, were arranged upon it below stairs. The people who read, read among others who played chess and checkers, and dominoes and parlor-croquet, and other games which Sybil Knox had never heard of.

The committee wanted an appropriation for *L'Illustration* and *Le Monde Illustré*, published in Montreal. And the report closed with the eager wish that they could interest the Canadian village at Lyman's Mills, as they had not yet done. Huldah Wadsworth laid down her notes and made the others scream with laughter as she described her failure in talking French with these people. "Actually, you know, they do not understand their own language." But she was firm in the faith that somebody could interest them, and keep those nice French boys from sitting in the post-office on barrels every evening throwing bottle-corks

at each other. "Only I am not that somebody."

In a most unparliamentary way, the Club fell into a talk on this whole Lyman's Mills business. Different girls told of their own successes and failures. It seemed that on Monday one or two went down and spent the evening at the library, with brothers or fathers or other men-folk, so as to be there to answer questions, to teach people how to play chess, or, in general, to grease the wheels of the machine. There was no end of stories, often very funny, as to their experiences in these hospitalities. What was clear enough was that they were determined the enterprise should go through; and that they had found out that it would not go through, unless they all gave their personal help in the guiding and working of the machinery.

After a good deal of this detail, which sometimes had something to do with future plans, and more often had not, the pale Miss Robideau, who was one of the two new members, crossed to Mrs. Carrigan and said, without

addressing the whole company, that she was interested in what was said about the French boys. "I could not do much with them, I suppose. But I could with their sisters, I think. You know I am their countrywoman, and—and——"

She stopped with a little delicacy, doubting how she might best say that her French was perhaps better than Huldah's. Mrs. Carri-gan did not hesitate to supply the words.

"And, of course," she said, "they will be glad to talk in your language, if they cannot speak in Huldah's. Huldah, dear, come and hear what Miss Robideau is thinking of."

"Let me hear, also," said Sybil Knox, a little annoyed with herself that she had not had the courage to say the same thing. From the moment when she had heard that easy French was in demand in this Green Mountain town where fate had thrown her, she had felt that she was not wholly an exile in her own home. "Miss Robideau, try to make room for me when you go over. As for *L'Illustration*, I have fifty back numbers in the house,

and I do not believe they will care much for novelty.”

Miss Robideau was one of the dressmakers in the village. She had lived there only a year or two. But Mrs. Carrigan, who always had her eyes open to what was available in Atherton, had marked her for her own since she had first employed her, pleased with the girl's simplicity, modesty, precision, and delicacy of taste, as well as bearing. Mrs. Carrigan had never meant that the "Send Me" should drift into the restrictions or exclusiveness of parish circles in Atherton. She was more than glad when she found that Miss Robideau went regularly to the Catholic church at Asney, though it cost her a long ride, and she knew that there could not be too much money in that purse. She had urged the girls to follow up their acquaintance with the stranger, and had succeeded, with some difficulty, in persuading her to join them. She was more than pleased, therefore, with her willingness and good sense, which showed that she had so well taken in the motive and plans of the Order.

“I can gladly go Tuesday nights regularly, unless the weather is too severe.” It is Miss Robideau who speaks. “And Friday, also, if anybody wants me. I can go out on the mail train. You know it passes here at six seven, and I would close the shop those nights a little early. Then I would come back on the morning milk train; that comes in at half-past seven, quite in time for my breakfast. But I should have to find some nice person there who would *sleep me*,” she said, laughing. “Do you know, Mrs. Knox, if I can manage that part? I believe it will work beautifully.”

Sybil Knox listened with a real admiration. That is to say, pleasure and surprise mingled as she heard this poor girl, who had to work for her daily bread, so unaffectedly give away two of her precious evenings every week, simply to be of some use to other people; and as she listened she felt, with satisfaction hardly to be told, that her turn had now come.

“Better than that, Mademoiselle. I speak French a little myself. Though these Canadian boys may not wholly like my accent, I

know I can make them understand. I am not much at chess, but I can play jackstraws and dominoes. Now my plan is this: We are not wanted there till seven. It is only three miles across. You shall shut the shop early, as you say. I will send down regularly for you and you shall come up to me—it is half a mile on the way, you know—and we will have a hurried cup of tea. Then we will drive over to Lyman's, put the hack in some shed they will have, play jackstraws and tweedle-John, and come back together. I shall drive myself—if you are not afraid of my driving. If you will take the bed at our house you shall have breakfast when you will.”

The shy Frenchwoman hardly knew how to take this eager, but very acceptable, invitation. She was really too modest to be willing to throw herself so freely on another, whom she only had met that afternoon. And she had that wretched consciousness that, as things were, she in no way could offer any courtesy to Mrs. Knox on the same scale. Still, she was well bred, so she knew how to express her thanks, and, not unnaturally, she

fell into her own language. She thanked Mrs. Knox, while she expressed the fear that she made trouble. Here Mrs. Carrigan interfered.

“Trouble, *ma chère*, of course it makes trouble. Do we not all make trouble? Do not the boys over at Lyman’s make the very trouble we want to mend? Does not Grossbein, who sells the lager to them, make more trouble? Just what we are sent for is to undo trouble, and what we are pledged for is to take trouble on our shoulders which other people would have to bear.”

She was so voluble in her eloquence that they all laughed, and Mrs. Knox, who had a certain shyness of her own, was better able to press her offer. She wanted to lend a hand, and this seemed the simple way.

“Simple or not simple, it is the way we will do it,” said Mrs. Carrigan. “I am president of this branch, so that I may have things done, and I decide that this is the best way to do this. Let no one rebel.

“More seriously,” she added, as they seated themselves at a little table with some beef-tea before them and some bread and butter—

“more seriously, I suppose that in the twentieth century we shall put our opportunities together in rather different relations from those they hold conventionally to-day. That is, just as a soldier is in ‘the service,’ you know, and there is no lack of modesty when he says he may be called at an instant, and must obey on the instant—I suppose it will then be all natural and simple for every one to stand in the attitude of ‘Send Me.’ And we shall go off two and two, shall we not, where there is anything to be done, as Philip went off with Bartholomew, and John with James, as if it were a thing of course to go where we were told to go ?

“But mark this,” said the dictatorial lady, “nobody goes two nights in the week from the Send Me to Lyman’s Mills, or anywhere else. We abolished slavery in 1863. Now slavery consists in being bound by certain appointments to do things not contemplated when you entered into bondage. We have force enough to send some one else Friday. Clara, book Mrs. Knox and Miss Robideau for Tuesdays at Lyman’s.”

The arrival of the beef-tea and bread and butter broke the party up into four or five different knots. There were, in fact, so many working-parties who had different enterprises on hand. Beside the reading-room at Lyman's there was a loan collection of prints ; there was an arrangement for reading to the men who could not read at the Soldier's Retreat ; there was a commission on the town park, which was trying to make an Arboretum of Vermont there ; and there was a committee on the town poorhouse. At this time the Send Me had all these enterprises in hand.

