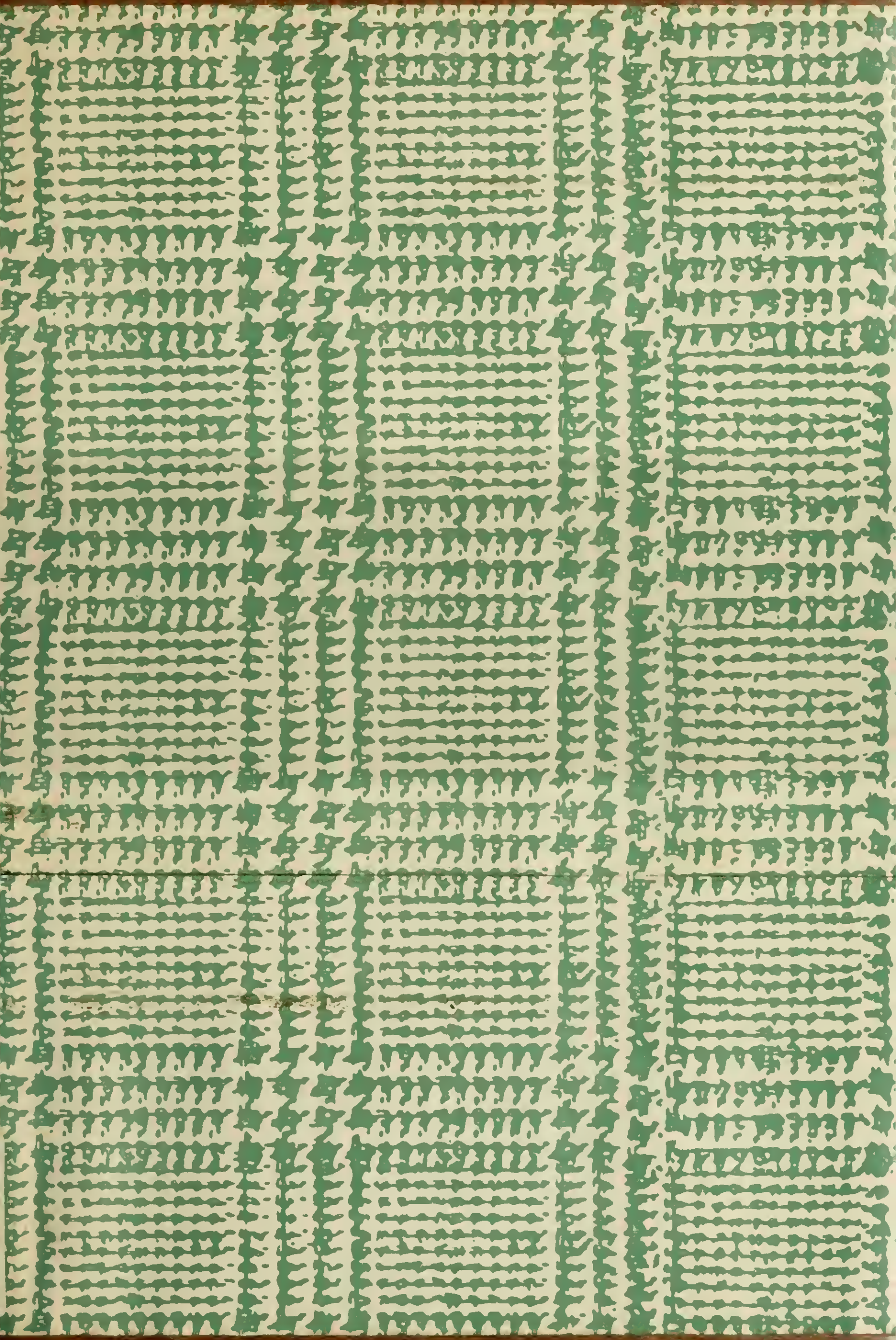

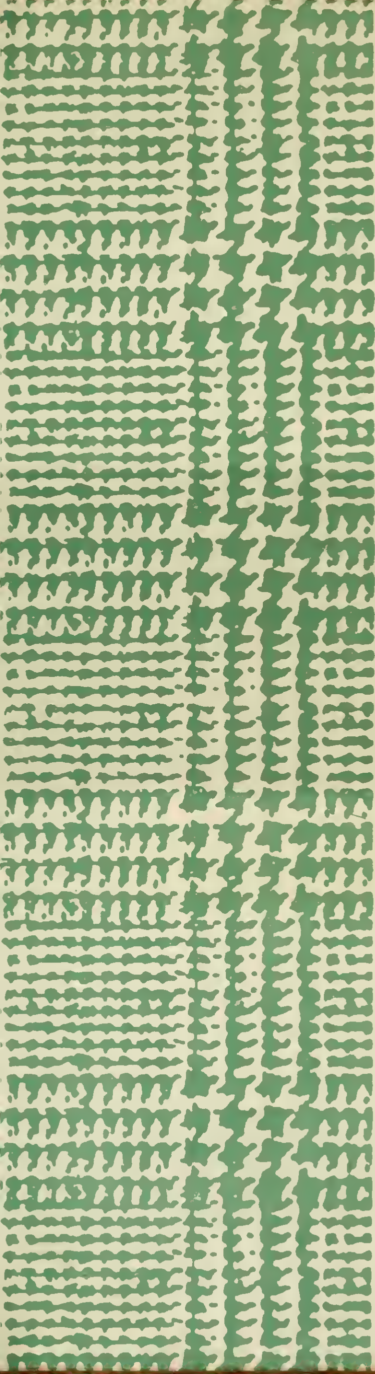

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Faithfully yours
James R. Cocke

Blind Leaders of the Blind:

THE ROMANCE OF A BLIND LAWYER

BY

JAMES R. COCKE M.D.

AUTHOR OF "**HYPNOTISM**" ETC.

> "Which have eyes to see and see not;
> They have ears to hear and hear not"
>
> EZEKIEL

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BLIND LEADERS OF THE BLIND

CHAPTER I

"AND WILL THEY TEACH ME TO SEE?"

During the year 1866 an estate at Catawba, Ala., was purchased by a successful country merchant, who by his shrewdness had withstood the losses of the Civil War. He had never been able to believe in the ultimate success of the South; and so when debts due him were paid in Confederate money, he lost no time in putting it into land; for he very justly argued, "The soldiers cannot carry off the ground, anyway."

Through the purchase of this estate, Colonel Southerly came into possession of some seven hundred acres of land, with a curiously constructed brick house, whose outer and internal arrangements forcibly illustrated the lack of architectural skill of the early settlers of the Southwest. It was situated upon a hill, and was originally designed for a tavern. On the north, east, and south were ranges of those peculiarly formed hills which are locally known as knobs. To the westward ran a long expanse of meadow, through which crept lazily a stream, which found its source at the base of the hill on which the strange-looking house was situated.

The owner of the estate was a self-made man. He had fine tastes in many respects, some of which he had acquired from his wife. He had married a woman of excellent family, whose characteristics were fortunately strong where her husband's were weak.

They had no children of their own, but had "raised" at different times some eight or nine orphan children. These children were relatives of either the husband or wife. At about the time of the purchase of the present property they assumed the care of another child, a son of one of Mrs. Southerly's brothers, then only about five years old. He was an invalid, and was deprived of his sight as well, and even at that early age gave evidence of many peculiar traits.

The little fellow speedily became the pet of the household. He was petulant, and at times self-willed, but warm-hearted and affectionate; and his peculiar affliction, together with his lovable nature, brought him very close to the hearts of the entire household. His mother had died soon after his birth; and his father, Robert Netherland, for whom he was named, a successful lawyer in a prominent Southern city, followed her a year or two later.

When Robert reached his new home at Catawba, carpenters and painters were turning the house topsy-turvy, much to his delight; for the noise and stir was a delightful change from the quiet and monotonous life he had been leading. Colonel Southerly's negroes were building their log cabins upon the newly acquired plantation; for though they knew they were legally free, they were faithful to their old master, and proud to stay with him.

The repairs of the house having been completed, Mrs. Southerly, always practical, began to consider how she should educate her new charge. The child's loss of sight, together with his extreme frailty of temperament, made her dread to send him away from home to a school for the blind. After consideration, two raised print books were ordered; and she determined to teach him, as she said, "At least to read, if not to write." She would therefore call Robert to her, take him upon her knee, and guide his hand over the embossed alphabet. Often with tears in her eyes she would exclaim, "How I wish he could get back his sight! It is so hard, so slow."

To which the Colonel would say, "Never mind, Mattie; when the little fellow grows stronger, I'll take him up North, and there find some one who may possibly help his eyes."

One day in June a man got off the train at the "flag station," and sought out the house of Colonel Southerly. It was easily found. He represented himself as an oculist, and told the Colonel that his family physician, Dr. Shootmaster, had recommended him to call and examine the child's eyes. He then produced such testimonials of his power and skill as made a strong impression. The family physician was sent for. As he was equally impressed, he foolishly consented that an operation should be performed upon the eyes of the blind child, the operator promising to restore one of them to perfect sight, and render the other somewhat better. As he was a thorough charlatan, he naturally did not understand the use of chloroform or ether, declaring them unnecessary, and that there would be but little pain caused by the operation.

Colonel Southerly took the little one on his lap, laid his head upon his breast, and, while, choking back the tears, held the child's hands firmly, and sternly commanded him to sit perfectly still. The charlatan turned back the eyelids with a pencil, and proceeded to scrape their sensitive under-surfaces with the sharp point of an instrument. When the eye was covered with blood, he pretended to operate upon the ball as well, touching it lightly with an instrument. He then poured some black solution from a bottle (which was afterwards found to be nitrate of silver), and with it painted the tissues he had previously scarified.

The little one controlled himself, and uttered not a sound; but the pain that the medicine caused gave him almost superhuman strength, and a negro was called in to help hold him.

After washing off the eyes with cold water, the oculist declared that "that will do for to-day," and said that he would come and operate upon the other one on the morrow. The child was put to bed; and an old negro, Thomas, was stationed to care for him. In one of the upper front rooms of the house he lay writhing and tossing with pain, while the white-haired negro, leaning over him, prayed fervently that God would restore his sight.

Robert had been the care of this negro since coming to Colonel Southerly's house, and the old man warmly predicted "dat de Lawd would open his eyes some day, and he'd see clear;" so he said to the little one, "Be still, honey; lie still; keep yo' head still now. De Lawd lets you suffer a little pain now, but you'll see on de morrow;" and the child fell asleep, and the golden summer day ripened, and the sun climbed to the zenith. While sleeping, Robert was suddenly awakened by a strange noise; at first a hum, and then a clatter, and then the blowing of a mighty horn. He sprang up in bed with a frightened shriek; but the old colored man said, "Why, Lawd a massy, chile, it's nothin' but de bees a-swarmin', and de boys blow de horns and beat de tin pans to settle 'em;" and as the child sank upon the pillow, Mrs. Southerly, quite overcome by the operation, put her head in at the door, and startled at the blanched white face, rushed into the room, crying, "O Robbie, what have they done to you? Don't die, little one, don't die; we have none of our own, and cannot spare you."

The movement of the child had caused him such severe pain that for the moment he had fainted, and mistress and servant both thought he was dead; but when brandy was given him, he quickly revived, and with the return of consciousness came a fearful, grinding pain. It grew with each returning thought, and a strange boring, pressing, squeezing, as though some instrument were being forced by a ruthless hand through his eye to the back of his head; and then, as reason gave way to delirium, he shrieked, "Is this sight? Must I suffer to see? All the things in the room are forcing themselves through my head. Oh, tell me, tell me, Aunt Mattie, is this the way you see? Must everything that I see pull and grind, and then go through my eye to the back of my head? Can the big bureau, and the washstand, and all the chairs go through? It feels as though everything in the room lay upon my eyes;" and his whole being was again wrapped in fearful agony. Sound was but another form of pain. Everything which touched him gave him pain; and when it died away, worn out by its own excess, its phantom children murmured in his ear, and said, "'Tis sight, you will see! See! See! See! See! Morphine, morphine," he heard; and the little one recognized the voice of Dr. Shootmaster, the kind physician, who bade him sleep; and the world became a confused dreamland.

Robert recovered slowly from the effects of the operation upon his eyes. The sun rose and set for many, many days, but it brought no light to the sightless eyes of the little one, and gradually he resumed life's ordinary routine.

How monotonous a child's life is! How long to the little one is that period we call a day! Time indeed writes slowly upon the tablet of a child's mind, and the record of a day seems longer than the record of a week after man attains maturity. Truly our aggregated experiences shorten our days as we pass towards the winter of life.

What were the days of this child like? and what were the nights too, for that matter? The day was only a period of bustling activity, and the night a period of silence. Let us enter in fancy, a moment, the consciousness of this child. His eyes were not gladdened by the sight of merry picture-books. The light of day did not reveal to him a new and ever-broadening world. The warbling birds were creatures of music, and only existed in his consciousness as such.

One chilly afternoon in the autumn, when the northeast wind swept down from the mountains and brought with it some early snowflakes, a young negro stopped before the gate of Colonel Southerly's house, and asked if he might see little Robert, the blind boy, who came out attended by his faithful servant. The young negro spoke kindly and respectfully, and told the little boy he had been hunting out in the meadow, and that he had brought him a bird which he had killed for him. The child held out his hand eagerly, and took the velvety creature from the black man, and, feeling of its delicate form, exclaimed in wondering tones, "Is this the little creature that used to sing to me last summer?"

The negro, somewhat moved, answered, "No, massa; der are plenty of birds dat fly in de hebens, and I just shot dis one for yo' supper."

The other negro saw from the child's face that he was not pleased, and tactfully led him away. He was about to take the bird to give it to the cook, but Robert petulantly refused to part with it, and said he wanted to feel of it; and passing his hand over the bird, he asked, "Where does the voice come from? Where are all of those beautiful notes now?"

The old negro patted the child's cheek, and said, "Why, honey, de bird can't sing now, it's dead;" and gently took it from Robert, and, carrying it into the kitchen, ordered it cooked for his supper.

Robert sat down in his little split-bottomed armchair in front of the big open fire, and mused: "Can the little creature of silk sing as I have heard the birds sing? And can it fly? And how does it find its way through the air? I suppose the birds can see too, but I never heard that they did."

Then he listened to the wind, as it whistled and moaned; and then he wondered if the wind had eyes too, and could see its way; and then he wondered what seeing meant.

Just then he heard a man's voice say, "Whoa, whoa;" and in a moment he heard a knock on the front door (for there were no door-bells to be found in that region in those days), and the servant opened the door, and ushered Colonel Beaufort in. This genial, warm-hearted gentleman had been an officer in the Confederate army, and had brought with him from the war a horse which he had trained with especial care.

The colonel snatched Robert up in his strong arms, pressed the child's white cheek to his own ruddy one, looked into his sightless eyes with his big, kindly, warm blue ones, and, stroking his flaxen hair, said, "Look here, old boy; I've brought my horse, and I want you to see her."

"I have heard Aunt Mattie speak of her," said Robert.

As he spoke, the old negro wrapped a warm cloak around him, still in the arms of his friend, and putting a little cap upon his head, the colonel carried him out upon the veranda, and thence down the steps into the yard, and placed him upon the horse-block. He then called, "Jilt, come up and speak to Master Robert."

The beautiful bay creature came from across the road, whither she had wandered, and placed her warm lips close to the child's ear as though whispering to him. He was frightened a little at first; but, putting up his hands to feel of the head, was amazed when he found the length of the horse's neck, and the length of the mane, while the flakes of snow felt cold as they lit on the horse's mane and on his hands. The Colonel quickly detected the expression of surprise on the child's face, and asked him if he had never felt of a horse before. Now, the fact was the little blind child had no idea of the form and shape of a horse. All he knew of it was the sound of its hoofs upon the road, and its neigh. While he had several times been up in the saddle in front of different members of the family, it had never occurred to any of them that he could not form a correct mental picture of a horse, unless he felt of its whole very large body and legs and head.

The Colonel, noticing that the flakes were falling faster, put Robert in the saddle, and gave him the bridle, and told him that the horse would take him to the barn, and quietly placed himself in front of the horse to guide it, leaving the child to think all the while that he was guiding her himself. They all went off together, the attendant on one side, and the Colonel on the other, while little Robert was perched up in the saddle. They rode under the shed of the barn; and then the Colonel told Robert that he needn't try to fool him, that he always knew he could ride a horse if he would only try.

He lifted him down, and while doing so again pressed his wan cheek against his own.

"Now I'll show you a queer trick," he said.

He then commanded, "Attention!" and the horse's attitude was fixed. He commanded, "About face!" and the horse whirled, as though on a pivot. Again he commanded, "Right wheel!" and then, speaking to the horse, he said, "See, they are putting shot in the cannon over there. Fall!" The creature dropped on her knees as if dead. "Get up!" he commanded; and she arose. Opening the barn door, he commanded, "Charge!" The graceful animal shot through the door and away across the barnyard, and the merry-voiced Colonel called, "Come back, you rascal, the enemy is whipped;" and back she came, pacing rapidly.

The Colonel then wiped the horse off thoroughly with a cloth, and throwing a light blanket over her, patted her on the neck, and gave her a lump of sugar, then left her to the care of one of the negroes, a number of whom had assembled by this time. Then, suddenly snatching Robert up again, he put him up on his right shoulder, and walked rapidly back toward the house, the little one prattling all the time about the tricks of the beautiful horse. They entered the hall unbidden, and there met Colonel Southerly, who took Robert down from his perch.

After each had said "Howdy," and shaken hands, Colonel Southerly invited Colonel Beaufort to stay to supper, and all night if he liked; to which the colonel replied he reckoned he would, and then remarked that he would like to wash his hands.

After they had had supper, the two gentlemen smoked long-stemmed "Powhatan" clay pipes. Colonel Southerly was a great smoker, and very fond of Durham tobacco. He was also quite a politician; and while they smoked they discussed the national banking system, the price of hogs, and the probable candidacy of Horace Greeley for the presidency.

In the meantime little Robert sat upon a footstool by the side of Colonel Beaufort. Finally Colonel Beaufort turned to Colonel Southerly and said abruptly, "What will become of this blind child?"

The Colonel responded, "Oh, I shall provide for him. I am going to adopt him for my own."

"Do you know," said Colonel Beaufort, "that the reason for my visiting you to-night is to talk to you about this little boy? I know of a man who keeps a school for the blind; and I want you to send him there, if you think best after investigating it."

Mrs. Southerly quickly responded, "No, no; I cannot be parted from him. He is too delicate."

Colonel Beaufort reached over and took a large knot of hard pine from the wood-box, as the fire was getting low, and placed it upon the bed of coals. The resin in it readily took fire; and it blazed up brightly and illumined the group, — Mrs. Southerly, the two gentlemen, and the child. Colonel Beaufort drew a piece of paper from his pocket, and, gazing intently into the face of the child, began sketching it as he spoke.

"Look at that face, Mrs. Southerly," he said; "see the earnest, anxious look upon it. His spirit, imprisoned by the death of one of his senses, seeks to express its craving for knowledge through the eloquence of his face. Madam, I speak and hold you responsible. Before God, if you allow the chains of ignorance to bind his entombed, imprisoned soul, your sin will indeed be great."

Robert's face bore an expression of puzzled inquiry.

"What! will they teach me to see?" he asked.

"Yes, with your mind," the colonel replied.

Colonel Southerly took a book from his pocket, and asked for the address of this instructor of the blind.

Mrs. Southerly's heart was too full for speech, and she left the room ostensibly to attend to some household duties, and the party broke up for the night.