When Mrs. Knox returned to her home from the meeting of Send Me, late in the evening, the afternoon's mail awaited her.

She looked at it with some indifference, sure only that it would contain, what she now expected once a week—directions from all her men of business, cousins, and cousins' wives, to sell out her C. & O. stock. Still, one must look at the outsides of one's letters. So she turned over the bunch, rather larger than usual, and her indifference vanished when she saw the well-known hand of John Coudert.

His letter was long for a person who had had so little correspondence with her, and deals with matters so far remote from Atherton that they must make the subject of another chapter.

CHAPTER XXII.

John Coudert to Sybil Knox.

DORCASVILLE, McDOWELL Co.,

October 7.

MY DEAR MRS. KNOX :

(If that is still your name.) I do not know how you think this world is governed. But one of those surprises, which make one think that somebody directs it who knows what he is about, has just now put me in possession of information to which you are entitled.

It is only within an hour that I have learned that I may probably still address you—as I am most glad to do—as Mrs. Knox ; or that I was right in so addressing you on the 7th of August, when I had the pleasure of writing you from St. Louis.

Oddly enough, this pleasant news came to me in a prison, and through the intervention of our poor friend, Berlitz, regarding whom at that time I wrote to you. I suppose you were not able to give me any information about him. But a letter his wife wrote him, from your house, has arrived, and I hope his answer to

hers will reach her by the mail which brings you this.

Reading so far, Mrs. Knox rang the bell, and was told at once that Mrs. Berlitz had a letter from her husband and had been crying till she went to bed. The other "girls" had given her what they called a sleeping-mixture of hops, and she was now asleep. They had thought it best not to bother their mistress about this until morning.

John Coudert's letter continued :

Mrs. Berlitz's letter gives your address with your name unchanged. As I have no later tidings from you, you will understand my using the same address.

I write on the same subject on which I addressed you from St. Louis. I can well understand that all your advisers are begging you to sacrifice our poor C. & O. kid to the mercies of any priest who will cut its throat for you. I write to beg you not to do so. And, strangely enough, it is your kindness to Frau Berlitz which puts me almost in a position of certainty in this affair.

Strange to say, if anything were strange in this world, Berlitz proves to be a most impor-

tant witness in the chain of testimony by which we hope to bring Baal, the King of Iniquity, as I suppose you know, to trial. Berlitz is in prison himself for no fault whatever. Make that sure to his wife. He detected an incendiary, he was without counsel, almost without an interpreter, and, "for the greater caution," as the lawyers say, he was shut up himself in prison for two years, because nobody knew what else to do with him. The incident of the letter has given me an opportunity to see all the papers which were on his person when he was imprisoned. Strange to say, one of these papers supplies what I have said is the missing link in an astounding line of testimony, which we hope will break up the great conspiracy against our road. I hardly know why I call it a conspiracy which is conceived in the brain of one man, and carried out with pitiless resolution.

I beg you, my dear Mrs. Knox, not to think that I wish to force a correspondence upon you, when I know that you already have more friends than any other person in the world. I should not have taken the liberty to write a second time, but that I can now, as you see, give almost absolute confirmation to the advice which I gave in my letter from St. Louis. But I should like the favor of a reply, letting me

know that you have received this letter. Unless you wish it, then, I will not trouble you with farther advice in a matter which, I can well conceive, may be very annoying to you.

Truly yours,

JOHN COUDERT.

It is hard to say whether this letter gave to Mrs. Knox more pleasure or more pain. Exquisite pain, one might almost call the surprise that she felt that he had evidently never received the cordial letter which she had written to him on receipt of his letter from St. Louis. Exquisite pleasure, it must be confessed, at one or two of the expressions, where he said he was glad to call her still Sybil Knox, and spoke of the announcement of that simple fact as "pleasant news."

She did not permit herself to go to bed this time before she wrote her hasty answer, and placed upon it a stamp for immediate delivery. It was simply to say that she was glad of the good news, that she had not ventured to wake Mrs. Berlitz from her sleep, that she had trusted fully to his advice in the matter of the investments, and that she should continue to

do so. It also expressed, with sufficient eagerness, her regret that he had never received the letter which she had written him at once in answer to his. It ended in these words, which tried to be humorous :

I am still Mrs. Knox, and am likely to be. I cannot conceive how you heard anything else, excepting that there are many Mrs. Knoxes in the world, and probably there is now somebody who is rejoicing in another name. But I have no friends in Memphis, and am ashamed to say that I hardly knew where Memphis was.

I am doing my best to keep the promise which I think I made to you, that I would see to the full what a country town in Vermont has for life, before I pretended to think that Paris or Rome or Washington could give me a better home. Thus far I am happy here, and have not found many of the drawbacks which kind friends forewarned me of.

I cannot thank you enough for your loyal interest to the holders in this almost shipwrecked property. If no one else knows how much we owe to you, be sure that I do, and that I am always,

Truly yours,

SYBIL KNOX.

This letter came to John Coudert while he was still starving at Dorcasville. It did him what the people of that country call "no end of good." Physically he needed some support, for he was literally starving on the provision of salt pork, dropped eggs, baker's crackers, and doughnuts, which was made for him with unchanging regularity three times a day in the broken-down inn. He was no epicure, but, to a man who had been used to civilized society, the utter absence of coffee, for which a curious mixture made of burned sweet potatoes was substituted, the absence at the same time of all fresh meat, the absence of what they call "soft bread" in the army, and the monotony of the other fare, involved, not questions of epicureanism, but serious questions of health. On the other hand, he was in the midst of such peaches as he had not known were in the world; and if a man could live, as Adam and Eve did, on the fruits of the orchard, he would have been perfectly happy.

But he had worse distresses than those of food on his mind. However, he was in for the campaign, and he knew that, if he were in for

the campaign, he must live as a soldier lives. So he accepted the baker's crackers and the fried pork. But he had found it harder to bury the remembrance, which rose from its grave every day, that Sybil Knox was Sybil Somebody else; and the other remembrance, which belonged to it, that she had never answered the letter which he wrote to her. Now that it appeared that she had answered the letter, and that she was Sybil Knox, life appeared to John Coudert from a very different point of view.

They were drawing tighter and tighter the strings, and yet they gave, and could give, no sign abroad. As Coudert read his New York paper from day to day, he saw that the prices of the C. & O. stocks and bonds went down steadily. It was clear that the great enemy himself did not know that any danger impended over him. It was equally clear that sensitive Wall Street had not found out yet that any attack was proposed upon him. There was not a syllable of discussion in the journals, of things which John Coudert had supposed would become matter of public

notoriety at once. All this was well for him and his friends, the governor and the attorney-general.