CHAPTER II

ELISHA STEELE, A SELF–MADE CAPITALIST

One winter evening Elisha Steele sat in the back parlor of his house on Beacon Street; and, looking out on the Charles River, he observed the ever-changing lights and shadows on the water. Mr. Steele was no artist, yet this scene gave him a sense of calm pleasure.

His early days had been spent in Connecticut, where he had learned the button trade before the days of so much machinery. After making buttons, he began peddling them. Mr. Steele was a shrewd man, and he soon discovered that he had a talent for making money in other ways than peddling buttons. So he added thread, needles, and cloth to his pack, and his fortune grew apace.

One day, while stopping at the house of Farmer Appleby, Mrs. Appleby, who had seven marriageable daughters, complimented him upon his beautiful handwriting.

"Why, law," she said, "there's my darter Helen, she can't write so she can read it herself. Now, if you would only jist teach her to write, I'd give you your board and lodgin' every time you come a-peddlin' this way."

Young Steele undertook the task, and presently, concluding that he would teach an evening writing class once a week, secured for this purpose the little old schoolhouse down by the creek near Jack Gonger's cobbler shop. And so it came to pass in time that an entry was made upon the church register at Millville, recording the marriage of Helen Appleby to Elisha Steele.

As time went on, Elisha Steele became rich, and also the father of two children; and later he bought the previously mentioned home on Beacon Street, Boston.

Helen Appleby, the ruddy-cheeked girl, had been transformed during these years into a stout but sad woman; sad because her husband occasionally gave vent to a propensity acquired during his peddling days; namely, that of kissing every fair-looking woman, married or single, to whose lips he could gain access.

On this particular evening, after he had wearied of looking at the reflection of the lights of the city upon the river, he drew down the shade, took up his paper, and began to read by the soft light of a large parlor lamp. His face was of an unusual type. His high and shapely forehead suggested a strong intellect. His eyes were dark brown and rather expressive, and the light in them constantly changed. His mouth was strangely out of keeping with the upper part of his face. It was sensual and coarse, the lips were thick, and the upper front teeth were large and protruded, thus pushing his upper lip towards his nose. This gave a slightly sneering expression to his face, while his thick flabby cheeks gave it a round appearance. He was of medium height, and weighed about two hundred pounds.

"Ah, that foot of mine," he said, as he struck his great toe with his cane.

Mrs. Steele sat near him embroidering. Her face was dull except for a peculiar droop of the eyelids, which gave her at once a lazy and sad expression. Her husband, when his eyes grew tired of reading, looked coldly at her occasionally, and then looked more coldly at the little blond boy who sat on a hassock at his mother's feet. The large mahogany door, leading from the broad hall into Mr. Steele's sitting-room, opened, and a drawling voice said, "See, papa."

Mr. Steele looked up, and his eyes met the searching black eyes of his daughter. She was dark, and her skin looked greenish-yellow in the flickering light of the fire. She walked up to his chair, and handed him some drawings which she had attempted. He scanned them quickly, one after another, and remarked, not very tenderly, "What are these? Do I behold the early products of an embryonic genius? Do you mean this for a man? Give me your pencil;" and taking it from her, with a few deft touches the badly drawn figure of a man was made to resemble a cat. Then glancing at an image of a chicken which she had drawn, "Why," he said, "let's make this a rat."

He looked up. His daughter's eyes were flashing with anger. Her cheeks were red with a flush of mortification.

"Oh, ho," he said, "genius not appreciated at home."

His daughter quickly took her attempts at picture-making from his hand, and, biting her thin lips, walked towards the door. One seeing her face might easily have believed that she was the child of an Indian chief; for her cheek-bones were high, her hair glossy black, and her retreating chin heightened the resemblance. She came by her face honestly; for her grandfather, on her father's side, was part Indian.

As the door closed, Mr. Steele got up, and said, "I guess I'll bring Major in."

"What do you want with the dog, Elisha?" asked his wife pettishly.

"You'll find out when I get him;" and opening the door he called to his daughter, "Thankful Steele, bring Major to me."

"Yes, father;" and in a few moments back she came accompanied by a noble St. Bernard dog. The animal followed, but did not manifest any love for her.

"Ah, come Maje, come, come," his master commanded; and the dog ran up to him joyfully.

"Charge, Major," he said; "you are to be the devoted but ignorant subject of a scientific experiment."

The dog lay down at his feet; his master opened a small black box which stood upon the table, and took from it a bright, cruel-looking instrument.

"What are you going to do with that?" his wife asked listlessly.

"Perfect it, my love."

He raised the dog's head upon his lap, and, holding the instrument by the two handles, ran it along the middle of Major's head. It cut the hair as clean as if it had been done with a razor.

"A little too close. I'll fix the set screw," he said; and the dog gave a low piteous moan, not of pain, but of humiliation.

"Lie *still*, Major," the stern voice commanded; and then the machine was again drawn over the dog's head, shaving a line at a right angle to the first one.

"There, that will clip a man's hair just like that," he said. "Now go, Major."

The noble beast got up, and, dropping his head and tail, slunk out of the room.

Mr. Steele smiled.

"H'm, the dog don't like the job," he said; "but I'll trim his hair more neatly for him to-morrow."

His wife sighed, and rang for a maid to brush the dog's hair from the rug.

Mr. Steele left the room, and meeting his daughter in the hall, told her to say to her mother that he was going to the club.

He felt an unusual sense of contentment this evening, as he walked along carelessly toward the Go-When-You-Please Club, in whose spacious parlors he found a circle of congenial friends.

Mr. Steele had tried to get into the Somerset Club; but their "list" was always full, he told his friends. He then tried the "Algonquin" and the "Union" and the "Athletic" — their "lists" were full too. The Go-When-You-Please Club had a list which was never full. This club had a motto; it was, "The More the Merrier."

It was also the ambition of Mr. Steele's life to be admitted to the best society in Boston, and on this evening he consulted with Senator Thuggins of the State Senate as to the best means of accomplishing this very desirable end.

This gentleman had deluded himself into believing that he was a member of the highest social circle. He was of an old New England family, one of his ancestors having been aboard the Mayflower in the capacity of cook. Members of the family had been in the Legislature of Massachusetts for many generations, and one of them endeavored to buy his way into the United States Senate; but failing in this, he bought the best substitute he could, — a house on Beacon Street.

After having drunk two glasses of brandy and soda, Mr. Steele waxed eloquent; and, at the same time losing the little polish which he had with so much difficulty acquired, he delivered to a knot of friends surrounding him an exceedingly flowery speech, of which the most roseate feature was the red face of the speaker.

"Now I'll warrant you there's much in blood; but because a man's granddaddies for twenty generations back were not 'generals' and 'book-writers' or 'judges,' that's no reason why his capabilities shouldn't be recognized;" and continuing, told of his humble beginning as a button peddler; and how he had made thousands of dollars in the cattle business, and after having made these thousands of dollars, congratulated himself upon his astuteness in *keeping* them.

Continuing, he said, "When I bought Rankin's block everybody said that Elisha Steele was getting 'stole from;' but I bought the block for twenty-five thousand dollars, and to-day I sold it for two hundred and sixty thousand dollars;" and slapping his big stomach triumphantly, said, "Who's the man that's got 'stole from' now?"

"Not you," rejoined his friends merrily, after which short address they all proceeded to have another drink.

But who are "they all"? Let us glance a moment, not at the rich hangings of these large parlors. Let us ignore the billiard-room beyond, even ignore the clerk at the office desk. What are they all doing, all of these men, not of the worst, not of the best, of Boston's business men? Most of them are smoking; a large number are drinking; but all are talking "business." Many of them had dined at the club. They had begun talking business as soon as they left their business. The majority of them were wealthy, and had acquired their wealth, — how? One having a vivid imagination might verily have smelled the raw, rank odor of the untanned hide, and occasionally the sweet aroma of the grocer. The druggist, the shoe man, the woollen man, the cotton man, each — not in his turn, but altogether — helped to swell the din of self-exploitation. It has been mentioned that they were drinking. Were they sipping the "nectar of the gods," and taking it easy? No, indeed. They were making hard work of their drinks, and they were drinking that which would work sad havoc in their systems. Whiskey everywhere. Waiters were carrying bottles of it upon trays in obedience to orders sent to the desk. A man would seize a small glass in one hand and a bottle in the other, and, pouring about one-half gill into the glass, would swallow its contents as though he were afraid the liquor would escape him. Then, with equal rapidity, he would drink about the same quantity of water, and then tell either of some old business venture, or some new one that he was projecting.

These men were smoking. Deliberately? Oh, no; they puffed at their cigars as though they had a contract to smoke a large number in a given space of time.

Mr. Steele signalled one of the waiters, and called for a bottle of "Old Rye."

"A bottle?" asked the waiter.

"Yes, a bottle," he answered quickly; "put it up to take out; hurry."

The waiter noticed a brilliant solitaire diamond pin in Mr. Steele's *fin de siècle* tie.

Now, it happened that this waiter was a negro; and negroes always love brilliant things, and as he was bringing Mr. Steele's bottle of whiskey to him, he was fascinated by this luminous object. He held a tray and some glasses in his left hand, and Mr. Steele's bottle in his right. So wrapped was he in the contemplation of the beauties of the jewel that he did not perceive the large feet and legs of Mr. Leatherby, which this gentleman had unintentionally stretched in front of him. The fact was Mr. Leatherby, having had ten or a dozen drinks, had gone to sleep. The negro tripped over the extended legs as one might have expected; and down he came, tray, glasses, bottle, and all. Owing probably to the high temperature of the room, and the fact of his having been suddenly awakened, Mr. Leatherby yelled "Fire;" and seizing a large pitcher of ice-water, turned it, or rather spilled it, over the head of the luckless waiter. The astonished negro rose suddenly, and, in negro dialect, asked if he "looked like a house a fire"?

Mr. Leatherby retorted, "No; you look like the charred remains."

Some of the less intoxicated members took up the joke. Seizing bottles or pitchers, as they could obtain best, they freely deluged the son of Ham, *without*, not *within*, as he would doubtless have preferred. Whiskey, ginger ale, beer, rum, and many other liquors, were wasted by this rampant crowd on the exterior personality of this son of Africa.

The negro soon became aware of the joke which was being perpetrated upon him, and after imploring the crowd, if they wished to wash away his sins, to give him a little washing inside as well as out, left the room all dripping and dishevelled. The older members of the club, while enjoying the joke, prudently remarked, however, that "only water should have been used."

But business soon got the upper hand of mirth; and beef and mutton, patents and stocks, were once more reeling through the befuddled minds and out of the mouths of most of this merry gathering.

After Mr. Steele had had six or eight drinks and two cigars, he bethought himself of home and bed. He always boasted that he could "carry more whiskey" than any other man he ever saw; and while in a good humor once stated to a comrade that whiskey might affect his temper, but never his intellect or his legs.

He arose, and upsetting a table standing by him, with a match-safe and a tray upon it, walked down the stately parlor, and in doing so described a very straight line. His eyes were somewhat glassy; but he fixed them upon one point in the corridor of the club-house, and made for it. He was just drunk enough to realize that he must make some effort in order not to swerve an inch from his pathway. So with majestic tread he passed into the corridor, and then the black waiter who had been so ruthlessly douched held his coat for him. He assisted Mr. Steele to put it on, and began buttoning it up. While doing so, he quickly snatched the pin from Mr. Steele's tie.

"Oh, you're a jolly fellow," cried Mr. Steele, and slapped the negro between the shoulders with his large hand, but did not perceive the theft. He left the club-house, and passed into the street. The full moon looked down upon the snow. The cold wind blew from the northwest, and many a star gleamed in the heavens.

Mr. Steele climbed Beacon Hill, and stopped at his residence, and after bestowing more care on the door-lock than is usually necessary for a sober man, opened the door with his latch-key, and ascended to his bedroom.

CHAPTER III

"ALL SORTS AND CONDITIONS OF MEN"

THE mists hung heavy over Boston and over the harbor, and the streets were slushy and full of mud, when Mr. Steele awoke and began to dress. His spirits were not of the best; for, although he was a successful man, after such a night's experience somehow or other it seemed to him that the world had wronged him, and while ruminating over the fact that his dear wife misunderstood him, as did the most of the world, he suddenly missed his diamond pin. The mirror discovered the loss of the pin as soon as did Mr. Steele. What a change! His face grew stern; the brown eyes became at first snaky, and then flashed with anger, and grew red like those of an angry bull. With a voice not unlike this animal's roar, he summoned his wife. Even in his fury he noticed something unusual in her face too; something that threw a damper upon his anger. He had been wont to see tear-stains on her face after a night of debauch; for, alas, he had had many of them. He had often detected cunning in her expression when she secretly evaded his tyranny; but this morning her face was cold. Now, there are two kinds of expression possible to the human face, both of which may be said to be cold.

One is the expression of cold, intense hatred; the other an expression which is seldom seen excepting on the faces of women, — that of coldness like death, when a love that once lived is dead; and this last was the expression Mr. Steele saw on his wife's face on this dreary morning.

There are few lives so base, so selfish, as not to feel in one way or another the loss of a true woman's love. This man Steele possessed within himself two natures; and unlike most men, they both were subject to his iron will. He could be as tender as a woman; he could even at times feel noble impulses and do generous things. True, these latter were unusual with him; but something in that strange expression on his wife's face on this particular morning stirred up within him such a conflict of emotions as he had never before known. He demanded to know where she had put his diamond pin, feeling all the time in his heart that she had probably not touched it.

But she was undisturbed. She looked at him steadily, and spoke to him very quietly, as she said, "I have put it where I have put all the affection I ever had for you, away from my life, and out of my consciousness. I do not know where your pin is."

He tried to grow angry, and was a little profane; but he was conscious that he had at last met an obstacle in his life such as he had never before been called upon to surmount, and his tone changed.

"Why," he said, with a dismal attempt at a laugh, "it seems you cannot take a joke."

"Possibly not," she said; "but when I wedded you I linked myself to nature's greatest satire upon manliness."

Now, Mr. Steele was not a well-bred man. He could cajole, he could flatter or brow-beat, but skilful repartee was not in his power. While possessing a superficial refinement, he cared only for the selfish, sensual, and vulgar in life. He was rich, and money represented to him the most that life had to give; he was at the same time vain, and desirous of admiration.

He called the servant and looked for the pin, but finally gave it up as lost. Not knowing his exact condition of the night before, and realizing that his mental processes were probably somewhat "cloudy," he did not dare accuse any one.

He finished dressing, and went down to breakfast. There was his dark-eyed daughter, looking more than ever like an Indian, and his son with light hair and blue eyes, and his wife with her white, cold face.

His dining-room was warm and ruddy with a bright fire on the hearth, and the food upon the table looked deliciously tempting. He took his seat, and, as was his custom, asked God to "bless the food of which we are about to partake," thanked him for his bounties, and prayed that the loving Father would guide and keep them all during the day. He ate; the others did not. After breakfast he arose and kissed all of his family "good-by," which was unusual for him to do, and then went out into the cold damp air of the morning.

He went down the street, and observed the fog and the men and women as he went along. He turned down Tremont Street, then down School Street, and at the corner of Washington Street entered a low wooden building. He looked at the piles of books everywhere around him, he glanced at the different sets upon the shelves, — at Dickens, Thackeray, and Scott. The salesmen were all busy for the moment; and noticing the book which lay upon the counter nearest him, he picked it up. It was Flint's "Practice of Medicine." The gas was lighted in the store, for the morning was dark. He put on his spectacles, and looked at the different illustrations. A clerk came up to him; and he laid the book down, and asked courteously for an account book, adding, "A memorandum book that I can carry in my pocket." Another salesman came up, and asked if he could supply him with any medical work. It flattered Mr. Steele to be thus mistaken for a physician, so he answered, "Oh, no, my library is quite complete, thank you;" and tapping Flint's "Practice of Medicine," remarked, "I, however, am a doctor for all mankind. I, sir, am a man of business; and business, you know, plays a very important part in healing all men's woes. It makes philanthropy possible; and when I succeed it opens my heart with the broadest charity for the poor."

He paid the clerk for his purchase, left the store, and went to his place of business,—a comfortable office on State Street, where he had a stenographer, another clerk who kept his books, and an agent who took care of the real estate. He also had stocks and bonds securely locked up in the vaults of the safety deposit company.

His manner was serene and calm, for he never allowed himself to become ruffled when at business. He was in his office quietly looking over his books, when in walked a red-faced man.

"Ah, Mr. Kennedy," he said, "what brings you here this morning?"

"What brings me everywhere?" asked Mr. Kennedy. "Business, sir, purely business. I live for business."

"And upon it too," said Mr. Steele.

"Yes, sir, upon it. One day in the year I am rich, and three hundred and sixty-four days I am poor; to-day is one of my poor days. You know I have gone into partnership with Messrs. Spittleworth & Buttons."

"I congratulate *them*," was Mr. Steele's reply.

Mr. Kennedy took a large envelope out of his pocket, and unfolded a map and a number of printed circulars.

"Here's a map of the State of Illinois," he said. "Here's a fertile field for business. We are forming a big land syndicate; in fact, the syndicate is already formed, with Mr. Spittleworth at its head. We buy the land when we can; we loan money on it at eight per cent interest when we cannot buy it. When we purchase it we sell it again, receiving cash for two-thirds of its value, and take a mortgage bearing ten per cent interest for the rest. Now, you have money to spare. You are an enterprising capitalist."

"I hope I use my capital to develop my country's resources," answered Mr. Steele.

"Who does not?" replied Mr. Kennedy. "Money makes money, I tell you. Why, see here. We bought this farm at Winterdale (indicating its position on the map) for eleven thousand dollars, and I tell you it was an exceptionally good bargain; for we sold it for sixteen thousand dollars, got ten thousand dollars down, and a mortgage at eight per cent interest for the rest. You know Winterdale is a very thriving country place, and like all other thriving Western places it wants to borrow money. Its prominent citizens want to build a court-house and water-works, gas-works, a street railroad, an electric plant, lay out one or two handsome parks, and build a fifty thousand dollar monument to the first settler at Winterdale as well. The fact is, I want to sell you some of these bonds. They will pay ten per cent interest, and can be bought for eighty-five cents on the dollar, which will make considerably more than ten per cent you will realize upon the investment."

Mr. Steele was not allured by the promise of large interest unless the investment was well secured, and he never allowed himself to show any particular interest while conducting a business transaction.

"Really, really," said he, "that's curious. I refused several opportunities yesterday to invest money in Western securities. The fact is, I have more use for my money than I have money. I have too much already in railroad stocks out West. The West is like a growing boy, you know, very restless, enterprising, but visionary. And besides, I have a fortune in a very small affair. I own some patents in a hair-clipping machine."

Mr. Kennedy looked significantly at Mr. Steele's bald head.

"Did you clip your own hair with it?" he asked.

Mr. Steele was never averse to a joke. He laughed heartily, and said, "Yes; it will polish the crown as though it had been sand-papered and rubbed down in oil, and if a man lives to his second childhood all of his hair will grow again. Let me show you;" and he took a little instrument from a drawer in his desk and passed it over the back of his hand. It cut the hair on it as clean as a razor could have done.

"I tell you I have a fortune in this," he said; "every man can be his own barber."

"Provided he wishes to be bald," his friend answered.

"Oh, no," Mr. Steele said; "look here. I turn a screw, and it will cut the hair at any length you wish. I am going to organize a stock company to-day. I may put a little money in it myself. Enough to control it, taking into account the value of the patent; for I tell you, Mr. Kennedy, never venture money unless you have the controlling interest. Money is made in little things, and lost in big ones. Silver mines for instance. I own land in the West. I went out in '49, and bought a lot of it cheap. Those were dangerous times. Men cut their meat with their own bowie-knives."

"And their business competitors too," answered Mr. Kennedy.

"Very true," said Mr. Steele.

"But I want to sell you these bonds," said Mr. Kennedy.

"What is the amount of money you wish me to invest?"

"Only a small amount. About fifty thousand dollars."

"Well, take the papers over to the lawyer, Mr. Brownleaf, you know, in the next building, and just have him look them over to see if they are all right; at your own expense, you know."

"Certainly, certainly, I'll have him look them over at my expense," said Mr. Kennedy.

He buttoned his ulster tightly around his throat, and put on his tall hat, which would have been improved by ironing, and leaving the office, entered the elevator, and went down to the lawyer.

Mr. Steele soon had another visitor. He heard a rap upon his office door, and an individual entered who was a stranger to him.

The man's appearance was not attractive, neither was it wholly repulsive. He was what is popularly known as "pigeon-breasted." He had a thin face, rather mild dark blue eyes, a low forehead, and a mouth the set of whose thin lips indicated stubbornness. He held in his right hand a large square object covered with a rubber cloth, to the top of which were attached two leather handles. In his left hand he held an old patent leather satchel which looked very much as if it had been rescued from a football team. The man's collar was dirty, as Mr. Steele observed when he had removed his overcoat, and his face, too, showed the need of soap and water. His hands were thin and spare, and the tips of his fingers were stained with ink. He asked in a shrill voice, "Mr. Steele?"

Receiving an affirmative reply, he began, "I've been employed for twenty years by one railroad company as a freight agent; large amounts of money has passed through my hands; I meet large numbers of people daily of all ages and kinds; the auditors have never found fault with my accounts. I have been married three times, my wives are all dead, and I occupy the tenement which me and my last wife hired of you when we was married, and my baby died from swallowing a string of beads; my wife scalded her foot by dropping the Christmas turkey off the platter five years last Christmas, and yesterday I bought a music-box which will play five tunes, if you buy the plates extra, and I am going to take it to see my sister in Holyoke. I took a bad cold while visiting a cousin at Northampton last fall, which is now better from a bottle of cough balsam and some of Doctor Reilly's catarrh snuff."

Mr. Steele rubbed his nose with the rubber tip on the end of his pencil, and began to wonder just what was his caller's mission.

"I went down last Sunday afternoon to hear the minister lecture at Tremont Temple against the Catholics, and just came from the State House where I went to attend a meeting to protest against the enactment of a law regulating the practice of medicine in Massachusetts. I tell you, sir, I have a right to employ anybody I please when I am sick, and no man shall say who my doctor shall be; for, sir, I tell you, my nurse took a wart off the end of my nose with a dishrag when I was five years old."

"How interesting," observed Mr. Steele; "but pray what can I do for you?"

"Now, Mr. Steele, my name is John Paracus, and I have occupied one of your tenements ever since I married my last wife, and you know things always need repairing. You had a new range put into the kitchen six months before my wife died, and then you had the roof fixed the next year. Now, sir, I believe in doing by others as you would be done by, and I have come to tell you that the water running through my pipes has made a hole in one of them in my kitchen; and I have always paid you my rent every month, and the water is running through them as though the windows of the heavens had been opened. Now, sir, I'll play you a tune on this music-box; I'll play you 'Columbia, the Gem of the Ocean,' and you just hear it say the 'Red, White, and Blue.'"

Mr. Steele excused himself from the music-box politely enough, and informed Mr. Paracus that his agent would send a plumber to mend the leaky pipe at once.

The next moment the conversation took quite an unexpected turn. Mr. Paracus took from his pocket a notice of a meeting to be held that very afternoon in Homestead Hall. The objects of this meeting were to sell the stock of, and to elect officers for the stock company which was to float Mr. Steele's clipping-machine.

Mr. Paracus intimated a wish to put some money into the company, and Mr. Steele did not discourage him. Then he lifted the patent leather bag and the music-box carefully, and away he went much delighted with the interview with his landlord.

Other callers came into Mr. Steele's office on this memorable morning, all afflicted with one "ism" or another, until Mr. Steele's lunch time arrived. After eating his luncheon at a fearful rate of speed, as if he wished to be through with an unpleasant duty, he returned to his office, in order to prepare the papers for the meeting at Homestead Hall.

No other city in the world could assemble such a collection of individuals as the one which gathered in Homestead Hall, Boston, that afternoon for the purpose of organizing the stock company which was to "float" the "hair-clipper." But they were not the representative business men of Boston; and, in fact, it is easier to say what they were not, than to assign them to any definite social class.

Some of them were middle-aged, many were older. Fat women predominated in this gathering, and most of them were accompanied by lean men. The meeting had not yet begun; and the members were conversing in groups of two, three, and four. One very fat lady was assuring a dyspeptic, lean-looking man that "in spirit there is no flesh," that "disease is only a delusion, a reflection of mortal thought, as it were." She assured him that he could eat anything he liked. She should have added, if he could get it.

This woman's face was covered with a red pimply eruption, her features were exceedingly coarse, her black eyes snapped vindictively, but her voice was singularly mild and childlike. Her abundant hair had been black, but was now slightly gray, and was piled or knotted on the top of her head; her eyes were small, and set too near together; her hands were large and very red, and she evidently was proud of them, for she constantly gesticulated with them. She took the withered hand of the man with whom she was talking between her own fat ones, and assured him that if he would only attend the lectures upon Christian Science which *she* was giving, and ignore what seemed to be his body (not a very difficult task if one might judge by its size), his spirituality would reach a higher plane, and he would realize that to take medicine was a sin.

This latter statement caused her washed-out companion to wince perceptibly, for the reason that he was an advertising agent of a large patent medicine firm. There was another group of individuals some four rows of seats back; and Dr. Sneakleaf, the advocate of a new school of medicine, the odoriferopathic school, was entertaining them with an exposition of his pet theories. He had been infected with a new medical craze, although a graduate of the Harvard Medical School. He was arguing vociferously with three females of uncertain age, explaining to them that nature spiritualized and refined all vital agencies. Taking from his pocket a small vial, he invited a red-nosed woman to take a sniff of it.

"There, there," he said, "you have breathed in the spirit of health. The particles of the drug you have inhaled are too small for microscopic detection, but they will reach your olfactory bulbs, and thence will reach and stimulate your organs of inspiration;" and again he argued, "The microbes which cause disease enter the system through the nose."

"When it is not stopped up, as it is apt to be in this climate," added a sceptical individual back of him.

"I'll unstop it," shouted the doctor; "these subtle, vitalized odors will penetrate even through the hypertrophied tissues of the turbinated bones. They will slay the microbes as they enter the system, and at the same time stimulate its vital processes."

While the doctor was speaking, a group of men was gathering across the aisle. One of them was a very large man, whose principal distinction was a loud, vulgar, discordant voice. One of his companions was an exceedingly small man, who looked so frail that one of his friends doubted the advisability of his braving the chill east winds on that afternoon. But he was fired with a mission; and he talked rapidly and volubly against the rich, and of their oppression of the poor. He told his companions that the old rusty cannons which lay in the Navy Yard at Charlestown would be dragged out of their beds of dirt, and would be used one day by the rich to fire upon the poor. He discoursed vehemently upon their past history, and said that these guns had been used during the Revolution to free this country from the yoke of the British. They were now a menace to the liberty they had once so gallantly defended.

At this point an old soldier, overhearing the conversation, remarked that "if anybody tries to shoot those damned things they will bust."

"Let them bust," shrieked the little man vehemently, "long before they mow down the gallant ranks of the honest laboring men of Boston."

By this time the hubbub in the hall was growing louder, and some impatience was expressed at Mr. Steele's long-delayed appearance.

Now came in four ladies, and middle-aged gentlemen wearing shabby coats continued to arrive. Everywhere the rich were being denounced, and yet all wanted to be rich. Each individual was airing some pet theory for the reform of society, or for the cure of the bodily ills of man. Many were the sharp and unkind things said of Mr. Steele. They were all bent on tearing down the mighty fortune he had wrung from the poor, and each in his turn evidently hoped to appropriate as large a portion of it as possible for his own use. Most of the ladies and gentlemen had literary aspirations. Some were artistic geniuses, but alas, the perverse world did not appreciate their merit.

Others again would be orators. In fact, one man had made Sunday afternoon speeches on Boston Common, and so powerful was his eloquence that the people fled from him as from a pestilence. One stroller on the Common had ventured to call him a crank, and a policeman had outraged his dignity by compelling him to descend from a tree whither he had climbed to escape the stones hurled at him by some urchins.

In other parts of the hall could be heard discussions upon such themes as "Light and Color Cure," "The Holy Corn Cure," and the latest performances of some juggler were being marvelled at by others. Some of the ladies insisted upon attributing to the juggler supernatural powers, and "which he, through motives of modesty, concealed." Some strenuously advocated woman-suffrage; and one little wee bit of a body declared that she had a right to serve in the militia. No man had a right to keep her from shouldering a musket and marching to the defence of her country and her sex.

The old soldier had changed his base of operations, and at this point very ungallantly informed the speaker that she would get her petticoats drabbled in the mud if she tried that dodge; but the woman defeated and annihilated him in a moment.

"I wear petticoats! I'd don a suit of armor, as did Zenobia when she led her magnificent Palmyrene hosts."

"To defeat like Zenobia?" asked the old soldier; and walked off without receiving a reply.

Physicists claim that every vibration of the air ever set in motion by the human voice will go on vibrating unless this atmosphere of ours should be destroyed. What a pity some recording instrument could not have caught each vibration of the air on this memorable occasion, and reproduced the words of the concourse! What a galaxy of thought-gems were uttered only to be lost! There were those who would populate Africa with every one who differed from themselves. Others would make money flow as freely as the muddy water of Lake Cochituate flows through the pipes of the streets of Boston. Some would navigate the air if opportunity would only permit. From their physical appearance it seemed to some bystanders as if a northeast gale would afford them the opportunity they desired. Most of this mighty gathering were agreed upon one thing, and this was that those who had money ought not to have it; and each individual present was willing to take all of this very useful commodity that could be obtained without much work.

Mr. Steele arrived at twenty minutes of three, and on his arrival an ominous hush fell over the audience. Everybody eyed him curiously, as they did also a man who was with him, whom Mr. Steele nominated for the position of presiding officer of the meeting. He was elected by acclamation; and Dr. Sneakleaf then introduced the chairman, Mr. Doolittle, as a "man of indomitable energy who has promoted many successful enterprises." He did not enumerate them; and the old soldier, recovering from his defeat so gallantly inflicted by the Amazon, demanded to know what they were.

"I cannot furnish you with information and brains too," the doctor retorted, and was vociferously applauded.

When the doctor had ceased introducing the chairman of the meeting, an old man arose from his seat and was recognized by the chair. His hair was snowy white, and his weak, wrinkled face wore a kind expression. He had for many years earned a good salary as an organ-tuner, and had squandered it in foolish investments. He drew from his pocket a paper upon which a horoscope had been drawn, and told the assembled company that he had sought advice of an astrologer, and had learned that to-day the planets were "propitious." He told them that he would risk his last thousand dollars and regain all that he had lost; alas, a hard thing to do. Seventy-eight years had passed over his head, and for more than forty of them he had worked in an organ factory. Every day he worked from morning till night, and in the evening built castles in the air, and became rich in fancy, and in fancy only, by some daring speculations.

Mr. Steele eyed him keenly. The chairman, Mr. Doolittle, took little notice of him.

After he had finished speaking, Mr. Steele's machine was produced. The white-haired organ-tuner enthusiastically offered to have the machine tried upon his own person; and stepping to the desk he bowed his head upon it, and Mr. Doolittle ruthlessly cut a few of the locks which hung over his forehead with the cruel-looking little machine.

All were delighted with the success of the experiment; all wanted stock in the company. Some had a little money; no one but Mr. Steele had a large amount; others contented themselves with hoping that a fortunate day might bring them some.

Mr. Doolittle called upon Mr. Steele to speak. When he arose his face looked expressionless. His tones were quiet as he said, —

"I hold this patent; you see what the machine will do. I propose to organize a stock company. It must have fifty thousand dollars paid up capital. The total capital of the company must be one hundred and twenty thousand dollars. If sufficient money is subscribed the company will be organized under the laws of the State of Maine. I will put my patent in for seventy thousand dollars worth of stock."

Watch him while he speaks. The gray light of a dying winter's day came in through the windows and bedimmed the gaslights. His hands lay quietly upon the desk in front of him. With one glance he seemed to take in and estimate the personal equation of each in turn of all the audience before him; and then he looked at Mr. Doolittle, who had called the company together.

Let us look at him too. An ordinary enough face he had, were it not for the fact that avarice, greed, cunning, and selfishness all seemed struggling with each other to predominate. He wore side whiskers, and when he spoke his voice had in it an assumed tone of smoothness. His neck was short. His eyebrows were thick and bushy. His hair was coarse and red. What was the secret of this man's power? He had swindled countless widows out of their last mite. He had foisted land schemes, water schemes, and mill schemes, in fact, everything out of which could be built a bogus stock company.

The contrast between the two men was strong. Both rascals, Mr. Doolittle was morally the filthiest. When he defeated his own ends he did so by over-reaching himself. Mr. Steele had never defeated his own ends, except to defeat the chief end of man, — to be generous, to be noble. He felt his lack; Doolittle felt only his insatiate avarice.

After Mr. Steele had finished speaking, Mr. Doolittle opened the books, and announced in a calm, smooth voice that the subscription for the stock was now open, and stated that it would not be put openly upon the market. The old organ-tuner, half blind with accumulated years, was the first to subscribe. It was the last thousand dollars of his earnings which he had to waste. A woman subscribed another thousand. She had made her money — how? Well, not too reputably. The Christian Science teacher with her big red hands subscribed three thousand dollars; but the odoriferopathic doctor looked at the list, and rattled some coins in his pocket, and slyly whispered to Mr. Doolittle that he had brought five subscribers, and would rather have his premium in money than in stock in the company.

Mr. Doolittle nodded his head, and the disciple of odoriferopathy brought up his five subscribers.

One was a big woman with vulgarly large solitaire diamonds in her ears, a big showy diamond cross on her breast, and big showy diamond rings on her fingers. She wrote her name in a big bold vulgar hand on the stock-book, and subscribed for five thousand dollars, her last spare money; and a young, chattering, silly woman next subscribed for twenty shares, two thousand dollars; and a gayly dressed old woman, who was paying for furniture in a lodging-house on instalments, subscribed for five shares, and mortgaged the furniture which did not belong to her to get the money.

All who had money bought the stock; those who had none strongly urged those who had to buy; and out of this foolish concourse of rattle-brained people fifty thousand dollars' worth of stock was subscribed for, and the little savings which had escaped the foolish ventures of the past were wrung, not by torture, but by cunning, from these weak and silly people.

Be it understood, Mr. Steele's machine of itself was no cheat; but alas, there are many ways of plundering helpless stockholders, and of one of these methods we shall learn more anon.

The company disbanded. Each to go to their homes? Oh, no. Most of them went to cheap boarding-houses. pernicious dens, where they infected by their chatter others as unstable as themselves with the fever of speculation.

CHAPTER IV

DE'ETTE

Late in the afternoon of the first day of September, 1874, a farmer, John Block by name, stood on the veranda in front of his house. The sun was just setting, and the exquisite blue of an early autumn sky contrasted beautifully with the gorgeous colors of the autumnal scenery. Farmer Block cast his eyes over the fields of yellow corn, and then turned from this vision of warmth and beauty to look about him, overhead, and up and down the road.

As he struck his leather boots with the long cowhide which he held, he anxiously repeated, "Oh, I wish he'd come! I wish he'd come!"

His great blue eyes, usually warm and kindly, were now filled with apprehension and anxiety. He felt something pull at his whip, and, looking down, saw that his mastiff was playing with the lash.

"All right, Sepoy, lie down," he said affectionately; but suddenly the dog started up and gave a low cry. He placed himself in front of his master, looking piteously up at him. The man's face changed too, for both master and beast heard a plaintive moan from within the house.

"I wish he'd come," again he repeated sorrowfully.

The door opened, and a girl of twelve stepped out. Her face closely resembled that of her father. She, too, had great blue eyes; her forehead rising rather high above them gave to her face a slight want of symmetry. Her skin was pale and somewhat sallow, her lips were thin, and the whole appearance of the mouth portrayed an exceedingly mobile, sensitive temperament.

"Father," she said, "mother seems to be growing worse. Where *is* the doctor?"

"Listen," her father said.

In the distance could be heard the clatter of a horse's hoofs, and horse and rider came into sight. As they approached the little gate in front of the porch, the man, the maid, and the dog, all went out to greet them.

"I am glad you have come, Dr. Lucketwell," said the farmer. "It has seemed an age since we sent for you. You know when De'Ette was born you were uneasy about my wife, and so I sent for you early."

"All right, I'm early here," said the doctor rather brusquely, "and without any dinner or supper either. Have been spending the day attending old John Shinnleaver. John is poor, you know, not worth a cent."

The farmer told De'Ette to call Schneip, and tell him to take care of the doctor's horse.

"Yes, father; but the doctor has forgotten his saddlebags."

"Why, so I have;" and the doctor gathered them up quickly from the back of the horse.

As the girl ran off to obey her father's command, the doctor said sternly, "Look here, John Block. I told you it would be risky again. Your wife is very delicate."

"Yes, Doctor; but it is twelve years and six months since De'Ette came, and I hoped she had gathered strength in that time."

"All right; perhaps so, perhaps so."

Opening the door which led to the right, they entered a neat little parlor. The sofa and chairs were upholstered with black haircloth, and there were chromos and engravings of a cheap sort upon the walls.

"Whew!" said the doctor, "the place smells musty. When was your last guest here, and what in Heaven's name is this on the mantel?"

He picked up a bright piece of metal, and took it to the lamp.

"What! a coffin-plate?"

"Yes; my father's," said the other quietly.

"Why in the name of old bones isn't it underground *with* your father, then?"

"I have my mother's and sister's also," said Mr. Block rather vaguely.

"What do you intend to do with them? Put them under my pillow in case I go to bed here to-night, for me to dream on, as you would a piece of wedding-cake?"

"No," said the farmer, not quite liking the joke. "When I came to Illinois from New Hampshire I brought them with me because at that time it was the custom there to save them with the funeral wreaths. But, Doctor, let's to graver matters. My wife, I fear, is seriously ill. Save her, and the little one too, if you can. Her head aches, and she has been suffering intensely, and does not seem to know either De'Ette or myself."

"Well, I'll go to her room;" and the doctor went up a narrow flight of stairs.

He evidently knew the house well, for he went to a bedroom in the front of it. It was plainly but neatly furnished; and there upon a bed he found his patient, dressed in a dark blue wrapper. Her vacant eyes had a strange glassy blackness, and their very want of expression at the moment appealed in the strongest possible manner to the physician for the exercise of his skill. He placed a candle so he could see her face. The tissues around her eyes were swollen, and the naturally dark complexion was rendered darker by a peculiar dusky flush. In an instant the features began to quiver, and the whole body was racked with a convulsion.

"I must put something between her teeth or she'll bite her tongue," said the doctor to himself.

His piercing gray eyes looked quickly around the room. Finding nothing, he seized his saddle-bags, in which were his medicines and his instruments. While fumbling in them he was startled by a shrill voice saying, "Vat do you vant, Doctor? I am Mrs. Schneip, or Frau Schneip. I nursed the Prince of Würtemberg ven he vas born, and I guess I can do anyting *you* vant here."