That first plan in which the governor, enthusiastic as he was, had engaged, had been for the time abandoned. He had proposed to bring all three of the contesting railway companies into court, and ask them the question why they were not dealing fairly by the people of the State, who had given them their charters. He had supposed that, even in face of the intelligence and wit of the learned counsel they would employ, some public answer would have to be given to this question, and that this public question might at least be a basis for some legislation within his State. The State was, fortunately, large enough to contain the whole line of the C. & O. He hoped for some results which would compel justice, not simply to the C. & O., which was now being crushed, for which he cared comparatively less, but justice also for the people of the State, who were not receiving the advantages for which they had given these valuable charters to the corporations which

used them. Lawyers must decide how far he would have succeeded in any such bold endeavor. As it happened, that experiment was never tried before the admirable Supreme Court of the State, sitting in equity, and this little story cannot give an answer.

His attorney-general, Scarlett, saying that he would not rush in where angels had thus far failed to tread, was satisfied that, for a beginning, they could get the matter before the public, which was what he thought most important, by bringing into court the incendiary again—not on the offence for which he had already served out a part of his punishment, but on a new indictment. Any reader will see that this was at best difficult, and Mr. Scarlett himself knew the difficulty quite as well as we know it. But the fortunate discovery which John Coudert had made at Dorcasville—that there was undoubtedly a real collusion between Walker and the incendiary—gave him exactly the point which he needed. Coudert had understood enough of criminal law to make intelligent suggestions to the attorney-general, and on those suggestions

he and his district-attorney instantly acted. Neither Coudert nor Scarlett, in their impetuosity, considered it desirable to show their whole hand at the beginning. But they were now well convinced that the station had been burned down at the real orders of Baal, the great and ingenious speculator behind the scenes, who had obtained the control of the two lines which the C. & O. united. This man, in his determination to obtain command of the C. & O., for years past had been doing everything to reduce the value of its property in the market. To his manipulations was due that steady decline of the prices of its bonds, and other securities, which struck such terror into the hearts of such men as Convers Knox. It was perfectly clear, as a matter of fact, that the poor incendiary had been the tool of this arch-rascal's ingenuity. Now they knew who was the agent by whom he had acted; and by prosecuting Walker, that agent, they knew they could put the poor fellow himself upon the stand, and that they could compel the attendance of Baal himself.

Their procedure was undoubtedly a bold

one. They knew very well that it was so. But no less audacious an enterprise had any chances of success. And they had the great advantage that, by proceeding thus, they gave, as yet, but little public notice of what they were engaged in, and had all the possibilities of a fortunate surprise. They knew very well that prosecutions for conspiracy were, as they ought to be, difficult, and, if one may use such a phrase, unpopular. But they were almost indifferent as to how Walker might come out from his danger. Whether a grand jury ever did or did not find an indictment against him, they cared but little. They were not really seeking to punish poor Walker. They called him "poor Walker," as they called the other man "poor devil," because they sympathized with such tools of the arch-conspirator. But they did expect that, in the searching analysis which would be made necessary in the proceedings before the grand jury of the county, and afterward in a trial in open court, testimony would be brought out, which would be published before the world, as to the origin of the constant at-

tacks made upon the poor railway for whose rights they were making this struggle. And that testimony would be enough to place them advantageously before the great court of public opinion.

CHAPTER XXIII.

JOHN COUDERT had had but little to do with criminal law, in a practice not very long, but already, in its own line, very successful. But he had, in earlier life, met with grand juries once and again, in his experiences in the State of New York. Now that Mr. Scarlett permitted him to enter the room of the grand jury of Wilson County with him, he found many things in Western practice which were new to him: some which amused him, many which pleased him. Before half an hour was over, he felt that, if many formalities were omitted, which, to a tender-foot like himself, would have been pleasing, there was a distinct determination to come at justice, though they advanced at the quick-step, and with few impediments. The proceedings before a grand jury are not open to the public. They are conducted in definite and regular form, but with more of a conversational man-

ner, and, indeed, with more ease, than those of an established criminal court of the received pattern, when it rises above the methods of a simple justice's tribunal. It would not be fair to say that a grand jury administers law in the fashion of a Cadi in the "Arabian Nights." But there is more of the openness of what one might call the free interrogatory methods of the French courts, than we are all used to, in the somewhat reticent or suspicious habits of the more open criminal courts of America or of England.

It would be impossible, as the lawyers decided, to bring the incendiary station-master to trial again. He had been tried, and convicted, and was working out his sentence, too short, perhaps, for their notions of justice, but still a sentence assigned by the law. It was not in the county court at Dorcasville, therefore, that the inquiry was held which now interests us, but in Wilson County, at Coramville itself, the county town, where Walker, once inspector on the C. & O., had been arrested, and where, as the reader knows, were the central offices of that hard-pressed com-

pany. But Coudert saw, to his satisfaction, that Berlitz was present, and at his side another man, who was, as he rightly supposed, the station-master. They had been brought across as witnesses.

After hearing inquiries and listening to decisions in one or two other cases, in the very limited criminal calendar of the county, the foreman of the grand jury was told that nothing was left but the matter of the C. & O. Railroad. He was told, and the jury of course were told, that the prosecuting officer of the county would bring before them evidence to show that there was a criminal conspiracy between Obed Sherman Walker, who was present, who had been at the time of the alleged offence a division-inspector of cars on the C. & O., with one Benjamin Jefferson Mayberry, who was an engine-driver on the same road, and whom the attorney had hoped to bring forward at this time, but who had escaped, and with a switch-tender named Michael Sweeney, who had been killed in the collision which had resulted from the conspiracy. The jury were told that the case was the same case in

which their predecessors thirteen months before had made inquest, but where they had then refused to bring in any bill.

The attorney knew very well, he said, that this fact would prejudice the present jury against making a second inquiry, and he confessed that it ought to. But justice was justice, he said, even if long delayed. He knew that he was addressing the leading men of the county, and he knew that they were as anxious as he was, that Wilson County should not be known through the civilized world as the home of miscreants who went unpunished. The world knew Wilson County now, he said, by the terrible slaughter, called an accident, in which forty men and women, some of them sleeping in fancied security, had been of a sudden hurried into another world to meet the great Tribunal, which was the only Tribunal which knew no delays in justice. No true man in that county wished that the world should suppose that it had not manhood enough and courage enough to detect and to punish the wrong-doers. He had now in his possession what was, he was sure, sufficient evidence to

show to the jury who one of those wrongdoers was. It might be that the evidence as it was presented would implicate others. He was sure that, if the sheriffs of other counties were as active as their own sheriff had been, the man Mayberry might be brought before them, even before they were dismissed. The wretch Sweeney, who had, as the attorney believed, turned the fatal switch, which had led the train to its destruction, had himself gone on the instant to the august Tribunal of which the attorney had reminded them.