The doctor had found an instrument by this time, around which he wrapped some chamois skin, and forced it firmly between the tightly closed jaws of his patient. Then looking up he eyed a little fat old woman. Her face was covered with black spots, which gave it the appearance of having been recently peppered; and her under jaw kept up a tremulous motion, as though run by some hidden mechanism. She had but one eye, with which she looked at the doctor through a large eyeglass. This heightened the otherwise very sinister and grotesque expression of her face.

"Vell, Doctor, it's a hard chance."

The doctor frowned and answered coldly, "I did not ask you for your opinion. Go and bring some hot water."

"*Ja*, I vill; but I saw peoples before you vas born," she said, as she waddled out of the room. As she went to the kitchen to fill the kettle with water, she muttered to herself, "That doctor thinks he knows it all, but I'll just read him a lesson, so I vill."

De'Ette had gone to seek Schneip; but after vainly calling him a number of times, decided to take the horse to the barn herself. As she approached him, the magnificent creature arched his neck as though he would salute the little maiden.

"Hello, Chaser," she said; "be still until I unhitch you."

The horse turned his great luminous eyes upon her, and suddenly lowered his head, and seized her hand between his lips, and at once dropped it, as though giving it a fervent kiss.

"You old rascal, Chaser," she said, "I thought you were going to bite me. Come along."

They walked together, passing down a lane shaded on either side by a long row of black walnuts. The horse occasionally raised his head to bite leaves from the low-hanging branches; while the girl, scarcely observing whither she went, kept her eyes fixed upon the ground. Reaching the barn she opened the door, and the horse walked into the stall. As she held the saddle in her hand, she felt, or heard, a presence behind her, and turning quickly saw a figure in the door of the barn watching her. The barn had been dark, save as the rays of the moon penetrated here and there between the hewn logs of the walls; but now the room was lighted by a small lantern held in the hands of Schneip, who had been watching her unsaddle the horse.

"Schneip, I have been calling you."

"*Ja wohl*, I am sorry. I was shust looking at dis book. It ish Comstock's Chemistry. Vat do you suppose dot ish, anyway?"

"You had better have been about your master's business, and, when you had finished that, studying your Sunday-school lesson," said De'Ette angrily.

"Vell, dot ish so; but shust vat ish bromine and iodine?"

"Go, Schneip, and get some oats for this horse;" and leaving the barn hurriedly, she retraced her steps to the house.

De'Ette's home was a typical Western house, one and one-half stories high, made of clapboards, which had not known a coat of paint for many a day. John Block had bought the house twenty years before, when he emigrated to Illinois from New Hampshire, being then in his twenty-second year. He had married Bertha Edgerly, a Yankee schoolma'am, two years his senior. She was of a good family, and had been educated in a normal school in Massachusetts. De'Ette, their daughter, was born eight years after they had moved to Illinois. Their nearest post-office was Winterdale, one and one-half miles away. John's farm was a piece of prairie land; and when he bought it he had to assume quite a heavy debt, as his father had left him only a few thousand dollars, earned in the manufacture of shoes when profits were comparatively small.

De'Ette entered the kitchen, and sat down by her father's side. As she sat there in her blue calico gown, looking wistfully up at him, her girlish face, though immature, by its expression told plainly of strong purpose, and of a nature capable of deep and varied emotions.

The kitchen was small, and their features were at times rendered indistinct by the flickering light of a sputtering, half-burned candle.

"Has the doctor come down yet?" asked De'Ette.

"He has come down and had some supper, and sent for Dr. Catcherly," replied her father.

"Who went for him?"

"Patrick Monahan, darling," he answered, stroking her flaxen hair. "I feel very much troubled about your mother; she has seemed ill for a long time."

Dr. Lucketwell came in, and said, "John, we have had a hard time. I think Miss De'Ette had better go out." When she had left the room he continued, "The child is born. I hoped that Dr. Catcherly could get here before the birth, for it is indeed a serious case. Your wife has had several convulsions and is still unconscious; but you have a son, and a fine boy he is too. If I can carry her through the night, she may live."

The farmer's eyes filled with tears, but he soon controlled himself.

"I have struggled hard on this prairie," he said. "I have tilled the land; I have wrung from wild nature a living, and a little more; but she has been the one motive, the one incentive, that has made it possible. Stand by me to-night, Doctor; use all the knowledge, all the skill, which you possess; save her life if you can, and whatever I can do to repay you shall be done."

The stern face of the doctor relaxed a little; for he, too, was a man who had made a severe struggle for existence, and the simple, manly appeal of the farmer touched him deeply.

When John was left alone he went into the next room, and returning with the Episcopal prayer-book, read the prayer for all women in the perils of childbirth, asking himself the while why childbirth must be so perilous. Then absorbed in meditation, he recalled one by one his life's hardships, and lived over again the disappointed ambitions of his youth.

The nours of the long night wearily dragged themselves away. Light fleecy clouds flurried through the sky, now and then obscuring the moon. As the clock was striking four, another visitor rode up to the gate.

"Dr. Catcherly?" asked the farmer.

"Yes," answered the newcomer; "at least what is left of him after being jostled by a fifteen-mile ride at night over the prairie. Such a ride takes all the poetry out of a man very quick. A physician's life is not a bed of roses."

Dr. Lucketwell came to the door, and, without speaking, signed to his colleague to hurry.

The two men went up-stairs, and John Block took the doctor's horse around to the barn, glancing furtively as he went at the light in the window above. He then returned to his lonely watch. De'Ette had gone to bed. As he sat by the fire, which he replenished with fresh wood, he heard the cry of an infant; not a lusty cry, but a low, faint, piteous moan. There were anguish and pain in that cry, as though the spirit had been rudely forced from Paradise, and imprisoned in a little lump of flesh.

In a few moments Mrs. Schneip came into the room, her underjaw vibrating at a fearfully rapid rate, and bluntly and without feeling said, "The baby is dead," adding that the mother was still unconscious. Shortly after, Dr. Lucketwell brought the sad news that the mother and child were both gone.

While the manifestations of grief vary with the temperament of every man, we can never mistake it for joy. Some weep, some groan, a few shriek, but the deepest grief of all is silent. It consumes the inner man as with a terrible fire, while it leaves the faculties clear, perhaps keener for the fearful anguish.

De'Ette was awakened, and told of the death of her mother, and also that the little one, too, had died. Her grief was great; but, young as she was, she soon realized that she was the only loved one left to her father, and determined to do all that she could to fill his lonely life.

Then the gray dawn stole over the prairie, and embraced the dwelling of Farmer Block in its dreary grasp.

CHAPTER V

IS JOHANNES SCHNEIP "A FOOL"?

Johannes Schneip had spent the night in quite another way than the rest of the members of that household. Although he had been in the United States only two years, he could read the English language well. This was a constant surprise to those who heard him speak it, for he appeared to be practically ignorant of the tongue. His pronunciation was wretchedly poor, his utterance thick and slow. All night long he had pored over the treatise on chemistry, about which he had asked his young mistress early in the evening.

He first tried to memorize the symbols representing the different elements. He read the "I." the "Br." and the "Fe." and they had for him a hidden cabalistic meaning. They were the keys which could unlock the portals of some strange enchanted land. Twice his sputtering candle went out, but again he lighted it. Finally he dashed down the book, saying, "I will understand it; I will know what it means."

He sat in a revery for a long time. So deeply absorbed in thought was he that he did not hear his mother enter the room, and was not aware of her presence until she gave him a ringing box on his right ear, berating him in her native harsh, guttural language for being so indifferent while his mistress was dying. The boy looked startled for a few moments, and then began to walk around the room. It was cheerless enough, being a part of the second story of the barn. His mother commanded him to saddle the horses for the two doctors. He did so; and tired and worn with the fatigue and anxiety of the night's work, they mounted their horses and rode away.

The home was desolate. De'Ette looked five years older with her grief, and with the new cares which had fallen upon her. The day advanced. Death held supreme possession, and kept watch over the household, impressing its hush upon everything.

John Block possessed naturally strong religious tendencies, and his first thought on such an occasion was to send for the minister. Schneip was called to go on this errand.

Now, it happened that the way to the minister's house was shorter through the cornfield than around by the road. The minister lived about two miles distant. Johannes was told to go straight across the cornfield, then to follow the road which he would come upon to the right, and to deliver the note carefully to the Rev. William Rugby Round. The young German put on his hat, and with his chemistry in one hand sauntered lazily into the field of corn. As he did so, prairie chickens, disturbed by his footsteps, flew up from the corn, making a whirring noise as they went; but the boy had none of the spirit of the huntsman in him, and so took but little notice of them. As Mr. Block viewed his vanishing form, it seemed as though the corn had swallowed him up.

Schneip opened his book, and reading about H_2O, soon discovered that H_2O meant water. He did not discover that he was not going straight across the cornfield. Instead, he was describing a circle in an area of waving, ripe, rustling gold.

He walked on and on utterly oblivious of the distance traversed, so deeply absorbed was he in what he was reading.

He was also unconscious of the flight of time, and did not realize that he was spending the whole of the afternoon walking in a circle. He was aware suddenly that his legs ached, and big drops of rain began to fall upon his head and face; and looking up he perceived with amazement that night was stealing upon him.

"*Mein Gott!* dis vas a broad field," he said.

As he walked, each cornstalk looked like the last, each ear seemed to nod towards him, and Schneip felt as if they wished to speak to him. Finally a peculiar sense of dread come over him. He could not place himself in space. By this time the breeze had developed into a strong gale, and everywhere the stalks of corn were breaking with a snap, and falling with a dull thud. As he increased his speed, the wind seemed to increase in violence. A cornstalk broke at the right of him, and struck him on the neck. The rain began to pour in torrents, and a vivid flash of lightning and a peal of thunder frightened and bewildered him. He felt as though unseen enemies were standing on all sides ready to strike him. On he rushed, till suddenly it occurred to him that he did not know where his home was. There were no landmarks; nothing but the breaking corn and the drenching rain. At dusk the boy emerged, not on the other side of the field, but at the exact spot where he had started. He found the family anxiously awaiting him.

He felt dazed, like one awakening suddenly from a hideous dream; and when accosted by his mother, he replied in German that he could not find his way across the field. He noticed a stranger with the rest of the family; and then, instead of warm words of welcome, he felt the lash of a whip upon his wet, tired limbs. His mother, angered at his supposed stupidity, began thrashing him with Mr. Block's cattle-whip.

At first the boy took the blows meekly enough; then his usually stolid face became passionate, his light blue eyes seemed to grow dark, and flashed with indignation, for he realized keenly the wrong and humiliation. Then his temper grew beyond all bounds. He snatched the whip from his mother's hand, and would have struck her a fearful blow with the heavy handle, had not Mr. Block seized his arm. The stranger, who proved to be the minister for whom Schneip had been fruitlessly sent, then interfered, and, speaking kindly in German, quieted both mother and son.

Just then Mrs. Schneip saw the book in her son's pocket; she snatched it out, and tore it into atoms.

Poor Schneip looked sorrowfully down upon the fragments of his book strewn upon the floor, and a look of abject misery came over his countenance. Picking up the fragments hurriedly, he rushed away to his room over the barn, and muttered, "I am no fool; I will yet learn something;" and as he sat down on a low chair and lighted his partially burned candle, he felt bitterly towards all of the world. He wondered why *he* always had had to work, and why he had had no home, and but little chance to go to school, and why no father's love and care had guided his wayward nature. Looking at his hard, ugly hands, he imagined himself some hideous, misshapen thing; and then with a sudden revulsion of feeling he looked at the fragments of his book, the only thing which had ever stirred his slumbering intellect or excited his sluggish curiosity. Now it was destroyed. It seemed to Schneip that the only promise ever given him of better things was gone. As he wept bitterly, a sudden thought seemed to strike him, and his whole attitude changed.

"I'll go away," he said. "I've worked with my mother a long time, and she says I'm a fool; I'll find out if I am one."

He laid himself down, and slept lightly until awakened by the daylight; then springing to his feet, he packed into a small bundle the few clothes he had, and before the family were astir he was walking down the road with his bundle under his arm and no money in his pockets.

The station was a little wooden house with a short platform in front. It consisted of one room, and an office for the ticket-agent and the telegraph-operator. On a side track stood a number of empty freight-cars. Schneip said to himself, "I'll get into one of these cars, and go where it goes."

Trying the door he found it unlocked. He jumped into the car, and closing the door, hid himself in one corner, crouching on the floor.

Mr. Block soon discovered Schneip's flight, and fed the horses and cattle himself that morning.

Mrs. Schneip was angry, but remarked that it would do him good to look out for himself. The slight inconvenience occasioned by Schneip's absence was soon forgotten and swallowed up in the great sorrow which had befallen the household.

Preparations were being made for the funeral; the undertaker came; and finally the last rites were performed by the minister over Mrs. Block's remains.

"How desolate!" said John Block to himself; "the home is no home any more."

Mrs. Schneip was maid-of-all-work in the household, and she was much vexed at De'Ette's assumption of authority; but the stubborn Teutonic will soon gave way to the bright intellect of the American girl.

De'Ette now gave her best effort, young as she was, to filling her father's lonely, empty life. She was not contented simply with superintending the household, but lavished a wealth of affection upon him, studying in every possible way how she might enter his reserved nature.

Days and weeks and months went along. The golden autumn tints gave way to the winter's blasts. De'-Ette felt her new responsibility; but she was brave, and did not shrink from the extra care imposed upon her.

CHAPTER VI

NEW AND STRANGE SIGHTS AND SOUNDS

Schneip had fallen into a half-doze when he was awakened by a shock, or rather a bump, and he knew that the train was going — but whither? The car jolted and jostled, and made him quite miserable; then came hunger and thirst, and these, added to the incessant jolting, soon made him dizzy, and he fell into a deep sleep. He awoke a number of times during his journey, but he did not know how long it was.

The train stopped several times, and at these times he tried vainly to open the door of the car. He was afraid to call for help, and even desisted in his attempts to escape from the car when he heard the brakeman walking on top of it; but each mile travelled increased his thirst and hunger.

At one of these stops a cattle-car was coupled on next to the one in which he was imprisoned, and the moaning of the beasts added to his already intense wretchedness, making each minute seem longer than the last. Thus with the moans and the groans of the cattle, and the shriek of the whistle of the locomotive, the train was borne into the great freight-yard of Chicago.

It stopped, and Schneip's car was detached. Another engine took it, and wheeled it away, seemingly an interminable distance. Schneip could see through a small crack in the door that night was coming on. He heard the voices of the men as they loaded and unloaded the cars near him. Gradually the number of voices grew less, and Schneip was falling asleep again, when with a sudden *bang* his car door was thrown open, and a heavy object fell with a thud upon the floor.

Two negro men with lanterns then jumped into the car.

"Push it over to the left," said one.

"By God, look there!" said the other; and both men stopped suddenly, and looked fixedly at Schneip. One of them struck him a heavy blow with his fist.

"What are you doin' here, you pot-bellied vagrant?" demanded the negro, and again struck the poor boy over the head.

"I'se goin' to call a policeman, I is," said the other; and it seemed to Schneip only a few seconds until a blue-coated, brass-buttoned policeman stood before him.

"What's your name?" thundered the officer.

"Johannes Schneip."

"You don't look like no *snipe*, you don't," said the negro. "You're a queer looking bird, you are."

Schneip, terribly frightened, made an effort to escape through the open door, but was intercepted by the officer.

"No, you don't, not much. You are a vagrant, and I'll take you along with me."

Taking a firm hold of Schneip's collar, he dragged him from the car, and walked what seemed to Schneip a very great distance. There was nothing to be seen but line after line of freight-cars. The headlights on the locomotives attached to some of these trains seemed like the great eyes of big devils which were looking the poor boy through and through, as the policeman whisked him on and on between these lines of cars.

"Nothing but blows and hard words," thought poor Schneip, as the policeman prodded him with his "billy," urging him on. Some of the train-hands looked at him kindly, but most of them laughed at the poor vagrant.

Finally they emerged into a broad open street, and the din of the many carriages and teams still further added to the prisoner's confusion. The officer stopped suddenly here, and taking a whistle from his pocket, blew a shrill note. It was answered almost immediately, and another officer stood by Schneip.

"Took him out of a car; vagrant, take him up," said the first officer, handing him over to the second. He took him down a broad street lined on either side by tall buildings. It seemed to Schneip's frightened gaze that these buildings almost reached the moon. He exclaimed wonderingly in German,—

"These houses are as high as the moon."

The officer caught his words, and turning, said, "*Bist du Deutsch?*"

The boy answered, "*Ja;*" and taking courage at finding one of his own countrymen, asked in piteous tones what he intended to do with him, and begged him to show mercy.

Before the officer could reply they ascended a short flight of stairs, passed through a narrow door, turned sharply around to the left, and stopped in front of a desk, behind which were several of the "blue-coated gentry."

The officer explained in a few words to a man who seemed to be in authority, that Schneip had been given to him by the officer guarding the railroad yard, and that the only charge against him was vagrancy. The boy's looks did not belie the charge. His clothes were covered with black grease, he smelled of rank bacon; the grease and odor being obtained from the car in which he made his journey.

"A dirty one, by God," remarked the sergeant.

"I am hungry and cold," said Schneip in German to his captor.

The sergeant said, "Some of your jargon, I suppose."

"Some low German," responded the officer, as he held tightly to Schneip's collar.

"Low German," repeated the sergeant, "I should think it was 'low,' even for a Chinaman. I'll wager my boots and my pistol he's lousy. Cell twenty-two, Lichmann."

"*Ja wohl*," said the officer.

"None of your high Dutch at me," replied the sergeant as Lichmann marched the prisoner away.

They went down a long corridor with iron doors on either side, and up an iron staircase, and through another long corridor, and then down a few steps, at the bottom of which an iron door opened as if by magic.

"Go in," said the officer in German; and shoving Schneip into the cell, slammed the door and locked it.

The first thing that caught Schneip's attention was a queer little noise. It might have been human, and it might have been produced by some instrument; but it caught his attention, and for a moment made him forget his misery. It came and went periodically, and the intervals between were filled in with a series of thuds, as though some one were beating a heavily cushioned object which was hollow, hence resonant.

He listened intently, and while pondering was frightened by the most unearthly yells which seemed to be right at his elbow. They came in quick succession, four or five of them, and then the dull beating increased in rapidity.

"Take them off, take them off," shouted a voice; "they are choking me; they are strangling me."

"Take off the top of your head, you infernal idiot," shouted another man across the way, "and let people sleep. Who are you, you miserable thing with the horrors? Eat your old snakes if you want to, but let us sleep.

Just as his next door neighbor was quieting down, Schneip's attention was attracted by a sound in the corridor. He heard the tramp of two men as they dragged some heavy object along. A door opened opposite his own, and he heard something fall as though a heavy body were thrown upon a mass of straw.

Schneip looked around him for the first time, and saw a straw bed in a corner of his cell. Having previously sat on a hard stool, he got up and threw himself down on the bed of straw; but not to sleep.

Soon a voice began to call, at first faintly, "Water, water, water." It executed a magnificent crescendo, and then a diminuendo, and then a crescendo. This was continued, Schneip knew not how long, but it seemed an age.

He finally fell asleep; but suddenly a bright light awoke and frightened him. He sprang to his feet, fearing some fresh misery might be in store. Looking between the bars of the grating in the door of his cell, he saw two men in the corridor holding lighted candles.

"That's no apoplectic," said one.

"Wrong cell, dear me," said his companion with a low drawl. Another door was opened, and a sound of heavy breathing was heard.

Accompanying the heavy breathing was a puffing noise which regularly interrupted it. It seemed to Schneip as though some one were alternately sucking in and blowing out his cheeks, thus causing them to act like valves, which impeded the respiration.