All of this address was rounded off and adorned with much more fustian than would ordinarily have been given to its decoration. But the presence of Scarlett, his distinguished chief, from the capital of the State, and of Coudert, whom he knew only as a New York lawyer brought in to assist Scarlett, did something to turn the head of the local official.

He then explained that he had put the case at the end of the calendar which he had prepared for the examination of the grand jury, because he had been waiting for an important witness, who had not, however, arrived. He

would go on without him as well as possible. At that very moment, however, the door of the room opened, and, led by an officer of the court, the great magnate of railroads came in. Neither Coudert nor Scarlett had ever seen him before, and, until this moment, Scarlett had not believed that he would come on any such summons as had been issued. Indeed, he felt that, in the very audacity of his appearance at such an inquiry, the man had scored an important point. He knew that the jury would be favorably impressed by the fact that a man whose goings and comings filled the world, was enough interested in Coramville and Wilson County, and the session of the criminal court there, and the truth or falsehood of certain charges about the smash-up, to leave Wall Street and the manipulation of politics, to be present at their requisition.

The witness was, in fact, the celebrated stock operator, Winfield Baal, who was, as Scarlett and Coudert were both sure, at the bottom of all the misfortunes of the C. & O. Neither of them had ever seen him, but neither of them had read a newspaper for five

years which had not done its part to contribute to the mystery which, in the eyes of ignorant people, surrounded him.

For the man himself, he was, perhaps, the most unpretending-looking man in the room. His dress was simple, and his manner quiet. You might have thought him a schoolmaster, a little unbusiness-like, who had come to make a copy of his father's will, and had turned to the left instead of going to the right, in the court-house. You would have said that he was one of the simple kind of men who are used to making such unpractical blunders.

After a moment's pause the attorney went on with his speech. The charge against Walker was that he had conspired with other persons to wreck a through freight train, known as 21, when it passed the Allendale station of the C. & O. The intent was to throw the train off the proper track, at a place where it would rush down a high embankment into the Willow Creek. In point of fact the night-express south crossed the trestle over Willow Creek just as the ill-fated freight train was crossing the down track, being behind time,

and trying to make up time so as to save an important connection. It had literally cut in two the freight train, which was crossing its track. In the collision its engine-driver and fireman were killed and nearly forty passengers and train-hands. No one supposed that this part of the calamity was intended by the conspirators. But it had followed upon it. And it was this awful fatality which had interested the world in the inquiry which they were pursuing. But in pursuing that inquiry they must remember that the prisoner had shown his purpose on, at least, one other occasion. In a certain sense the jury would have to conduct two inquiries.

And yet, in a larger sense, these two inquiries were one. The fated freight train—and he should show them why it was fated—had arrived at the station where it was wrecked four hours behind time. Had it been on time there would have been daylight, there would have been present half the people of the village, and all the station officers. The jury would soon learn that it was behind time because this man Walker meant that it

should be behind time. He was the inspector. He was the general inspector. Every man who had inspected the train at Adair had been appointed by him, and was under his orders. The jury would learn that at Adair, on this fatal day, Walker had refused the advice of his best subordinates. He had placed cars in that train which were not fit to go. "Gentlemen, they were not fit to stand on a sidetrack for hog-pens." Such a train never had started since railways were invented, according to the county attorney. So, as the brakemen would show them, the train had lost time all day. There had been hot boxes. There had been broken couplings. Cars had been in the wrong place, so that it took long to leave them at way-stations. "What business, in fact, had these way-cars to be in a through train at all? One of his minions placed them there."

For each of these failures he should have to produce a different witness, for he was engaged in that difficult business of proving a negative. But he would show them in seven different cases that this faithless inspector had

made himself personally responsible for the detail of omission or of commission which had resulted in this delay. This would be the first branch of their inquiry. He would then proceed, by another inquiry, to show them how this delay was connected with the terrible collision in which both trains were crushed, in what men were pleased to call the accident with which the world rang.

If the county attorney were given to a little fustian and mere decoration in his speech, yet he did his work well: he, or John Coudert behind him. The grand jury now had the benefit of the money which Coudert and his friends among the lambs of the C. & O. had contributed, for the expense of hunting up witnesses in a transaction which was now passing into history. There was a little host of these men. They were all sent out of the courtroom before the inquiry began, and they came in, one by one, to tell their stories. They were men of every grade of intelligence, as they were men of very different positions. Man after man told his different story of particular failure where he had warned Walker

and where Walker had sent him about other business. In five separate cases the witnesses were brought under Coudert's examination to say that they had told the boss that the car was not fit to go. In each case the boss had sworn at the man ; generally, indeed, giving him the same instruction, to "go to hell."

In one instance, indeed, a witness of literary turn produced his diary, in which he had written when he went home to supper: "Had a row with the boss. Told him the through freight would go to hell before morning." It was this part of the inquiry which John Coudert had personally conducted in these hot summer weeks. As it went on, Mr. Winfield Baal sat quietly, sometimes listening to the witnesses with interest, sometimes reading his New York newspaper, and twice writing letters on a pocket-pad, which he had with him, as if they had been suggested to him by something which he had read. It was not till this branch of the inquiry was closed, and the prosecuting officer said that it was closed, and that he should now proceed to the other branch of the inquest, that Baal asked him,

perfectly civilly, if he could not arrange the inquiry so that his testimony might be taken before the departure of the afternoon express for St. Louis. "You will understand better than I can," he said, "for I have no idea why I am called here at all. But I have too much respect for this county and its citizens, not to obey their call, even at some personal inconvenience." He said this without any sneer or irony, and, indeed, there was something in his look, as he surveyed the room gravely, which would have given a stranger the impression that, after years of travel and care and anxiety, Mr. Baal had found in a corner room in the court-house of Coramville the place that best filled his noblest conceptions of architecture, of comfort, and of fitness for the purpose of life. Coudert could not but observe that at the moment of Baal's arrival in the court room the face of the prisoner had lighted up with relief and satisfaction. Every one else was looking at Baal; but Coudert was looking at Walker. When again, after the long and tedious testimony, Baal made this courteous request of the county attorney, Walker again

sat up in his chair as if he were tired no longer, and the moment of his release had come.

Coudert was more sure than ever, if possible, that the two men were in the same boat, and that the guilt of the one was the guilt of the other.

CHAPTER XXIV.

AT this moment Mr. Scarlett, the attorney for the State, rose, and said to Mr. Baal that the government would be able to meet his wishes.

“My brother has confided to me,” he said, “the investigations into this part of the case, and I know the witnesses personally. The gentlemen of the grand jury may not recollect that, within a fortnight of the time of the collision, of which we have thus far been tracing the history, a station was burned, under circumstances which excited general curiosity. An effort was made to secure justice in that matter, and the station-master was imprisoned, together with a traveller who was at the spot at the time, who was supposed to be an accomplice. We shall show to you, gentlemen, that, within a few days before the burning of the station, the station-master and the man Walker here were in close conference in the station

itself, and we shall show you that Mr. Winfield Baal, the president of the Great Midland Company, was in conference with them. This conference was held between the hours of twelve and one o'clock at night, not a time when the presidents of railroads are apt to consult the subordinates of other and rival roads. We have not included Mr. Baal in the charge which we make of conspiracy, between Black, the station-master, and Walker, who is before you, and the engine-man, who has thus far escaped us. But we are very desirous to know from Mr. Baal what passed in the interview to which I have alluded. As an unprejudiced third party," and here there was a certain scorn in Mr. Scarlett's manner, "he will be able to give to the jury testimony which will be of interest to them. Mr. Baal, you may take the stand."

At this little address it was clear to everybody who looked on that Mr. Baal was startled. He crossed the room and took the stand with an affected ease, but it was quite clear to every man on the jury, as it was clear to each of the counsel, that his ease was only affected. He

took the oath, however, calmly, and with a reverential manner, and bowed to Mr. Scarlett, to intimate that he was ready for any questions.

The first question which was put to him was not what he had expected. He had supposed, in the rapid moments he had had for thought, that he should be asked where he was on the night in question. But Mr. Scarlett said :

“What passed between Walker and Black in the interview to which I have alluded ?”

To this question Mr. Baal's answer was :

“How can you expect me to remember where I was on a given night fifteen months ago ? I do not sleep twice in the same bed for ten successive nights, perhaps ; and now you ask me where I was on a particular evening.”

Mr. Scarlett replied quietly :

“I have not asked you where you were. I asked you what passed between Walker and Black.” And thus, in their first encounter, Mr. Baal was overthrown, and a little ruffled. So soon as he had recovered himself, however, he spoke, in a dignified way, with perfect scorn of the attorney's question. How should

he know what passed in the station of a road with which he had nothing to do? It was his misfortune that he often had to use the line of the C. & O. road. He was sorry, for, in his opinion, it was a line very badly run, and, so far as he could judge from the testimony which he had been permitted to hear, it was not a wonder that passengers disliked it and avoided it. But the supposition that he was in one or another station, when he could possibly avoid being there, was absurd.

Mr. Scarlett put several ingenious questions, trying to draw the witness from this position, but entirely in vain. Mr. Baal said again and again that the supposition was ridiculous; that, although he knew the station in question perfectly well, because he passed it three or four times a year as he went east and west, he had not set foot in it since the day of the County Fair, four or five years before. He remembered that he was there then, because at that time he had been asked to make a speech at the dinner.

“In point of fact,” he said, “I must have been in the sleeping-car every time I have

passed through that town for the last four years. For it is my habit to go to sleep at nine every evening, and I know the schedule well enough to know that the trains in each direction pass there after that hour."

With this ingenious mathematical statement he smiled rather malignly on the foreman, and then looked at Mr. Scarlett, as if to ask if there were any other testimony that could be expected from him.

Scarlett said that he would not ask him to keep the stand any longer. "But I shall have occasion to call you again, and I have no objection to your hearing what our other witnesses say." He accordingly called in the next witness, who was in waiting. The examination was fairly dramatic.

"Mr. Stevenson, are you the conductor of the night-express on the Toothed Lightning?"

"No, sir. I am the station-master at Adair. I was the conductor on the night-express till last January."

"Will you tell these gentlemen whom you know of the persons in this room who are not sitting on the grand jury?"

“I know you, sir, I know Mr. Coudert, and I know Mr. Baal,” bowing to Mr. Baal.

“How long have you known Mr. Baal?”

“I do not remember when I did not know him, sir. He often used to pass over the road. He is the president of the Great Midland, I think. He was the president of the Great Midland, and travelled through upon their pass.”

“Did you see him on the night of the fourth of June last year?”

“I did, sir.”

“Where did you see him?”

“He gave me a ticket for St. Louis on the night-express. I noticed the ticket because I knew he could travel on a pass, and he generally did.”

“Was he dressed as he was usually dressed?”

“No, sir. He was dressed in a heavy ulster, with a Scotch cap. But I knew him. He unbuttoned his ulster when he gave me the ticket, and I knew the pin he wore. I had noticed it the week before, when he came out with me from St. Louis. I was surprised when he left the train at Homer.”

“You are sure that he left the train at Homer?”

“I know he did, because I spoke of it at the office at Adair. I spoke of it to Malcolm, who was then ticket-master, and Malcolm left Adair the next day. He told me that night that he had got a rise, and he has been the general ticket-agent at Pinzon ever since.”

Here Mr. Baal rose in his seat, and said :

“This good fellow is entirely mistaken. I know him perfectly, and he is a very intelligent officer, but he has wholly mistaken his man.”

This was irregular, but, naturally enough, it was passed over. Mr. Scarlett then called Black, who came in with a great-coat over him, which covered his prison uniform.

A few questions showed that he was in prison for the incendiarism. With great volubility he declared that the evidence was all false on which he had been convicted. Scarlett attempted to make him give some account of an interview, the week before, with Mr. Baal. But the man was perfectly firm in denying any such interview, and any hopes that Scarlett

had had of confusing him proved quite vain. The attorney then produced, however, a scrap of paper, and said :

“ Mr. Black, this paper was found at the bottom of your desk. Will you read it to the jury ? ”

Black was evidently confused. He took the paper, began to read, and said he had not his glasses and could not read well.

“ It is not badly written,” said Mr. Scarlett. “ The foreman can read it to the jury.” And the foreman read :

“ Walker has the round-house on the Great Midland, Black has the station at Americus, —— has the inspec——, Sweeney has two hundred and f—— ”

The paper was torn across, so that the jagged end broke the words which were not fully spelled.

“ We shall show you, gentlemen,” said Scarlett to the jury, “ where this paper was found. It was found under a false bottom in the station-master’s desk, and was only found there after the trial on which he has been imprisoned. We expect to prove to you that the

words that are written there are in the handwriting of Mr. Baal, whose testimony you have just now heard. Here are five letters of his, signed with his name, and on the office paper of the Great Midland. In these letters you will find, marked with red ink by ourselves, the word 'inspector,' the word 'Black,' the word 'station,' and the word 'round-house;' and we ask you to observe the way in which he would have written the word 'Sweeney' as you will find it in the word 'Swatara.' It is that Mr. Baal may explain the resemblances of this handwriting at this period of the inquiry, that we have summoned him as a witness here."