The two men who had entered the cell retraced their steps, and called down the hall, "Slinkworthy, lend us a hand. We must get this man out. This air will stifle us all."

A footstep passed Schneip's door, and went into a cell near by. Schneip's curiosity got the better of his sufferings; and again peering between the iron bars, he saw three men carrying a very large man. They laid him on the floor in front of Schneip's door. He looked immense in the light of the dim candles they held over him.

One of the three men was evidently a physician. He took a candle from the hand of the officer, and very carefully scrutinized the features of the individual who lay upon the floor. He then stooped over and smelled his breath.

"Slinkworthy," he remarked, "this man may be stricken with apoplexy, but he is certainly dead drunk."

While the men were leaning over him, a white face appeared at the bars across the way, just over the head of the physician, and yelled in a stentorian voice, "Water, water."

The physician was much startled, while Mr. Slinkworthy was indignant. This functionary quickly raised his candle, and deftly singed the end of the nose protruding between the bars.

"There, you goggle-eyed heathen," he exclaimed; "I'll teach you to frighten the livers out of all of us."

Turning to his patient, the doctor was amazed to find the life-spark ebbing, and in a little while the drunken man was dead. In the pocket was found a card which bore the name, "John Benedict Steele," and an address of "Tremont House, Boston."

Poor Schneip went back to his straw bed heartsick, starved, and ill.

CHAPTER VII

"GUILTY OR NOT GUILTY"

A PROMINENT writer has said that time is relative, and that eternity alone is absolute. A little time, as measured by the human mind, when even consciousness itself is a burden, which was the case with Schneip, may seem an eternity.

But a few hours of sleep came at last; and after it the dawn and the morn, and Schneip's arraignment before a police justice. He, having had an opportunity to partake of a meagre breakfast, and wash the dirt from his face and hands, was in due time hustled with vagabonds, thieves, and other varieties of law-breakers, into a police court; and what a sight greeted his eyes! At every door were uniformed guardians of the peace, and everywhere in the room were filthy people. There were old men and women, young men and women, and boys and girls of all ages. Schneip noticed, as he entered, a desk, and at it a man busily writing; and he also noticed different policemen come up and hold up their right hands; and then the man who was writing would say something to them, Schneip could not hear what; and then the aforesaid man at the desk would give them formidable looking documents, and these brass-buttoned individuals would go off with them.

Let us describe Schneip's surroundings more exactly. He was in a dirty basement room, with a bare dirty floor, with dirty white walls, and a dirty white ceiling. There were hard benches arranged in rows across the room, and on the right side of the room was a pen constructed of boards. This rough partition was about six feet high, having a door opening from the central aisle of the room, and was called the prisoners' dock.

Into this dock Schneip was placed by an officer. Inside of the pen were a number of hard benches on which several prisoners were sitting. The front part of the pen was open, and faced the desks (one of which has been mentioned before), which were upon a platform elevated about three feet from the floor.

In a few moments a long, spare man entered the room. Schneip noticed that he was hollow-eyed and hollow-cheeked. He had a bright red spot on each cheek, which enhanced the exceeding paleness of the rest of his face. There was a tuft of red whiskers on his chin, and the top of his head was quite bald. His whole face had the expression of being intensely bored. He wore a white tie, and had on a greasy black broadcloth suit, and his long frock coat nearly reached the floor. This curious dress made the very tall man look taller. His watery blue eyes looked as though they would weep any minute. This was Judge O'Cafferty.

In the police court there were no lawyers; at least, there was only one man present who looked like a lawyer, and he was there looking out for the juvenile offenders against the law.

I have said there was no lawyer present. Judge O'Cafferty appeared to be at once judge, lawyer, prosecuting attorney, and jury. This man betrayed genius by his every movement, and his words were full of wisdom keen beyond description. He despatched cases with a lightning-like rapidity, the sight of which would have given some of the judges of the higher courts a legal vertigo.

As an instance: a black, burly negro was called up, charged with having stolen a carpet. The negro entered a plea of "not guilty" to the clerk of the court. The judge commanded him to stand before him, and, casting one furtive glance with his watery blue eyes at the prisoner, asked him if he knew he was under oath. As he spoke, the judge's tone was fairly pleading and tender.

"Yes, sah, I knowed it," answered the negro, not at all abashed.

Then the judge asked, "*Did you steal that carpet?*"

"No, sah," again he answered.

"Sit down," commanded the judge.

"Officer O'Han," called Judge O'Cafferty, and a powerful man in policeman's uniform stepped forth.

The clerk of the court commanded him to hold up his right hand; and Schneip wondered if he were going to give him a paper, too, to take out of the room, but he did not. The officer told the judge that he had found the Brussels carpet, which had been recognized by its owner, rolled up and put away down in a cellar inhabited by the accused, and how the accused, Bob Monkety, had been employed in the owner's house, and that one night the carpet disappeared when Bob did. The judge then commanded Bob to stand again, and again asked him tearfully, "Did you hear the officer's statement?"

"Yes, sah, I heerd it," said Bob.

Now the judge waxed eloquent. His voice shook and trembled like a broken reed in an old cabinet organ.

"If you did not steal that carpet, how did it get into your basement?"

The negro, nothing daunted, answered, "Now, Judge, don't ask me such silly questions;" and the judge bound him over in a hundred dollars bail to await the action of the grand jury.

As the officers were hustling him out of the court, he was heard to say, "Bail your great aunt's turkey-gobbler fer pickin' de kernels off de roastin' ears in de fiel'. I'se no bloated bondholder."

The whole trial took about seven minutes, and after this fashion the machine of the law did its work until the juvenile cases were called; then the judge commanded all the newspaper reporters to leave the room, and, judging by the exodus from the door, about all the men, women, and children were representatives of the press. There were some dirty boys and girls left in the dock to keep Schneip company. Most of them were pickpockets, while others, again, had committed petty larceny in one form or another.

Schneip was growing very hungry; and, as one after another of his fellow juveniles were dismissed with a mild admonition or with a light sentence at the workhouse, it occurred to him that the judge would vent all the vials of his wrath upon his unoffending head.

Finally his name was called; and the agent for the society with a long name came up, and walked with him to the desk of the clerk. At the same time one of the policemen stepped forward, and came up on the other side of the clerk's desk; and Schneip recognized his countryman whom he had met the night before.

He held up his right hand in obedience to the command of the clerk; and having gone through the ceremony of being sworn, a new one for him, the policeman instructed him to plead "not guilty," when he was asked, "guilty or not guilty."

He then went before the judge; and Lichmann, the policeman, offered to interpret for him, and Schneip's simple history was elicited. There was indeed little that was romantic about it.

Born in the kingdom of Würtemberg in the year of our Lord 1859, of peasant parentage, his earliest recollections were of hard labor in the field with his mother. For reasons not very clear to Schneip his father and mother moved to Berlin when he was six years old. He worked in Berlin in a large dingy old factory, carrying great bundles of wire up-stairs, until one day his father came home with a bullet wound in his arm; and the next event in Schneip's dull dream of life was a long voyage across the deep, cooped up in a large room on board the vessel, where everybody around him was seasick most of the time.

During the passage his father died; and, after landing, his mother and himself worked their way, by one means or another, westward.

Schneip told how he had worked as Farmer Block's helper, and also that he had been permitted two or three periods at school of two or three months each, and he also told that he was willing to work hard, and had worked hard; but he hoped that if he worked he might receive fewer blows and a little more kindness than had been awarded him by his mother.

The policeman was willing to stand as Schneip's sponsor before the law, and promised the judge that he would get him some work. His promise resulted in Schneip's charge being dismissed; and Schneip, hungry and tired, left the ill-ventilated court-room, and went home with Lichmann the policeman.

CHAPTER VIII

ROBERT FINDS FRESH PROMISE IN HIS DARK LIFE

Colonel and Mrs. Southerly decided to send Robert to a school for the blind, a sad name for a school, yet for Robert there was a world of hope in the term.

Few who have their sight realize to what extent it links them to the phenomena of daily existence. From the time when the eyes of the infant first teach its mind to recognize its mother's face, until perhaps the eyes speak the last sad farewell in life's cycle, sight is the principal avenue through which thought is awakened by the real world about us. The great majority of one's memories are of things seen.

When it was decided to send Robert away to school, he had already learned to read by touch in the "Blind Child's First Book;" but he was nervous and impatient, and soon realized that he could learn much faster through the eyes of others than through his own fingers.

Reared upon a Southern plantation, and being the pet of the household, he had been humored a great deal, perhaps too much; for the love and sympathy which Colonel and Mrs. Southerly felt for him had been in some directions a hindrance. The little fellow had been allowed to do nothing for himself that could be done for him, and a faithful servant guided his every step.

So the little fellow of seven years was as helpless as a child of two. Colonel Southerly had told him that he should be his heir, and frequently declared to his neighbors that "little Robert should never want for anything."

One September morning the Colonel and Robert tc the train for Concord, where was situated the school for the blind. The journey was a long one, without event, and in due time they reached the city. After a comfortable night in the hotel, they drove to the school.

The building was like many others of its class. It consisted of a central building with two wings. The grounds were large but ill-kept, as the institution needed money. Colonel Southerly and Robert were admitted to a large reception-room, and in a few minutes the director of the school came in. He was a very large man, and, like his pupils, was sightless. Although totally blind, he walked with a firm step, and carried himself like a soldier.

The ceremonies of the introduction over, Mr. Willoughby, the principal, addressed himself at once to his little pupil; and Robert was much impressed by his ringing, high-pitched, shrill voice. His manner to the child was unusual. It was free from all assumption of dignity or authority. He treated him more as an equal. Robert's spirits were rapidly falling, and the speed of their decline increased when Colonel Southerly bade him "good-by." For the first time in his life he was left entirely among strangers, and how strange these strangers were too! No kind glances could go from their eyes to his. The light of day did not reveal to him his surroundings. A fearful sense of overpowering desolation and loneliness came over him.

Only a few pupils had as yet arrived for that year's instruction; and the house was oppressively quiet, the silence being only occasionally broken by a footfall of a servant, or the voice of some one in the distance.

Mr. Willoughby placed the little fellow on a sofa beside him, and taking a wax tablet and a stiletto which was near by, guided Robert's hand, and in this way taught him to make a few geometrical figures. He then led him to the back part of the building; for the director could go about, where he knew his way, as well as a man with sight. He called, "Jeff, Jeff."

A gruff voice answered, and in a few minutes a boy about thirteen years of age came in and was introduced to Robert.

Mr. Willoughby explained to Robert that Jeff would take care of him, and stated that he would see him later, perhaps at dinner; for it was a peculiarity of Mr. Willoughby's never to admit but that he and every one else in the world could "see."

Jeff and Robert went out together into the yard at the rear of the institution, where a strange roar caught Robert's ears, and a whirring noise blending with it heightened the remarkable effect upon his senses. He experienced a sensation as though he had been launched into limitless space, and clung closely to his companion. He heard voices which seemed to be a long way off, and mingled with the roaring, whirring noise was the puffing of an engine.

Could Robert have opened his eyes and seen his surroundings, his terror would not have been so great. He would then have perceived that the back yard of the school was bounded by a river, overhung by a bluff whose edge was protected by a high wall. He would also have seen blue smoke curling up from an engine beneath the bluff, which furnished power to a planing-mill, and, across the river, a beautiful suburb of the city. Not seeing, he felt intuitively the large amount of space in front of him. The ground on which he walked seemed strange to his feet, and the chill damp of the morning was depressing in its effect upon his four remaining senses. A strange, unreasoning longing took hold of him, a fearful, oppressive longing, together with a despairing sense of loneliness and helplessness. Naturally proud, he controlled his emotions as best he could, and tried to talk with his companion.

His burly friend, also totally blind, offered to take Robert upon his back around the grounds. He knelt; and Robert climbed upon his back, and threw his arms about his neck. The boy walked off as though he could see every inch of the way, and rapidly increased his speed until he broke into a run. Robert did not realize that Jeff, like himself, was blind. Away went the boy, hither and yon, but soon suddenly stopped.

Robert noticed, in the meantime, that the roaring which he had at first heard had increased. Jeff let him down upon the grass, and said, "I'll show you the bluff wall now. The bluff is more than one hundred feet high; but you can't fall off, because you can't get over this wall."

Taking Robert by the hand, the two went up to the wall, and felt of the huge stones of which it was made; and Robert innocently enough asked what a bluff was, for he had never heard of such a thing. His playmate laughed heartily at this, and explained to him its nature, and told him of the river. Then the two boys, hand in hand, went back to the institution building, and up the stairs, and through the long corridor into the schoolroom.

Certain particulars of this room, which a casual observer might not have noticed, may be worth describing.

There were maps hanging on the walls, and one looking closely at them would discern that they were mounted upon heavy wooden frames. The surfaces of the maps were traversed by lines of pin-heads, marking out the boundary lines of the states and countries; and individual pins were driven into the wood at the sites of the principal towns and cities. The rivers were represented by excavations made in the wood; and the edges of these excavations were elevated with glue, and were intended to represent the river-banks. The portions of the maps representing different lakes and oceans had been chiselled out, and by this means the level was lower than that of the land.

There were bookcases in the room, and even a careless observer would have been impressed by the enormous size of the volumes they contained. Most of the books were from four to six inches in thickness. They were long and wide, and looked very heavy, but were not; for they were loosely bound, and did not contain so many pages as a book of the same size ordinarily would have done. The names were printed in embossed letters on the backs. There was a huge globe in one corner, which some mischievous child had unfortunately cracked around the line of the equator. The countries comprising the different parts of the globe were embossed, thus making it easy to learn their position by touch. There were desks and chairs much like any other schoolroom.

After Robert had felt of the maps, Jeff offered to show him his slate; and opening a desk took a very curious looking object from it, — a thick, square, leaden plate set in a wooden frame, the edges sloping towards the plate, which was perforated with square holes. Jeff took some metallic type from a box, and explained them to Robert. These type, when set into the holes in the slate in different positions, represented figures; and in this way the blind children learned to figure and work their problems. Lying on the desks were pieces of pasteboard with transverse grooves, and with these grooved boards the pupils learned to write and keep the lines by feeling.

There were piles of bright brass plates covered with embossed letters stacked up in one end of the room, upon which the little ones first trained their touch. The Brail tablet was next produced, — a rectangular piece of wood across which ran a strip of brass full of holes, the sides of which were divided into little notches. Jeff raised the brass strip from one end of the wood, and neatly fitted a sheet of paper beneath it, and with a stiletto pricked holes in the paper. These pricks made dots upon the under surface of the paper; and different positions of these dots represented different letters of the alphabet, punctuations, etc. By these signs the children could write a system of hieroglyphics, and could read their own writing by touch.

Robert was amazed at the rapidity with which this amateur instructor handled the different apparatus.

Dinner was announced, and Robert was introduced to two or three teachers who had returned from their vacation. Unaccustomed as he was to meeting strangers, their frivolous table conversation added to his ever-increasing loneliness.

The human voice carries with it the temperament of the individual, and something more. It tells whether the speaker is interested or not in the one to whom he is speaking.

Naturally these teachers took no especial interest in Robert, and his wonderfully quick ear told him so. After the meal, which seemed to him to have lasted a long time, one of the instructresses led him upon the veranda, and there left him to the storm of loneliness and homesickness that swept over him. And standing there the little stranger could not shield himself by diversion from the torrent of desolation which was springing up within his darkened soul. Every sound seemed strange, and the depression grew until pent-up emotion found vent in tears. Ashamed of his grief, he hid himself behind one of the large sanded columns, battling bravely all the while for self-control, when the kindly eyes of the matron spied him as she came down the veranda. Taking in the situation at a glance, she led Robert to Mr. Willoughby. This big, fat man, with a heart twice as large as the rest of himself (if we may measure it by his deeds), gathered the boy in his arms, and in his usual shrill voice, half asserted, half asked, "Robert, you are homesick?"

The child knew instinctively that he had found a friend; and more than this, he knew that the soul of his instructor read and understood his soul. This was no ordinary homesickness. It was the battle of Robert's innermost nature with strange surroundings with which he could not familiarize himself.

Mr. Willoughby took Robert to his own room, and bade him undress. He had never performed this function for himself, as it always had been done by an attendant. The director soon discovered that Robert had never been taught to help himself, and right there began the first lesson which brought him from a realm of mental as well as physical darkness into the world of intellectual light. This simple lesson of his kindly teacher aroused in him a desire to do for himself, which was destined to be the motive force of his future life. But the homesickness had taken a strong hold of him, and for several days he was made really ill by it.

Mr. Willoughby believed that the first thing to be done with a blind child was to teach him, as far as possible, physical independence. He had devised a system of physical instruction, by which his pupils could learn to find their way about, and avoid large obstacles in their paths.

Robert presently learned to run up and down all kinds of ladders; and in a very short time the little boy who used to creep along, for he dared not run as did other children, raced over the verandas and playgrounds, and found in his newly acquired freedom a fresh stimulus for renewed exertion. He had been in school only a few days when the teacher of music arrived, a lady of about thirty years. She was also deprived of her sight; and in her appearance there was nothing remarkable excepting a sensitive, intellectual face. One characteristic she had, however, which endeared her to all around her. This was her voice. It was sweet, rich, and tender, and withal a peculiar patience could be heard in its tones.

Robert received his first music-lesson on that day. Placing him upon a piano-stool, the blind instructress took the little white hand of her pupil and had him feel of the key-board.

"There," she said, "these raised keys are the black keys. You see they occur in groups of two and three. The long keys which are placed one beside another are the white keys. The white key on the right hand side inside each group of three black ones is the letter A;" and she enumerated the letters following up to G.

The inanimate key-board seemed to be a friend to Robert, for he learned it in a very short time. Five-finger exercises followed each other in due time; then the first study from Richardson's instruction book was learned, and the jingle of its melody seemed like a fresh promise in his dark life.

It is generally supposed that blind children learn music by ear. This is not true. They learn first to locate the keys upon the piano. They learn the time-tables next; and then having comprehended the values of notes, music is read to them, and they memorize the notes and their rhythmic values.

Robert's instructor wrote to Colonel Southerly that the boy was talented, but that his nervous system was altogether too highly organized. Thus day by day Robert Netherland advanced in knowledge. He learned the raised maps one by one; familiarity with the type-slate came rapidly with practice, and the art of Brail writing was soon acquired. With him were many children as helpless as himself; but under Mr. Willoughby's training the four senses soon learned to do the work of the one which was lost.

So marvellously did they do this work, so wonderfully did the blind children learn, that it often seemed to some of their instructors that there must be some avenue by which they acquired knowledge which was not known to persons accustomed to learning and studying principally through the medium of sight. Children who could at first scarcely take a step without being guided, under Mr. Willoughby's wise direction learned first to find their way, then to avoid any obstruction of any considerable size which they might encounter. Mr. Willoughby used to explain that this was accomplished by the children feeling the vibrations of air upon any large object which was in their pathway.

Sound and touch, then, and possibly something else, enabled Mr. Willoughby's pupils to pursue the studies ordinarily taught children in a good school; and the helpless ones of an endless night learned that the happiness gained from knowledge must be their only daylight.

The months went on, and with them Robert's development; and when the school year passed away, the formerly helpless blind child returned home a mischievous, sprightly boy. His pale cheeks had grown ruddy, his flabby muscles strong.

One summer day he went to a huge warehouse with his uncle, where there was a large amount of tobacco stored away. It had just been cured, and the leaves were tied up in large bales. Robert, liking the aromatic odor of the leaves, mounted upon a big pile and began smelling of them. In a little while he scrambled and rolled down from the top of the pile with a bunch of leaves in his hand.