At this Mr. Baal expressed some indignation. It seemed he was trapped into a discussion of his own personal character. If the attorneys of the Cattaraugus and Opelousas Road had any charges to make against him let them make them. His office was perfectly well known, and nobody supposed he would run away—this with a sneer. His attorneys were thus and thus and so and so; and any communication might be made to them. And

at this he looked round as if he were about to leave.

“Not quite yet,” said Mr. Scarlett, “we have several questions to put to you. Do I understand Mr. Baal to say that he knows nothing of this writing?”

“I have already said that I never saw the man Black before I came into this room. What have I to do with the lower officers of the Cattaraugus and Opelousas?”

“If Mr. Baal declines to testify to the writing I will call the attention of the foreman and of the jury to this slip of paper,” said Mr. Scarlett. He stepped forward himself to the foreman, who held in his hand the half-sheet which he had read to the jury, and gave to him the other half-sheet, which had been torn from it. It was perfectly clear from the indentures that the sheets fitted together.

“I have told you where we found the first of these sheets, gentlemen,” said Mr. Scarlett, standing close in the presence of the jury. “The other half came to us by mail last week from the wife of the witness Berlitz, who will

now be called, that he may tell you how it came to him.”

Our old friend Gerhard Berlitz was then put on the stand. Mr. Scarlett handed him the second half of the sheet, and asked him if he recognized it. Berlitz was obliged to testify in German, but one of the jury who understood German and English was sworn as an interpreter, and this caused but a moment's delay. Berlitz looked with surprise upon the letter, and said it was the letter he wrote his little girl as soon as he knew where she was. “I had no other paper,” said he. “The prison-keeper had given me one sheet, and I had used that for my wife, and this sheet was a piece I had had with some tobacco in it ever since the morning I was arrested. I smoothed it out and wrote upon it.”

“Tell the jury where the sheet came from,” said Scarlett. And Berlitz said, without the least hesitation, that he had taken the piece of paper from between the rails as he walked up and down on the night when he was arrested. He had a piece of tobacco which he wanted to save for the next day, and he explained to the

jury at some length his reasons for wrapping this tobacco and tying it with a string. When he was arrested and imprisoned his other effects had been taken from him, but he had begged for the tobacco, and had been permitted to keep it. So he had the paper among the little fixtures of his cell in the House of Correction, and, wishing to write to his daughter, he had written his letter on the blank page.

Scarlett then turned the page, showed to the jury that the words were finished which had been unfinished on the paper he had first put in their hands. He then called their attention to the fact that this was a sheet of the ruled paper of the Great Midland Railway, and that it was a sheet of the form used in the president's office.

“ We do not ask you, gentlemen, to convict anybody on this testimony. We shall introduce this piece of paper, if you find a bill, before the jury which is to try this man Walker, and we shall introduce it as a part of the evidence which shows that the Great Midland Company is responsible for all the series of accidents which have fallen upon this railway.”

John Coudert thought that Mr. Baal looked pale, but there was nothing in his manner to show that he was not the most unconcerned person in the room.

Gerhard Berlitz then continued his testimony. But really there was nothing in it which had not come out on the case of incendiarism before, and it was impossible for either of the attorneys to draw from him anything but the most outside account of what had happened to him. Before he left the stand Mr. Scarlett said to him :

“Mr. Berlitz, when your clothes were taken from you at the prison this pin was found among them ;” and he handed to him a small pin with a single diamond in it. “Are you in the habit of wearing pins like this ?”

Berlitz started as he looked at the pin, and for a moment seemed surprised. Then he said, almost as a man remembers a dream :

“Sir, I never wore the pin. I put it in my sleeve-cuff that I might save it. I found the pin between the slats of the seat on which I tried to sleep that night, when I was waiting for the train, before the fire. That was when I

went to the station-master. I went to tell him about the pin. But his office was shut, and I put it in my sleeve. When the fire came I forgot the pin was there.”

Mr. Scarlett crossed the room to Mr. Baal, and showed to him the pin. “Do you remember this pin? Have you ever seen it before?”

Baal looked upon it with scorn, and said :

“Of course I have never seen it before. I have never seen any of these people who are talking here.”

“So you said,” said Mr. Scarlett ; and then, walking to the foreman, he said, “If you will look on the back of the pin you will see the letters ‘W. B.’ These letters stand for ‘Winfield Baal.’ Our next witness, Mr. Foreman, is the jeweller in New York who sold the pin to Mr. Baal six years ago, and who, at his orders, marked the back of it with the letters which you see. Call Mr. Erastus Tiffany.”

As Mr. Erastus Tiffany entered the room there was a little pressure and confusion among people who tried to enter with him, but who were kept out by the officer at the door. When order was restored, and Mr. Tiffany took the

stand, it was observed that Mr. Baal was not in the room. Mr. Scarlett whispered to an officer, whom he directed to follow him, but the officer did not find Mr. Baal. Mr. Baal's valise was never taken from the hotel where it had been left. And from that moment to this moment Mr. Baal has never been seen in the United States of America.

In the next morning's issue of the New York papers the announcement was made with flaring headlines that, after an examination before the grand jury of Wilson County, in the State of Franklin, Mr. Winfield Baal, the distinguished president of the Great Midland Company, had disappeared. His luggage was at the Pontiac House, but Mr. Baal had not appeared to claim it. The papers regretted that, owing to the antiquated, prehistoric code of the State of Franklin, reporters had not been permitted to be present at the hearing before the grand jury. But it was generally understood in the town of Coramville that the hearing had related to an alleged conspiracy in which the Great Midland, under the direction of Mr. Baal, had brought about sundry wrecks

and misfortunes to the Cattaraugus and Opelousas. At immense length the history of the accident of fifteen months before was related. In one way and another a column was filled with stating what the journals in question did not know, but what they thought the public ought to know. The upshot of the whole, however, was that Mr. Winfield Baal, fearful of the wrathful citizens of Wilson County, and more fearful of arrest and imprisonment, had left the town of Coramville. One intelligent reporter was sure he had seen him in St. Louis, two others were certain that he had been in Chicago, a fourth had visited his office in New York, to find that he had not been there for a week. And this was the beginning of a series of headline articles with regard to Mr. Winfield Baal, which continued for a fortnight. It was then made sure that he had arrived safely in Montreal within twenty-four hours after he had left Coramville, and that at Montreal he had disappeared. Whether at this moment Mr. Baal is living in a back province in Brazil, or in some unknown city in Spain, is a question which cannot be answered by this author.

When Sybil Knox heard, as she did hear at once, of this dramatic conclusion to the terrible drama in which her father's railroad had so nearly been the Iphigenia of the sacrifice, she had the satisfaction of knowing that her own promptness, in sending to John Coudert the scrap of paper over which she had found little Clärchen Berlitz puzzling, had added one more to the threads which were twisted into the clew by which all parties worked their way to the daylight.

CHAPTER XXV.

WHEN it was first whispered, and afterward publicly announced, in the room where the grand jury held its inquiry, that the great Mr. Baal had fled from the town, "leaving his baggage at the Pontiac"—and this phrase was always added—every aspect of the case of the C. & O. was changed. The attorneys suggested an adjournment, and the foreman of the jury, with some pretext of more testimony, consented that the hearing should be finished the next day.

The time was favorable for approaching the incendiary station-master again. And when Scarlett talked with him privately, and made it clear to him that he had nothing farther to hope from any loyalty to Baal, he broke down. He admitted that there had been a interview in which Baal had promised him, and had told him that he might promise the others, the places and the money named on the torn sheet

of paper. Baal had refused to give him the paper, and had told him that the others must trust him. But when he had remonstrated, Baal had torn off the heading of the sheet, and had given him what was left. By some carelessness Baal had thrown away his part without tearing it. In a halting way Black told this to the foreman and the jury the next morning.

But the interest in these poor wretches was at an end. They had merely been the catspaws of the great operator, who had in one blunder thrown away, so far as his own life was concerned, all the successes of years.

To Sybil Knox, John Coudert telegraphed, "Victory. Your scrap of paper was enough. I will write at length, but I want you to know that all is well." To Judge Kendrick, who was again in New York, he telegraphed, "B. has broken down and fled the country. All goes well." As it happened, when this dispatch arrived, Convers Knox, the cross kinsman who had insisted that Mrs. Knox should sell out her interest in the C. & O., and when she refused to do so had thrown up her af-

fairs, was in Judge Kendrick's office. Judge Kendrick lost his head for a moment, and read the dispatch to Mr. Knox, who was giving him some details which it was necessary that he should know regarding Mrs. Knox's affairs. Convers Knox excused himself as soon as he could, and going to Wall Street bought C. & O. securities as largely as he dared, and much more largely than he should have done, on the strength of the information which he had received. This was the first intimation which "the street" had that anything had happened to the poor struggling railroad. From that time, however, it may be said that its interests steadily advanced, and that it recovered the honorable position which, in elder days, it had held among investors. Convers Knox made more money than it is worth while to tell on the accident by which Judge Kendrick had put into his hands this bit of information. For the judge himself, as for John Coudert, Scarlett, and Governor Needham, the whole business was a sort of sacred trust; and any one of them would have been ashamed to stain his hands in any transaction by which he should

make money from the simple administration of justice. And when we have said this, we may relieve the reader from following the details of law or of the exchange.

John Coudert himself could not do what he would have been glad to do—take an express train, telegraph in advance for private trains to be ready for him at every way-station, and so fly, faster than Aladdin ever flew, from Coramville to Atherton, as lovers will, even though they be more than thirty years of age. He had his duties still. He had to remain with his “Brother Scarlett,” and with the other brother who was the county attorney of Wilson County, till the presentation of the grand jury was complete, and until a true bill of indictment had been found against Walker, the car-inspector. But, as has been intimated, all these proceedings were languid indeed, compared with those with which the inquest had begun. It seemed a shame, indeed it seemed mortifying, that poor Walker and Black should be paying this penalty where the sin of the other was so much greater than theirs. It seemed hard that they, who had been led into

temptation, should suffer when the tempter escaped.

For Gerhard Berlitz, of course, the revelations made before the grand inquest meant liberty. It required but a day for Scarlett to advise "jolly Ned Needham" that Berlitz's testimony had proved of the first value in the cause of justice, and that, by Black's own confession, Berlitz had no connection whatever with the fire, excepting that he was the first person to give an alarm. By the return of the mail, therefore, there came a full pardon from the governor for the poor German, and a public announcement was made, with all solemnity, of the regret of the executive that a verdict which was evidently a mistaken verdict should have condemned him, and that he had suffered so long. The governor himself sent a handsome present to the poor fellow, and other gentlemen in the State made it their business to write to express their mortification and regret for what had happened. In every way possible, he was assured that his reputation could receive no stain, and that he went out as

a free man, with the confidence and respect of all who knew him. When he was well shaven, and dressed in the Sunday best of happier times, which had been kept for him in the store-houses of the benevolent prison-keeper, Berlitz looked like another man. And when Coudert shook hands with him, as he took the express train for Buffalo, Albany, and so for Atherton, envying him the good fortune which was to conduct him to that paradise, it seemed impossible that he was the same dogged, down-cast, and wretched creature whom, but so few weeks before, he had called for his first interview in the harness-room.

Rightly or wrongly, the attorney-general, Scarlett, declined to press before the jury the original proposal, by which Black might have been included as one of the conspirators with Walker for the wreck of the train. "It is a bad mess," he said, "the whole of it. We are punishing one man for the sin of another, and the other has got away. Black has given the State, on the whole, very valuable testimony, and I will be no party to seeing that he has an-

other term of confinement after this one is over." And with this rough bit of what perhaps savors of Lynch law, Black returned to his cell, and to his remaining months of sentence.

CHAPTER XXVI.

A TELEGRAM is sent from some scene of wild excitement, of hope and joy, or of dead despair. It arrives in a place with another atmosphere, of which the surroundings are so different that you can hardly believe that they belong to the same world. A war-correspondent writes his dispatch on a drum-head, in the midst of shot and bursting shells. And it comes to a quiet attic, where a quiet night-editor is trying to determine whether his public on the morrow will be more interested in a Bethel Sunday-school excursion or in the match in which Hopkinson's School beat the High School. Such was the fate of John Coudert's dispatch to Sybil Knox. It left the heated frenzy of surprise, doubt, despair, on the one side, and victory on the other. It was read in Mrs. Knox's parlor, where the Order of Send Me had its first monthly meeting after her initiation.

The meeting had been reverently opened by the little ritual service, and the secretary had read her short report, which could hardly help being funny, which combined the various suggestions and narratives of the last meeting. The verbal reports of different committees were received, and then Mrs. Carrigan, with a good deal of feeling, said :

“Girls all—and Mrs. Knox will not mind if we call her a girl—before we come on regular work there is one thing I must say, and I will clear my mind now. There is not one word on the records about Mrs. Edwards. That must be right, because what records are for, I believe, is to conceal the truth of history, so that the next generation may not know how we live and move and earn our living. And I am glad for many reasons that poor Mrs. Edwards—dear Mrs. Edwards, I am going to say—does not appear there. But I know, and you know, that Mrs. Edwards and her gossiping tongue have cost this Order a good deal of time this fall.

“Now, shortly, what I want to say is this. The poor dear soul came to see me yesterday,

and she had a good cry. She cried, and before she was done I cried. She said that she was—well, she said more than was worth while about that—she was ever so much obliged for what Mr. Carrigan did for her poor boy. The boy is all right; he is in the clothes-pin factory at Asney, or is going to be there. And she says he has learned his lesson, and will know how to hold his tongue when he has nothing to say.