"These smell nasty, uncle," he said, holding them up to the Colonel.

"Why, you said a moment ago that you liked the smell of tobacco; you are a changeable little fellow."

"I do like the smell of most of it; but these leaves are nasty," he insisted forcibly.

Colonel Southerly took them from his hand, and looked at them very carefully. He took a botanical magnifying-glass from his pocket, with which he was in the habit of examining wheat, which he bought extensively. To his utter amazement he found that the leaves were beginning to mould, but he could not perceive this with his naked eye. Thinking it might be a chance coincidence, for *he* could smell nothing wrong with them, he sent his *protégé* back to the big pile of tobacco with a request for more nasty leaves, if he could find them.

Robert dug away at the pile of tobacco with his little hands, and rapidly made quite a hole in it, sniffing it constantly as he worked. Soon he found more leaves which smelled like the first. Back he came helter-skelter, rolling and tumbling down the pile, with the musty leaves in his hands. The colonel took them, and found by the use of the glass even less mould on them than on the others. He made Robert bring him several lots, and each time the child unerringly selected the musty tobacco from the good.

"By George," said the colonel to Robert, "you have saved me several hundred dollars; had it not been for you, my pet, I should not have detected that this pile of tobacco, for which I paid five hundred dollars, was beginning to spoil."

He looked down at Robert, whose white duck suit in which his aunt had so carefully dressed him that morning was all soiled and yellow. It was a quaint little suit, with trouser legs coming down to his ankles. Mrs. Southerly had made them with her own hands, and it must be confessed that two pairs of legs the size of Robert's might have been inserted in the trousers without bursting the stitches.

The colonel said, "Well, I suppose your aunt will scold, but never mind this time. This is a matter we can afford to be scolded for." Then to a negro, "Charlie, bring Lightning Rod. We must get down to the store."

The black man brought a horse as black as himself, and the colonel mounted. Charlie put Robert up behind him upon a blanket. Robert then put his arms around his uncle's waist, and Lightning Rod paced away. Lightning Rod was one of those natural pacers, large and well-formed; he went over the ground with but little effort, his feet seeming scarcely to touch it.

Like many farmers, Colonel Southerly kept a "general" store, which was a very fascinating place for Robert. It was a dirty place, for the laborers on the farm received their wages mainly in supplies from it. These men would come in and buy their molasses and tobacco, to which there would be no objection had they not chewed the latter, and spit upon the floor, which practice was disgustingly uncleanly.

On the shelves on one side of the store were bolts of bright-colored calico, and great rolls of blue jeans; bundles of "domestic" lay upon the broad counters. Under these counters were boxes which were on wheels, and which contained brown sugar, coffee, and "sody," as it is called in the popular vernacular of that region.

Great swarms of flies played at hide-and-seek in these boxes, when they were left open by a careless clerk, as was frequently the case. On the shelves in the back part of the store were tall jars containing red and white sticks of candy. Big boxes of plug tobacco were exposed to view, while another section of shelves was devoted to innumerable patent medicines. There were tin canisters of ginger and spice and candles, all placed where the eye would take them in at a glance, while on the top shelf were arranged great lines of tinware. There were buckets of all sizes; there were tin lanterns drilled full of holes, which looked as if they were intended to pepper the light around in spots, and thus render darkness blacker.

It was harvest time; and Robert had been to school three years, and was very proud of his achievements. He had learned to find most of the articles in his uncle's store. He would wrap up the horseshoes in bundles as the blacksmiths called for them, and sell the children ten sticks of candy for ten cents, when they were so fortunate as to have this sum, which was rare. He would insist upon surreptitiously putting handfuls of loaf sugar into the water cooler, much to the disgust of Colonel Southerly, who did not at all approve of this method of serving sweets to the public. Robert also sold most of the patent medicines, for he knew each bottle by its shape.

One day in the busiest part of harvest it happened that Colonel Southerly sent his two clerks to the field to assist the overseer in looking after the negroes. He spent most of the morning with Robert at the store; but wishing to know how the men were getting along, he left Robert in charge. He told him laughingly to sell anything he could while he was gone, thinking to himself that there would be no customers, as not a soul had visited the store that morning, all being busy at harvesting.

The colonel rode away on Lightning Rod, leaving Robert with his old attendant, who had just arrived, in sole charge of the store.

It was a hot, sultry day. The heat was peculiarly aggressive. Not a breeze moved the leaves anywhere, and the air was dry, and burned the face like the heat from a baker's oven. The old negro was telling Robert stories, as they sat on the porch in front of the store, when they both heard the sound of an engine puffing laboriously, and the crunching, ringing, grinding noise of wheels.

"Why, laws a-massy! der comes a steam-threshing machine," said the black man.

"Why, what is that?" asked Robert.

"Why, honey, that's a machine what threshes wheat like a streak o' lightnin'. It jest pours it out bushel by bushel. It can gobble up more straw than any six horses you eber saw."

The strange sounds approached yet nearer. Then a voice called, "Where is Colonel Southerly?"

"Gone to de harvest fiel'," said the darkey. "Now I s'pose you want to thresh the colonel's wheat?"

"Yes," said the man; "but I want some tobacco."

Robert proudly went behind the counter; and while wrapping up the package for his new customer, Colonel Southerly arrived.

There were some ten or a dozen men with the threshing-machine, and other neighbors began to arrive on horseback. The store, so quiet before, was now a scene of bustle. Among the neighbors was a farmer who said, "Colonel Southerly, I want to sell you my crop of tobacco."

The colonel laughingly replied that his nephew Robert did all his tobacco buying, and continuing said, "Robert can tell the color of tobacco by touch better than you can with your eyes."

"The good Lord be praised!" said the farmer, "the blind boy has eyes in his fingers."

Then the family physician rode up, and finding Robert feeling of tobacco leaves was much amazed at his ability to tell their colors by touch.

"Why, the child must see," he said; and added, "Will you go into the closet and find those colors in the dark?"

Robert consenting, they shut him in the closet, giving him different packages of tobacco leaves. In the total darkness the child sorted out each different package, arranging the different colors in piles around him. Opening the door, he handed the bundles out one by one. "This package," he said, "is light yellow, and this is very dark; this pile is a rich brown."

The astonishment of the farmers was unspeakable. One after another of the workmen took pieces of tobacco from their pockets, and Robert would tell the color of each plug as it touched his finger-tips.

"It is incomprehensible," said Dr. Shootmaster. "I have heard that when one sense was gone the extra work imposed upon the others strengthened and rendered them more acute. But this, indeed, is beyond my comprehension. Do you suppose the child has some sense which we do not possess?" he asked Colonel Southerly.

"I cannot say as to that," replied the colonel; "but he certainly can tell the colors of tobacco more accurately than I can."

"I want to thresh your wheat," interrupted a deep voice impatiently.

"What is a threshing-machine like?" asked Robert, when the colonel had completed arrangements with its owner.

"Oh, it is a very large box with a big cylinder full of teeth, and it is run by a steam-engine; and it can thresh more wheat in a day than three machines can which are run by horse-power. I will show you how to blow the whistle," continued the owner of the machine; and taking Robert up, sat him by the engineer. Robert pulled the string, and the engine shrieked.

"What is the engine like?" he inquired. "I want to feel all over it."

"Why, the heat would burn your hands, honey," said the black man.

"We will all have a ride to the field," said the owner of the machine, "and you shall start the engine."

Placing Robert's hand on the lever which controlled the valve, he gave it a pull, and the engine moved lazily, dragging the machine after it.

CHAPTER IX

VALIDITY OF STEELE PATENT QUESTIONED

Mr. Steele was growing old gracefully, and growing rich rapidly. The simple invention, which he had bought for a mere trifle from a poor Italian, had been, under his shrewd management, a great success.

Had it been so with those who had bought stock in the company? For some of them; and for others merely another lesson of loss, but a lesson whose moral was never learned. Large buildings were built with the stockholders' money, machinery was ordered and put in place, and "Steele's hair-clippers" were manufactured by the thousand, and sold everywhere. Dividends, however, were not forthcoming. The company was constantly in need of more capital; and because of this need a very wise judge down in Maine granted this company, which was chartered in the Pine Tree State, permission to more than treble its capital stock.

Offices of the "Steele Hair-Clipper Company" sprang up in every city throughout the country, and the stock sprang up in every exchange. Then Mr. Steele proceeded to "unload himself," as dealers in stock express it.

Having made two hundred and fifty thousand dollars by this transaction, it occurred to him that he would turn to new fields for investment. With this end in view, on a hot summer day he strolled down Washington Street towards State on his way to the office of Messrs. Spittleworth & Buttons. Two men approached unobserved by him; one an aged man, the other a little man, both of whom recognized Mr. Steele.

Mr. Steele nearly ran over the little man, and looking down recognized his little friend, the editor of *The Intellectual Omnibus*, and turning around, also recognized the face of the old man, who, following the direction of the stars, had staked his last thousand dollars in the stock company which Mr. Steele had promoted.

"I hear you have sold out," Mr. Sampson said to Mr. Steele.

"I'm all the time selling out," said Mr. Steele; "in which particular direction do you mean this time?"

"Why, the hair-clipping machine," Mr. Sampson replied.

"Bless me, yes," said Mr. Steele; "I never remain connected with any one stock company more than four years. Having led it to success, I wish to go on developing my country's resources in other directions."

"What time is it?" asked Mr. Sampson.

"Heral-d-Globe-an-Recid, five o'clock edition; full account of the big lawsuit," shouted a shrill-voiced newsboy, pronouncing the names of these newspapers as though they were one word, in a manner peculiar to the newsboy of Boston.

"Why," said Mr. Steele, "it is half-past two in the afternoon. How wonderfully enterprising those newspapers are; they even anticipate the revolutions of the earth before it has time to turn upon its axis."

The old man took a penny out of his pocket, and bought a *Boston Evening Record.* There in big headlines he saw the following: —

"VALIDITY OF STEELE PATENT QUESTIONED.
AN ITALIAN BY THE NAME OF SARACCI CLAIMS
THAT HE WAS SWINDLED OUT OF IT.
FALL OF FIFTY PER CENT IN THE STEELE COMPANY'S
STOCK ON EXCHANGE TO-DAY."

"A claim for priority in the Steele patent. It cannot be possible," thought the old man, now beginning to need the thousand dollars which he had invested in it.

"Is it true?" he asked Mr. Steele. "Did some one swindle an Italian out of his patent?"

"Why, really, I trust not," said Mr. Steele; "I trust not. You may look the matter up, however; I am no longer connected with the company. Its secretary, our good friend Mr. Sampson, ought to be able to tell you."

The sun by this time was growing very hot, or rather its heat was becoming concentrated on the heads of these three gentlemen as they stood on the corner of State and Washington Streets.

Leaving his companions, Mr. Steele walked down the almost deserted street. It was Saturday; and the business men who could leave their offices had sailed away down the harbor, or ridden away upon the trains to spend Sunday in the country or by the seaside with their families.

Reaching his destination, Mr. Steele entered the building in which was situated the office of Messrs. Spittleworth & Buttons. Having satisfactorily transacted his business with these gentlemen, he again emerged upon the hot, dusty street, when he observed standing by the door an Italian peddler of toys. He looked at Mr. Steele stealthily, and then called him by name.

"Oh, Saracci," said Mr. Steele; "when did you go to peddling toys?"

"After you cheated me out of my invention," answered the Italian gruffly in broken English.

Mr. Steele surveyed him coldly but carefully, and saw that he held one hand inside the lapel of his ragged coat.

"Didn't I pay you what you asked?" he asked rather kindly.

"What I had to take to keep from starving," the man replied.

"What have you in your coat? Another invention?"

The man quickly drew his hand out, and held them both up to show that they were empty. Mr. Steele looked about him. The street was quite empty, save for a man standing half concealed in a door across the way. He recognized this man as a city detective. The Italian followed his gaze, and feeling intuitively that he was being shadowed, slunk away like a whipped dog.

When he had turned the corner, the detective crossed the street, and approaching Mr. Steele said, "Did you notice that man carefully?"

"Oh, yes; he is an old acquaintance of mine," replied Mr. Steele.

The detective said, "The Chicago police have wired instructions for us to watch him."

"Oh, I am sorry. I hope he is in no trouble," Mr. Steele responded, and, rubbing his two great hands together benignantly, walked away.

The Italian, after passing around the corner, entered a liquor-saloon, and watched the two men through one of the windows. The detective, true to his instinct, followed Saracci into the place. He went up and spoke to him, and priced his toys, and bought a little plaster of paris imitation of a bear mounted on a pedestal.

He then asked the Italian to drink with him, and some cheap white wine was ordered. While the Italian drank a pint of the wine without taking his lips from the glass, the detective drank beer. Cigarettes followed, as did a recital of Saracci's wrongs.

Mr. Steele went aboard the steamer, and sailed down the harbor. The Italian went to a stifling hot tenement in the North End, and the detective to a cool, pleasant home in Roxbury.

CHAPTER X

LOVE AND CHEMISTRY

Schneip obtained work the day after his release from custody. He was employed by a manufacturer of drugs as general messenger and errand boy, and slept in his employer's building. Several days after entering upon his new occupation, while dusting a number of carboys in the main laboratory, he noticed a volume lying upon one of the desks. He picked it up and read, "Atfield's Pharmaceutical Chemistry." The word chemistry aroused in him painful memories of his ill-treatment by his mother, mingled with curiosity as to the real nature of that mystical science.

He picked up the book, and began turning the leaves. Many of the illustrations pictured just such things as were in the room with him at that moment. There was a long bench, and above it shelves with rows of bottles, and iron retort-stands, whose long, slender arms terminated in rings which formed receptacles for bottles of all sizes. Test-tubes were in abundance everywhere. Curious looking bits of glass these, with one extremity rounded, while the other end was open, and the edge was fused so as to make a flange which surrounded the top of the tube.

This was no alchemist's shop hidden away in some dark cellar under the ground. It was lighted by great windows, and was large and airy; and there to the right of him was a little cabinet in which was a flue like a chimney-flue. The boys called it the "fume" cupboard. Up-stairs Schneip had seen the word "perfume" in gilt letters on a big bottle, and he ignorantly wondered what the relation between "fume" cupboard and "perfume" was. He also thought it probable that perfumes were manufactured in the fume cupboards.

If all odors were admitted to be perfumes, Schneip's speculations would have been correct in part; but since some of the odors generated in that cabinet were foul, while others were deadly poison, all of which were intended to escape through the flue, it will be seen that Schneip's analogy was rather vague.

Everywhere were Wedgewood mortars with pestles of all sizes. In one end of the room was a machine which looked like a huge coffee-mill. Great bottles which had no bottoms were placed in the retort-stands with their noses down. These were filled with all manner of herbs; and it was Schneip's duty, among other things, to pour alcohol into the large ends of these bottles, and then gather the liquid from the vessels placed beneath their noses as it "percolated" through. There were machines for pressing herbs, and everywhere there was a pungent, indescribable odor.

While Schneip was interestedly studying his surroundings, a bright-eyed young man came down a flight of stairs which led into one end of the room. He might have been five and twenty; he was short, with brown hair, and had a feeble mustache just struggling into existence.

"Hello," he said, "what are you doing here?"

Schneip answered in broken English.

"*Ach, du bist Deutsch, nicht war?*" said his companion; and Schneip answered gladly in his own language. The mental characteristics of these two were widely different; so had been the surroundings of their early lives. Different as they were, however, they soon became fast friends.

Schneip learned in a few words that the newcomer was Mr. Gilbraith, who had just been employed by the company as their principal chemist. He also learned that Mr. Gilbraith had graduated from the Institute of Technology in Boston; but he had no idea of the nature of such an institution, and Boston's geographical location was not very clear to him.

The chemist wished to learn German. He could read it; but like many college bred men, he spoke it very poorly indeed, if at all.

Schneip wished to learn — well, anything in the world that he could understand. Mr. Gilbraith succeeded in appropriating him for his laboratory boy; and Schneip, for once, had a congenial occupation.

How marvellous to his eyes were the wonderful colors which were evolved when certain clear, colorless fluids were mixed; while other foaming mixtures in the large beakers seemed to Schneip to be veritably alive, as they seethed and boiled when disturbed by a fresh fluid being added to them. Slow and patient, he served the chemist faithfully. Mr. Gilbraith advised him to go to an evening school, and Schneip improved his every opportunity. Days and weeks and months and years, at least three or four of the latter, moved on, and the dull, stupid German boy developed into a patient, studious young man.

Schneip worked daily at his occupation. He advanced both in technical skill and general knowledge. With these advances his financial condition also improved. Being all absorbed in the fascinating study of chemistry, he made but few friends. He occasionally spent an evening in a beer-saloon; but in his consumption of beer he was moderate, as in most other things. He was slow of thought; but his logical deductions were, as a rule, clear. He was plodding and patient with details. Everywhere, whenever he met one of his own nationality, he heard tales of discontent with the order of things. All kinds of strange methods of reforming society were proposed by men who would have done better had they begun the reform with themselves.

Schneip spent many a long evening sipping his glass of beer and eating pretzels, and listening attentively to what those around him had to say, but saying little himself. It was on such an evening, engaged in such an occupation, that he heard a man discussing the methods of making explosives. He had heard similar discussions many times before. With him were three companions, who were evidently much interested. One held a needle in his hand which belonged to a hypodermic syringe. Another had an old dingy-looking book from which he was reading aloud, while the third had an inoffensive pipe.

Schneip listened to what the man was reading, and also to the comments of the others upon it. Recognizing the subject to be chemistry, he joined the little party, and presently asked to be allowed to see the book. It was Comstock's Chemistry. That one magic title of an insignificant volume awoke the slumbering bitter associations of his early life. Schneip now knew more of chemistry than was contained in the little text-book. He had mastered the intricate details, in a great measure, even of organic chemistry.

His companion said in broken English, "If I could only do what is related in that book, I'd blow up the rich devils that cheat me out of the very bread I ought to have."

"Blow them up?" said Schneip.

"Yes, sky high;" and laughing at his own wit sought to be even more funny, and ejaculated, "high as the moon, high as the moon I'd blow 'em up."

Schneip's mind could not entertain but one idea at a time. He was so deeply absorbed in the discussion that he had not noticed the plump, rosy-cheeked, fair-haired, blue-eyed maid who stood behind the bar. He had drunk beer at this saloon a number of evenings, but the girl's beauty had not attracted him until this night.

Another member of the party said,—

"I wish I knew how to make prussic acid. I'd dog these rich men as they walk the streets; and on a dark night I'd suddenly run against one, stick this little needle into his skin, beg his pardon, and walk away a little distance, and watch him die on the street like a dog, away from his pretty home. He would not have any doctor to attend him there. No detective could find a clew to his death."

"But a chemist could tell how it occurred," answered Schneip. "I could analyze his blood, and tell that he had been poisoned with hydrocyanic acid. The blood of a person poisoned by hydrocyanic acid remains cherry red long after he is dead; besides, you would stand a chance of poisoning yourself while filling the syringe. A person was once known to have died from inhaling the fumes of pure 'prussic acid' as you call it."

"Oh, ho, my learned young man," answered the visionary poisoner "so you know all about it? Now, you are just the man we want. You are a poor devil, I know by your clothes; and what in the world stained your hands so brown? Earn about six dollars a week, eh?"

The man's pronunciation of English was good. He looked like a mulatto. The little accent he had might have been either Spanish or Portuguese. His hair was unquestionably that of a negro.

"How much do you get a week?" the man asked again.

"What I earn," said the other.