“I tried to make her laugh, and I told her that that was the greatest lesson that any one ever learned, and the hardest. But she would not laugh. She said so. She said, so sadly, that she wished she could laugh as she used to. But she said she should never be so light-hearted again. That a boy of hers should be in prison—that was terrible.

“But she had come to say to me, as if I were a sort of priestess, you know, that she had learned her lesson too. And she wanted to make me say that I would publicly announce, at the sewing society and wherever I chose, that she saw her fault and that she would mend it. And poor I—I was crying as

hard as she was—and I tried to say that she judged herself too hardly; and the words choked in my throat. For she has not; she has done no end of mischief, and she knows it, and I know it. So I said nothing, but just kissed her. And that is all, girls. But that is the reason why I call her dear Mrs. Edwards, because I am so sorry for her. Now there is not a word of this to go on our books. But the Recording Angel has it on his book already, for it is by far the most important thing that Atherton has shown this summer.

“Now, Mrs. Knox, if you like to tell us how to talk French, we will learn.”

So the girls, who had been surprised to hear the impetuous lady say “dear Mrs. Edwards” of the woman whom, the week before, she had most disliked of their little circle, had their answer.

Mrs. Knox and Miss Robideau plunged into the story of the Canadian reading-room, with its surprises, its many failures, and its occasional successes. All the little company listened and laughed or sighed as the varying waves of the story lifted or depressed them.

It was in the midst of this that they saw the telegraph boy's bicycle. Everybody knew him, and his yellow envelope was brought in.

Sybil Knox took the dispatch as she always did. A telegram always frightens a woman. But she—she had that cruel feeling that she had gone through the worst that life could offer, and that she could never have utterly bad news again. She did not tear open the cover. She signed the receipt first, bade them tell the boy to wait, and then excused herself as she took the dispatch to the next room. When she returned, Mrs. Carrigan, watching her with all the instincts of a real friend, knew that one of the great successes of life had been won.

But she was a friend too true even to ask before they went away what it was which made Sybil Knox more gentle, more active, more friendly, more wise, more sympathetic, more everything that is good than even she had ever seemed before.

And after a few days, late at night, the Knox horses and carriage were at the station

at Quarry Village, and in the carriage were Frau Berlitz and the wondering little Clärchen. And when the dazed and doubtful Gerhard stumbled out of the car, and looked round him on the platform, his wife saw him and rushed for him, flung her arms round him and kissed him, and little Clärchen pulled his arm and cried out, "Clärchen auch, Clärchen auch! Hier bin ich, hier bin ich!"

And, to Berlitz's astonishment, he was made to sit in a carriage as grand as that of the hereditary forester, and to drive through forests more magnificent than the hereditary forester ever saw. Clärchen was happily asleep on her father's knees; his happy wife rested her head on his shoulder. She said little, he said little, but the years of wretchedness were swept away and the two began to live again. Sometimes they roused up to ask this question or that. But each of them knew that this talking was rather a function or form. It was to deceive the coachman rather than to deceive themselves. For themselves it was enough that they were together. "Together" was the whole.

It was almost a week later that John Coudert appeared at the Chittenden, and, after he had reformed his dress, asked the way to Mrs. Knox's, and walked up to the house. He tried not to seem eager to the "attentive clerk," who was wondering what business sent him to Atherton. Fortunately for him, the smiling and beaming Clärchen, who recognized him in a moment, when she came to the door, said that Mrs. Knox was at home.

Had he said what he came to say and longed to say, when she came smiling into the parlor and gave him both her hands, it would have been :

"Dear Mrs. Knox, I have tried for the last six months to live without you, and I cannot."

But the proprieties of modern life hindered him. He could only accept her ready congratulations. He threw off his light overcoat as he was bidden. He answered, in a fashion, all her proper questions about his journey, about the hotel, and the rest. And when this regulation "opening" had been well pushed

through, each moving the right pawn as usage directs, she said :

“Now tell the whole, Mr. Coudert. We have all the afternoon. No one shall interrupt us.” And she even struck the bell, and said in German to the little girl, “Mr. Coudert has come on important business. You must say that I am very much engaged.”

And so John Coudert, who had something else so near his heart, had to go back to that long story of which the reader knows a little. The reader, more fortunate than Mr. Coudert, has had the kindly help of this author, who has omitted from the narration all that is not absolutely important. But John Coudert is a good story-teller, and he had a good listener. How he tried to guess, as he talked, whether all her interest were interest in the story or in Berlitz, how he tried to hope from her smile or from her tone of voice, or from her eye, that there was some little interest in him. Was she glad of success, or was she glad that he had succeeded? Was she sorry for failure, or was she sorry that he had failed? Who should say?

She did not say. She was a true woman, and after the two hours of their talk her secret was her own.

She touched the bell. "Clärchen, tell Mrs. Chittenden to send us some tea, and bid them send round the carriage. I am going to take two nice girls to drive, Mr. Coudert, and I am so pleased to have you for the fourth. We will show you our prettiest drive. And then you must come back and dine."

And she did so. She had promised Blanche Wilderspin and Mary to call for them. There was time for a perfect sunset view, and for the drive home just so as not to be late for dinner. She had sent for Colonel Carrigan and Mrs. Carrigan, and till he bade her good-evening and went away in the Carrigan's carriage, he did not have another word with her alone.

"May I come round in the morning to take you to the marble quarries?" said the hospitable Colonel Carrigan, as they parted at the hotel.

Horror was in the thought! A morning at a marble quarry, which he must spend at the Knox house? Never! He mumbled some-

thing about his letters, and writing for the mail, but had to hear the colonel say he should come round to make plans in the morning.

And that night he had to spend in wondering. He knew no more of his fortunes with Sybil Knox than he knew the night before, when he tossed and pitched on the billows of a Wagner car.

The next morning he shook off Colonel Carrigan, and rang again at Sybil Knox's door. Was he a little pale as he greeted her? And was she? She did not give him both hands again.

And he would not even sit down as she asked him to do.

“No,” said he, “not yet. Perhaps you will not want me to stay,” this with a sick smile. “This time I have not come to talk of wrecks and wreckers, but of myself and you. Dear Mrs. Knox, when I bade you good-bye in Europe I longed to tell you so. All summer long I would have told you so. But I had no right to do so. I have no right to say so now, but I cannot help saying it. I have come to Atherton to say so. To say how lonely I have been all summer, be-

cause I knew you were here, and I—oh, so far away.”

And she looked down, and she looked up. She looked down and blushed, she looked up and smiled.

And she said, “It is so good that you are here now.”

THE END.

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