Something about the man's manner repelled Schneip as much as his stolid nature could be repelled by anything.

The conversation of the little group had attracted the attention of several others in the room, and two of them joined the party.

"We want a smart man," the dark speaker added; "we want some one who can make explosive packages that will go off just when you want them to."

"And when will you want them to?" asked Schneip.

"Oh, that depends. In the first place, there are the police; we want one for each of them. We might need some also for the militia; and we want some for the rich, the capitalists. I tell you, everything is all wrong," he added.

By this time there were six around the square wooden table. A party of new customers came in, and the two waiters were serving them also with beer. As the maid behind the bar had no one to serve these men, she carried the beer to them herself. There were six big glasses topped with foam on the bright, polished, metal tray, and carrying it was a vision of loveliness such as had never before greeted Schneip's eyes. Such impressions as Schneip had of womanhood in general were not very favorable. He had never known many, and had loved none. The barmaid came up on his right, and set down the glasses of beer one by one on the table. The girl was rather demure, and her plump rosy hands seemed to Schneip the very perfection of beauty. Her simple dress partially hid a rather fully developed bust. Around her fair neck was a string of amber beads. Their eyes met. The girl blushed and dropped hers; Schneip blushed too, perhaps the first blush of his whole life. She collected the money; and her eyes fell for a moment on Schneip's browned, stained hand as he laid the coin in her fair one.

Knowing that the place was kept by a German, it occurred to Schneip that the girl might also be a German; and he spoke to her in that language. There were two other Germans in the party, and the maid stood and talked with them for a moment. She returned to the bar, and the men to their beer and former conversation. All of them spoke English, as some of the party did not understand German. They sipped their beer, and when it was gone ordered more. Most of them agreed that no laws were needed. They agreed also that priests were of little use, and gave rise to almost as much abuse. They had no love for the soldiers, less for the police.

One said he had no love for his Creator, and a number joined him in this sentiment. If the Creator was responsible for the physical appearance of the men, Schneip thought he deserved little commendation, at least for these specimens of his work. Language is inadequate to convey an idea of the composite picture which this group of malcontents made upon Schneip's mind. There were certain traits common to all. The dominant ones were filth of person, extravagance of language, and an utter incapacity for coherent reasoning. The man who resembled a mulatto looked like a very desperate character. The other members of the group did not look wholly depraved.

The mulatto, however, had an ugly scowl, and his face betokened generally a treacherous disposition. He always smiled; while threatening in tones of thunder dire calamities on the rich, he continued to smile. He wore a smile which Schneip did not like when he ordered drinks of the barmaid. His smile was somewhat fawning when he wished to convey an impression of gentleness, but he smiled in one way or another all the time. Schneip realized this gradually. He could not keep his eyes off the man's face. The mulatto had had drink enough by this time to loosen his tongue thoroughly. He ranted about his own wrongs, and the wrongs of the rest of mankind. He declared that labor was oppressed, and that dynamite was the remedy. His language was a curious mixture of slang and extravagant, misapplied metaphor. His experience was a large one. He had been in prison twice, after graduating from a college out West. His picture was in the rogues' gallery, and he was rather proud of it; and told his hearers that he came from New Orleans, and said that his mother was a Frenchwoman, which might have been true. He maintained that his father was a Cuban sea-captain bearing the name of Manandez.

Schneip, judging by his appearance, thought it more likely that the man's father was a sea-cook.

He went on to tell how a lady who believed he was talented had sent him to college, and claimed that this lady had wronged him grievously afterwards by committing the heinous sin of refusing to pay debts which he had contracted by gambling. He had thrown away the money she had given him to pay his tuition, and she had refused to supply him with more. The only wrong this man could understand, or the only principle of right he could comprehend, was that which made him either uncomfortable or comfortable, as the case might be. He ignored the rights of other men, especially when they conflicted with his own passions and desires, and wished that he could burn the home of his former benefactress because she would not bail him out when he was arrested for forgery. She let him remain in prison three years for this offence when she could have obtained his release if she would. All of this he told rapidly and somewhat incoherently. Others recited their wrongs, until the proprietor of the saloon came up, and said, "Gentlemen, it is now time to close the place."

Schneip got up, as did all the others excepting Manandez, who was drunk enough to be ugly, and refused to depart. The keeper of the saloon was a mild-looking man of about forty. Over his body was distributed a large amount of adipose tissue which would have prevented much muscular exertion had he been so inclined. He was by nature a man of peace, and believed in "moral suasion." He was never in a great hurry about anything.

The mulatto swore at the laws, at the police, and at the saloon-keeper. He asserted vociferously that he had a right to stay all night at any place he pleased, if he pleased. His blustering and bullying were cut short, however; for the barmaid, apprehensive of danger, had called in a policeman. He entered the saloon, and recognized the mulatto at once; while in him Schneip recognized Lichmann, who had been so kind to him, although they had not met for a year or two, as Lichmann lived a short distance out of the city. The presence of the officer angered the mulatto more and more, but he still smiled. The officer grasped him by the arm, when the man deftly took a dirk from his breast, and drew back to strike the policeman. For once Schneip was quick. Just as the arm was raised he seized it, and with a quick motion dislocated it at the shoulder. The prisoner roared with pain, and struggled violently to free himself; but Schneip and the officer overpowered him. Schneip held him by the throat, and his strong grip put an end to the man's howls, and to his resistance at the same time.

"Take your hand off," Lichmann said to Schneip in German; "you will choke him to death."

Schneip obeyed.

The mulatto still smiled, but now it was a pleading, apologetic sort of a smile. He was very brave with persons who were physically inferior to him; but when mastered by superior force that smile was servile, low, and mean.

He left the room, with the officer on one side and Schneip on the other. Another officer soon relieved

Schneip, and again he found himself alone. He heard two voices behind him, and turning saw the barkeeper with his pretty daughter going out of the door of the saloon, which he locked after him. To Schneip's eyes the girl was prettier than ever in the dim gaslight. After they had disappeared, Schneip wandered up and down the street, and through the cross streets, and after a while went home and to bed.

Day succeeded night, night succeeded day, and each succeeding evening found Schneip at the beer-saloon where the pretty maiden dispensed the drinks, and soon their acquaintance grew into an attachment. What kind of an attachment? The future will perhaps tell. Schneip was in love with the physical beauty of the girl. The French word *amour* expresses best the kind of love which he experienced. There are kinds and kinds of love, and there are subvarieties of the same kind and of different kinds of love, and there are degrees of intensity of each variety of love. The beauty of the girl appealed to Schneip, but the appeal was not to his intellectual nature. It addressed itself more directly to the sensual and emotional sides of it.

Schneip knew chemistry. The girl knew only how to be simply her natural, girlish self. Now, chemistry is a very good thing to know, and a simple girlish girl is sweet; but will chemistry and a simple girlish girl agree when the simple beauty of the simple girlish girl begins to fade?

However, Schneip was married. It was a simple marriage; and he took his little wife to a simple home, consisting of four small rooms up one flight of stairs, in a clean, respectable tenement-house. Schneip's employers gave him a cooking-stove, a bed, and a half-dozen chairs. Schneip's mother-in-law gave them some curtains. They were simple, white, tidy bits of inexpensive lace. The day Schneip was married, there were five hundred dollars credited to him in the savings-bank; and after his little wife had bought the spoons, the knives, the forks, the dishes, the bed linen, and the thousand and one little things which even the simplest home must have for the simplest comfort, there were nearly three hundred dollars left. Schneip was married on Saturday; and when he went the following Saturday for his pay, he was told by the cashier that his employers had added two dollars a week to his salary, which made it twenty instead of eighteen.

CHAPTER XI

ROBERT'S PSYCHIC LIFE DEVELOPING

The conditions which were developirg Robert's psychic life were vastly different from those which surround the lives of most boys of his age. He progressed rapidly in his studies. So rapidly indeed did he acquire the knowledge imparted by his instructors, that at the end of his sixteenth year his teacher advised Colonel Southerly to place him in a school with boys who could see.

His summers were spent at home; and, like other boys, he played, but his play was unlike theirs. His faculty for discerning the different varieties and flavors of tobacco by smell and by touch had become the marvel of all Colonel Southerly's wide acquaintance. He had made several trips with his uncle to Lynchburg, Va., where they visited a number of large tobacco warehouses, and he had astonished the dealers in this commodity by his ability to select the finest and best qualities with marvellous rapidity and accuracy; but their astonishment gave place to amazement when he told the color of a pile of tobacco leaves simply by touching them.

Robert began early to learn the wealth of unspoken thought and feeling in the human voice. Its every inflection, its every subtle shade, revealed to him the emotional lives and the principal traits of character in each one that he heard speak. He unconsciously began classifying voices, not by their musical pitch, but by the temperaments which he soon learned that the voice could express. (The ordinary voice in conversation, if well understood, will reveal the emotional and mental habits of the speaker. Add these up and balance them, and the equation of a given personality will be solved.)

Robert's world was a world so largely of sound that he ordinarily forgot that familiar voices came from persons who had features which would have been familiar, too, could he have seen them. The light of love's glances and the sunny smile of affection were both absent, and left a vacant, dark place in Robert's life. The expressions of fear and hatred, and the mask of deceit which the human face frequently wears, were entirely unknown to him.

Beauty of face was beauty of symmetry, only known to his innermost consciousness through his sensitive touch. As he had an active brain and an exceedingly vivid imagination besides, it was not strange that an unusual nature should be developed in such a boy.

The sweetest experience of Robert's whole life was his introduction into the world of thought. He reasoned about everything. Every sound he heard by day or night stimulated this faculty, and by the exercise of it he developed resources within himself which in a measure made him independent of those things which constitute so large a part of the lives of most men.

Colors had no dwelling in his mind. The rose and the violet were to him only ephemeral odors. Inherently he was speculative, and often imagined himself subtly borne upon the waves of sound into a world where even sense was not needed, and where all the experiences of life were purely mental; where the mind, freed from earthly necessity, could roam at will, and take its chief delight in the ever-varying phenomena which make up the sum total of its experience. Those who can see take in the world around them at a glance. Those who do not see learn the individual details of life one by one.

Robert wondered about the moon and the stars, and it seemed to him that he ought to be able to feel their ethereal light as he felt the heat of the noonday sun. He knew that he did not feel the moonlight; and the stars were only vague things, difficult for him to imagine in his comprehension of the universe. Mountains existed for him only as great hills which required fatiguing efforts to climb. The grass which carpeted the earth was a colorless, velvety carpet, perceptible only to his touch.

Robert's ears were doing double duty for him. They were hearing in the voice the expressions which the eyes usually see upon the face. He heard an unfamiliar tone in his uncle's voice. It betokened to him anxiety. It rang, not clear and loud, but was hidden, half-stifled, half-muffled. He had learned incidentally that his uncle owed a great deal of money; and he early realïzed that if misfortune befell his uncle he would have to shift for himself, and that such a struggle would be at a fearful disadvantage with those more fortunate than he. The idea haunted him night and day, and he wondered what he could do to earn a living. He could play the piano, but instinctively realized that music would afford at best but a scant and insufficient competency. He frequently heard Colonel Southerly say, "I hope to leave money enough to take care of Robert." His very tone when he said this indicated to Robert's sensitive ears a doubt of his ability to carry out this purpose.

Robert had a daydream. He wished to go to college, and his uncle shared the wish with him; so he was sent the fall he was sixteen years old to a preparatory school a few miles from his home. This was indeed a new experience for him. He had not found his blind schoolmates congenial, but now he felt keenly his physical disadvantage when thrown with the students who could see, until their kindness dispelled this feeling. His instructors early realized that his power of concentration, enhanced by his loss of sight, enabled him to keep up with the other pupils easily.

The difficulties of geometry were mastered; the tedious rules of the Latin grammar were learned by having others read them to him; the elementary part of physics and many similar studies were mastered. Days, weeks, and months rolled by. Another school term added to Robert's experience of life, and broadened the development of his mind. When he returned home from the preparatory school for his summer vacation, he heard the tone of worriment which he had previously noticed, increased in his uncle's voice. He also heard rumors from the busybodies, ever ready to carry ill news, that Colonel Southerly owed more than he could pay. The money for his expenses had not been sent so promptly during this last year as it had been before. An unspeakable gloom had settled over the home which had been so bright and cheery. Colonel Southerly, as many other weak men have done before him, would assure Robert and every one else that he could pay all his debts and have plenty left. The store did not have the trade it used to have; and one day Robert heard a wholesale merchant refuse to give Colonel Southerly any more credit until he had paid for the goods he had bought. Now, such matters would not ordinarily have attracted much attention from a boy seventeen years old; but Robert was a blind boy, and he realized, as few boys of his age could, what it meant to meet life entirely without money, and with no profession or trade, and one of his five senses gone. The term of his happy childhood was drawing to a close; the sweet trust and confidence with which he believed in those around him were beginning, even at this early age, to fade.

CHAPTER XII

DESPAIR AND HOPE

On one of those fearfully hot days, when there was not a breeze to relieve the burning, stifling heat, Robert sat with his uncle on the porch in front of the store. They had refreshed themselves with a large watermelon, the rinds of which had been thrown into the road; and Robert listened idly to the hoarse, grunting hog that was greedily devouring them. He heard also, indifferently, the sound of approaching wheels along the road. A man drove up to the porch, got out of his buggy, and hitched his horse to a post.

"How do you do, Sheriff Spinney?" said Colonel Southerly. The sheriff returned his salutation by saying, "Howdy."

What followed did not interest Robert much at first, until the sheriff, taking a document from his pocket, began to read aloud long, legal phrases. Then Robert soon detected that something was wrong; for the colonel was much agitated, although he made a strong effort to conceal it. He heard his uncle say, "I will have to make an assignment then, Sheriff;" and then commanded Robert, rather more sternly than was his custom, to leave them alone, as he had private business with the gentleman.

Robert obeyed; but he knew from the tones of the two men's voices that something was terribly amiss. His heart beat quick and fast. The hot air seemed hotter, the chirp of the grasshopper fell harsh and irritating upon his ears. He climbed over the stile, and descended the hill towards his uncle's house, where he seated himself upon the steps of the long rear veranda.

"What did those words mean? 'I will have to make an assignment then, Sheriff;' and why those troubled tones?" When Robert heard his aunt's voice he detected something wrong in her tones too; for the sheriff had been to the house first, and had ascertained the colonel's whereabouts from Mrs. Southerly. Her quick intuition, together with her knowledge of her husband's affairs, warned her of impending disaster. Having a clear insight, she realized intuitively that her husband's business was being badly managed, and had so told him several times, perhaps not as pleasantly as she should have done.

Robert loved his aunt, and confided at once in her, telling her what he had heard at the store. Mrs. Southerly controlled herself thoroughly, and said to Robert in a perfectly calm tone of voice, "You must not mind the business affairs."

At this moment a big, bronze turkey-gobbler flew upon the porch, followed by his mate and some half-fledged young turkeys. A negro woman came out and "shooed" them away. The younger ones retreated with a flutter and a chatter, but the gobbler was not so easily vanquished. He ran towards the end of the porch, but the instant the negress turned her back he flew up and began savagely beating her with his wings.

The woman screamed, while the turkey thrashed her soundly, till her mistress seized woman's ever-ready weapon, the broom, and drove off the pompous, beautiful, belligerent fowl. Robert, laughing at the incident, went into the house and up to his room. He took down a raised-print book from the shelf. The enormous volume contained between its covers only one of Scott's poems, — "The Lady of the Lake." He began to read it, and fancied that he could hear the sounds of the chase, the murmuring, rustling trees of the forest, the huntsman's horn, the fall of the steed; and then he fell asleep.

He was aroused by the familiar sound of the dinner-bell. In the dining-room he heard an unfamiliar voice, which he soon recognized, however, as that of the sheriff.

It was not an unusual circumstance for Colonel Southerly to have a guest at dinner. Owing to the large size of the plantations in the Southwest, a man had to travel a long distance in order to transact business with the inhabitants in that region; but now Robert found every one constrained, as Colonel Southerly could not speak without betraying a great deal of agitation, and his wife was calm and rather cold. The negro servant who fanned the flies from the table with a brush of peacock feathers was the only one who seemed perfectly unconcerned.

It was about noon, and the train for which Robert was dreamily listening was due. The whistle blew in the distance, and the train stopped at the station. This being a flag-station many trains had no occasion to stop; but when one did, it usually left a visitor for Colonel Southerly. It brought him another very unwelcome one on this day, in the person of a lawyer from a neighboring city. He was gentlemanly in his address, and accepted with alacrity Colonel Southerly's cordial invitation to dinner. This meal was soon disposed of, as it usually is in most households in the Southwest, and then the lawyer took a large package from his pocket. Again Robert was sent away; again his heart was heavy with a greater sense of some impending disaster.

As the summer days went on, Robert came to fully understand his uncle's financial misfortune, and realized at last that the home of his childhood was to be sold at auction.

The day arrived for the auction; and with it came some gentlemen, and many vulgar and curious women from the neighborhood. Mrs. Southerly met it bravely; the colonel was almost desperate; Robert was simply dazed. The household furniture was taken out of the rooms, and arranged on the grass in front of the house and on the verandas. The negroes wept as they took the pictures down from the walls. Everywhere over the home that Robert had loved so well were strangers. The rooms were bare, except for the carpets which were left upon the floors, and everything was displaced.

The auctioneer began first with the horses. The first bid was fifty dollars, and then was heard his harsh, "Fifty dollars; give me the five, give me the five; fifty-five it is; make it sixty; who says sixty-five? Give me the five;" and then some one gave him the five, and he would have it seventy. Then it was "going at seventy dollars, going, going, going; this horse going at seventy dollars;" and "Sold."

After the auctioneer had cried himself hoarse selling the horses and cattle outside, and while Robert's head was spinning with confusion, the bidding was begun upon the furniture of the house. Robert's case of raised-print books had been brought down by mistake with the other furniture. The stupid auctioneer first offered all of the books in the case for sale. Some of the bystanders knew that there would be no bidders for such books, but did not have the courage to interfere. He took one of the books from the case, thinking to get separate bids for them. One of the negro men standing by suddenly realized that it was a volume of raised print. He knew they belonged to Robert; and regarding the auctioneer as an intruder, he stepped up and took the book from his hand with a grace and dignity which would have adorned many a whiter man. Making a low obeisance, he told him that those were blind people's books, and that they belonged to Massa Robert.

The coarse, vulgar voice of the auctioneer softened for a moment. He had a little deaf-and-dumb child, and a vague, pathetic memory of his afflicted daughter flitted over the tenderer part of his nature.

A nephew of Colonel Southerly's bid in, for a nominal sum, the most of the household furniture, and presented it to Mrs. Southerly when the sale was over; but the house, land, horses, and the out-buildings were sold, and the associations of Robert's early home were all cruelly torn away. It would be a strange world to him now. He must go to new surroundings; and what were these surroundings to be?

That night after the auction was over, when some semblance of order was restored, Robert stood leaning against one of the columns which supported the roof of the veranda, suffering a strange depression which he had never known before with all of his mental and physical suffering.

The crowd was dispersing one by one; the sun had set, and it was twilight. A man who had been watching Robert for four or five minutes from behind one of the trees came up to the porch with an expression on his face which denoted plainer than words can say, "Why, I have an idea." He took Robert by both hands, and Robert recognized the voice of his old friend, Colonel Beaufort. It was filled with sympathetic tenderness, and gave promise of something more, an unexpressed suggestion rang in the clear, manly tones.

"Come," said the colonel, "I am going to take you home with me to-night. I have got something to think over;" and think he did. And Robert spent the night with him, and the next morning the colonel accompanied him home. He offered to take Robert to New York, and said that he reckoned he could get him work with one of the business houses that sold tobacco.

His uncle answered sadly that he hoped he would have enough left to take care of Robert without his having to work.

Colonel Beaufort answered cheerily, "Work is the best thing for every man, whether he is deaf, or blind, or has his every faculty. I shall get him a place, and you must let him fill it. Robert is about half my boy anyway, and I am going to make a man of him. He shall earn his living, and possibly something more."

CHAPTER XIII

"A BLIND BOY BUY TOBACCO?"

The home of the Southerlys was at last broken up, and even Robert was now obliged to go away to earn his own living.

Colonel Beaufort had business in New York; and he offered to take Robert with him, and if possible, turn his talent for selecting tobacco to some account. He had no doubt of Robert's ability, but he feared that it would be difficult to get him a fair showing.

"Business men are conservative," he said; "but I'll try." So he took Robert to New York. The eternal din of the great city, the ceaseless babble of its polyglot of tongues, made Robert feel that he was in a new world. Sensitive and refined, he shrank from contact with the class of men he met. They all showed the same sort of curiosity about him which would have been displayed had some wild animal been exhibited.

"A blind boy buy tobacco!" said one Jew. "I can only make about fifty per cent upon it with my eyes."

In vain did Colonel Beaufort demonstrate the accuracy and delicacy of Robert's wonderful sense of touch. In vain, too, did Robert select the dark cigars from the light ones, shading them more rapidly and more accurately by touch than could the workmen with sight. The Hebrew would not be convinced. They visited many of the wholesale places, but everywhere met with sceptical rebuffs.

How strange the voices of these business men sounded to Robert How cold some of them seemed. Others were sympathetic; but all doubted his ability to make himself useful in his new undertaking, or any other for that matter. When we know men only by their voices as did Robert, their dominant mental characteristics stand out more strongly than when our impressions of them are shaded and toned by the sight of their facial expressions, which too often are assumed. In the hotels, in the stores, all were curious; but it was too novel an idea for the brain of the average merchant to conceive. "A blind boy buy tobacco!" The thing seemed preposterous. Every *new* thing seems preposterous.

At last a wealthy tobacco firm in New York, who, like "the men of Athens," were ever looking for something new, decided to give Robert employment.

Away from home, an orphan, with all hopes for the future apparently blighted, the young man began his struggle for life. Could he survive? Was there a place in the world where he was fit to survive?

What constitutes fitness to survive? An especial adaptability to the conditions by which one is surrounded.

So pleased was the firm with his ability to discriminate between the flavors of tobacco that they soon determined to send him to Havana, and there have him learn to distinguish the qualities of its world-renowned tobacco.

Preliminary to the journey, he spent some months in the warehouse of his employers. This experience proved of great value to him as well as to those who gave him work.

On one of the early days of March, Robert found himself, with a competent negro attendant, and letters of introduction with which his employers had furnished him, ensconced in a comfortable stateroom on one of the steamers of the Ward line. The wind blew icy cold from off the sea; the hubbub of the passengers, mingling with the noise of the longshoremen and sailors, blended strangely with the noise of moving freight.

The big whistle blew, the gang-plank was raised, and the little towboat puffed away as it drew its mighty load after it. Presently the towboat was cut loose from the steamer; the big propeller began to work, and the vessel quivered under the mighty blows as it struck the water. As Robert stood on the deck listening to the roar of the sea and the noise of the vessel, he gained a new idea of the world's immensity. The captain told him of the lighthouses and forts which they passed. As the voyage continued, Robert found some interest in his fellow-passengers. There was the ever-present, loud-talking, egotistical Hebrew drummer; American business men were going to the tropics to further new enterprises; and there was a coterie of invalid women who were seeking health by a change of climate. There, too, were some Spaniards with big hearts, and but little command of English.

After they had been out about twenty-four hours the biting air became warmer, and a passenger told Robert that he could see the Gulf Stream, with its green border contrasting exquisitely with the deep blue of the rest of the sea. Then Cape Hatteras was seen in the distance; soon it was rounded, and a glorious moonlight night succeeded the clear skies of a sunny day.

The ship sped on; night again overtook them; again day chased the night away. The passengers told Robert that to the westward they could see dimly in the horizon the coast of Cuba. There she lay, beautiful, sun-kissed daughter of the southern seas! The land soon became clearly visible; and all were looking eagerly to see the outline of Morro Castle, which guards the entrance to the harbor of Havana. Soon its massive bulk was sighted, supine in its yellow-white beauty, basking in the rays of the sun, while it bathed its feet in the waters of the ocean.

The vessel ran slower, then turned, and sailed beneath the frowning guns of the fortress. Robert could hear oars paddling in the water, and musical voices half intoned the language which was so strange to him. The hotelmen in little boats came alongside, and announced the names of their hotels in broken English; some called passengers on the deck by their names. The vessel stopped, and a little steam-launch impudently puffed its way along side, and then a Spaniard told Robert that the custom-house and health officers were coming on board. Small boats, manned by strong, dusky rowers in dingy shirts, were at hand to convey the passengers ashore.

Those who see meet in their travels, once or twice in a lifetime, a face which indelibly stamps itself upon the mind. There are in the world a few voices so musical, so refined, so spirituelle, that they will remain in the memory like some sweet, half-forgotten strain of music. Such a voice had the Spaniard who invited Robert to go ashore with him in his private boat. The kindness in his every tone seemed enhanced as he uttered the liquid music of his native tongue when giving some commands in Spanish to his boatmen. And, too, there was something sympathetic in his touch, as he guided the blind boy down the steps at the side of the vessel to the boat, which swayed to and fro as Robert placed his feet upon its bottom. When they had landed, Robert and his attendant entered a dumpy-looking vehicle which the Spaniards call a *coche,* and drove away through the narrow, hot streets of Havana, and soon alighted in front of the famous Hotel Pasaje; and an odd place it seemed to Robert, giving him the impression at first of being open on every side; and when he reached his bedroom he was surprised to find that, like the office and corridors, it had a stone floor, without carpeting, except for one small rug in front of the bed. The bed was hung with clean, cool white muslin curtains; and the old-fashioned furniture of half a century ago seemed here to find a fit place in which to finish its term of usefulness.

Havana is a noisy place; and so Robert Netherland discovered as he sat in front of the hotel, on the stone pavement surrounded by other guests, listening to the multitude of sounds around him. It was evening; and throngs of people were on the streets, going to the theatres, or to the park to hear the music furnished by the military band. Everywhere were gayety and merriment of a very quaint kind. Everybody smoked, — the natives, cigarettes; the foreigners, cigars.

The hospitality of the Cubans impressed Robert profoundly, and one morning he was invited by one of his newly made Cuban friends to drive to the famous Palatino estates. They left the hotel early to avoid the intense heat of the midday, and on the way stopped at the strange old Tacon market, where at that time of day can be seen a gorgeous display of tropical fruits.

One of the merchants was greatly interested to show Robert the green cocoanuts, sapotes, the mamey, the big yams, and the plantains of all sizes, which in themselves contain all the elements for the nutrition of the body.

During the rest of the drive Robert's companion entertained him by describing Havana. He said, "It indeed resembles one of the mediæval cities. The buildings in the central portion are packed closely together. The streets are exceedingly narrow; and as the prevailing shape of the houses is square, a stranger on seeing the city for the first time would be apt to weary of the monotony of the architecture; while the iron gratings which are before all of the windows give to the houses a cloister-like appearance, which is not borne out when one sees the gayly dressed ladies as they come from them.

"The buildings are nearly all made of yellow-white stone, which when first quarried is almost of the consistency of chalk, but soon hardens when exposed to light and air. A very few of the most elegant and fashionable houses on the boulevard are painted either a delicate blue or pink, and have white shutters and facings. These light houses, together with the gardens which are a part of every home, produce a very picturesque effect."

They were soon in the spacious gardens in front of the "Quinta de Palatino," an estate formerly owned by the family of Count Palatino. There stood stately palms, tall and straight and bushy at the top, looking as if they would bid defiance to the winds. A leaf upon one of them was turning white, as these leaves do once a moon. It dropped to the ground; and a gentleman handed it to Robert, who noticed how strong and tough it seemed. Robert was told that these leaves are a great blessing to the Cubans. They form the thatched roofs of the huts upon the plantations, whose walls are made from the wood of these same trees, while the leaves are stuffed in the crevices between the logs of these huts, and are also used to cover the big bales of tobacco.

There in the garden were orange-trees, with their white blossoms half hidden in the green foliage. Cocoanuts hung upon the trees, snuggling up close to the branches. Roses were everywhere. Vines trailed in luxuriant profusion, while fountains murmured and gurgled as though they were pleased with the beauty around them.

The massive stone structure of the palace looked cool and stately in the background. Here some romance might have found a fit beginning, some enchanted beauty of old been freed from a mystic spell by her true knight.

The next day Robert's work began in earnest. For the purpose of examining the best qualities of Cuban tobacco he visited the great Corona factory. The building now occupied by this factory was once one of the most magnificent residences in all Havana. It was formerly the property of Señor Aldama, a very rich man, said to be worth fifty millions. Some vestiges of the former grandeur of the mansion yet remain. Much of the frescoing is still intact, and the great marble staircase is at once imposing and artistic. As the blind tobacconist was led into the spacious rooms where hundreds of dark-eyed, olive-skinned, picturesque looking girls deftly rolled the cigarettes, which have delighted the hearts of so many smokers all over the world, work was almost stopped, as they watched with astonished interest Robert's facility for selecting the correct shades and qualities of tobacco. Great machines were heard above, grinding tobacco. Some of the rooms were filled with large packages of cigarette paper which was soon to be used. In another part of the factory men were busy making cigars; while upstairs sweet, aromatic-smelling tobacco was spread out on the floors to dry.

The manufacturers of tobacco advised Robert to take a journey to the Vuelta-Abajo district; for there, they said, he could acquaint himself with the qualities of the famous product, and at the same time obtain the supplies required by his employers; and so he began to discuss the difficulties of the journey.

"How is this to be accomplished?" asked Smyrk, the interpreter.

One could go only a small part of the journey by rail. The rest of the distance had to be traversed on the backs of sturdy, slow little mules. This seemed to Smyrk a hazardous undertaking for a sightless person. While planning the journey, Robert stood in front of the hotel, dreamily listening to the sounds of the noisy but lazy city, when he was attracted by the shouts of the children near by. They were gathered around a dark, ill-tempered looking man, who was exhibiting toys made mainly of plaster-of-paris. The dogs and the horses and the miniature elephants, one by one found purchasers, until Saracci's stock was nearly exhausted. He was turning to go, when a gendarme doing police duty asked him, in Spanish, the price of his toys. Owing to the similarity of the Spanish and Italian languages, Saracci easily guessed the purport of the question. While Saracci was answering him, another gendarme stepped up, and demanded to know if he had a license to sell toys, and finding that he had none, carried the luckless Italian off to jail.

A Spanish gentleman had been watching Robert with interest for some time, and overhearing the conversation between him and Mr. Smyrk, stepped up and said, "Smyrk, is it possible that this young blind man is going to the interior of Cuba?"

Mr. Smyrk answered, "Yes, if he can get there;" and then introduced Robert to the newcomer, a well-known tobacconist of Havana.

"Why, I am going to the interior too, to buy tobacco," replied Señor Alvarez; "and if he will accept my assistance it will give me great pleasure to have him accompany me."

This reassured Robert; and as the aromatic weed was at once a bond of sympathy between them, much of the fear of a very lonely journey was removed. Early the next morning, therefore, Robert, with his attendant and his new acquaintance, took the train out of Havana for the famous district of Vuelta-Abajo. Many sugar plantations were passed on the way, the great fields of cane looking rich and ripe as they were lighted by the early morning sun. The roofs of some of the huts they passed were heavily thatched, and projected in both front and rear six or eight feet, thus making a grateful shade beneath which the inhabitants spent most of the time. When the end of their journey by rail was reached, Robert and his companions mounted upon mules, and rode on under a hot afternoon sun. Farmers were in the fields gathering the tobacco leaves with great care. Others were killing insects which were destroying the foliage of the young plants. The intense, oppressive silence was broken only occasionally by the sleepy chirp of some bird perched high upon a tree. At one point they met a man on foot carrying a few plaster-of-paris toys in a box on his back. He turned in a frightened manner as he heard the approach of hoofs; but soon realizing that there was no cause for alarm, came up and piteously asked, in broken English, for water. The man said that he had escaped from the officers, and was fleeing he knew not whither. The world had wronged him, and he was persecuted by the rich everywhere he went.

"I shall never forget that strange voice," thought Robert as they continued their journey.

Occasionally a hut was passed made wholly from the palm-tree, and at one of these the party stopped for the night. It was much larger than any of the others; but the floor was of earth, and the house consisted of but two rooms.

Though the heat was intense, in the distance could be heard strains of music, for the peasants were merrily dancing after their day's work. Señor Alvarez questioned their landlord concerning his yield of tobacco for that year; while the farmer's daughter, in broken English, told Robert a legend.

"Many, many years ago a maiden wandered in the field late one autumn day, and there discovered a tall weed. She smelled of it; and it was so sweet that she gathered its large leaves, and folded them together, and put them in her belt. Sometime after she went to the woods one evening with others to dance in celebration of a festival, and offer sacrifices to the spirit of the mountain. Three birds were killed, and their warm blood sprinkled upon a heap of dead leaves. Then one of the warriors tried to ignite the pile with fire from two rocks, which he struck together. The leaves were too damp to burn, and the maiden took from her belt the plant which she had gathered and left there for its fragrance. It was now very dry, and she thought it would burn. Giving it to the warrior, she said, "Light this; how sweet it smells!" Again the warrior struck the rocks together. A bright spark ignited the roll of leaves, but they only glowed, they did not blaze; and all gathered around to breathe the smoke as it ascended in curling wreathes, for they marvelled at the sweetness of its odor. Suddenly the ground began to quake under their feet. Low rumbling as of distant thunder was heard, and then great clouds of sulphurous-smelling smoke came down from the mountain only a short distance away. All fled to their homes. An old 'medicine-man' said that the spirit of the mountain was angry because his favorite plant had been burned in the attempt to light the sacrificial fire. The next day a boiling hot spring steamed forth from the side of the mountain. The inhabitants were greatly terrified by its appearance. In the woods where the warrior had thrown the leaves there sprang up great tall tobacco plants; and from that time they gathered the leaves and smoked them by night in the woods, and the spirit of the mountain would mutter and grumble and shake the earth. Then the Spaniards came; and a holy father went out one dark night, when the winds were fiercely blowing, and with a crucifix and holy water drove off the demon of the mountains. The splendid tobacco still grew, and the soil was cultivated, and the plant grew each year larger and larger. Now this famous tobacco is furnished to the princes and judges and kings all over the world, and has brought millions in money to the poor inhabitants in the Vuelta-Abajo district."

CHAPTER XIV

"YOU HAD A BROTHER?"

Mr. Steele's fair-haired son was blooming into early manhood. Like his father he blossomed rapidly, early showing a fondness for the fair sex, and an exceeding dislike to study at the same time. It had been Mr. Steele's fond hope that his son might shine as one of the bright youths of Boston society. He had hoped to make money enough to give Harvard College a half-million dollars on the day that his son received his degree; but alas, the perverse faculty failed to appreciate the young man's genius. Tutors were employed, and he was coached in Greek, in Latin, in French, and in German, also in algebra and geometry; but owing to the perversity(?) of the faculty, he repeatedly failed to pass the entrance examinations. Mrs. Steele maintained that the faculty had some grudge against her son. One of the tutors explained to her that probably not one of the professors even so much as knew him by name. Still Mrs. Steele insisted that she knew her boy was a bright boy, that prejudice, and prejudice only, kept him from standing in the front rank of his class at old Harvard.

But young Mr. Steele could not pass the entrance examinations, and finally it was decided to send him to a military academy. He passed into this institution very easily, but alas, was "passed out" rather dishonorably at the end of three months. He was then sent to a private school among the Berkshire hills, an institution recommended by Dr. Sneakleaf, the family physician.

"Poor boy," his mother said, when back he came in a few weeks to his home in Boston. Then his father became angry. He even intimated to his confidential friends that his son was a "fool," and it was decided to send him abroad. This was done; but his visit abroad was cut short, for his extravagance would have soon wrecked a fortune even as great as Mr. Steele's.

Elisha Steele did not have much affection for his son nor any one else, but was inordinately vain; and he longed to be a member of the "upper crust," a longing which he never realized.

Now, into the best society of Boston, boors, no matter how wealthy they may be, can never hope to enter. Refinement cannot be bought with money. It is not a product of tutoring. Like genius, it is given to the few; but those few will never admit on terms of equality those who vainly attempt to counterfeit it.

Christmas time had come, and young Mr. Steele had just arrived on the steamer. He did not receive a very warm greeting from his father. His dark-haired sister, who looked like an Indian, never greeted any one warmly; and his mother had met with too many buffets in life to have much of its enthusiasm left.

It was Christmas Eve, and Mr. Steele came home and decided that he would spend the evening reading the "Christmas Carol." He had been particularly successful that week in speculating. Around the fireside they sat in their home on Beacon Street. The young man was lazily smoking a cigar; his sister Thankful sat next him, the expression on her face belying her Christian name. She was now a young woman, with restless black eyes beneath knitted eyebrows, and a fretful mouth. Just at present her hands were tightly clinched, and there was a dark flush on the cheeks of her otherwise sallow face. She did not harmonize well with her father. She had ability, but she was also aggressive. Like her brother she was not studious; but Mr. Steele did not think it necessary that any woman should be, and so troubled himself very little about it.

In response to a rap on the door, Mr. Steele said, "Come in;" and a maid tersely announced, "There is a man in the hall who wishes to see you."

Mr. Steele bade her show him in. The stranger entered the room, and Mrs. Steele and Thankful retired simultaneously.

"Shall I go?" drawled Lorenzo. "I don't want to get up."

Mr. Steele did not have time to reply to his son; for the newcomer inquired abruptly, "Your name is Elisha Steele?"

"It is."

"You had a brother?"

"Have I not now?"

"That is exactly what I want to determine. Was his name John Benedict Steele?"

"My brother possessed that name," said Mr. Steele, "and I guess very little else."

"In that you may be mistaken."

"He went to Montana," said Mr. Steele. "He left us against my wishes, and I have not heard from him from that day to this."

The man took from his pocket a copy of the Chicago *Tribune*, also an extract written on a piece of paper from the mortuary records, which showed that John Benedict Steele had died in the station-house in Chicago. There was also a note upon the piece of paper which indicated that the deceased had been at the Tremont House in Boston some weeks preceding his death. Then Mr. Steele remembered that he had heard that his brother had been in Boston endeavoring to organize a mining company.

The man next produced a copy of a paper published in Helena, Mont., which contained a notice that John Benedict Steele owned property in that city worth about one hundred thousand dollars. Efforts had been made without success to ascertain who the heirs were.

In the United States the bonds between members of families are perhaps not as strong as they are between the kindred of some other nations. The American people are essentially a migratory people, and this is particularly true of the sons of the New England farmers. John Benedict Steele was a wayward boy. He was dissipated, and beloved only by his companions in vice. He was not frugal, as was his brother Elisha. He was generous; and this generosity was the principal source of uncongeniality between the two brothers.

John Benedict Steele once had a wife and a little daughter, and his brother now vainly tried to recall what he had heard about them. He had not seen his brother in many years, and he had a vague memory of something which he had heard about a disagreement between his brother and his wife.

"I can give you no information about my brother," said Mr. Steele.

"Then I'll say good-night," said the stranger.

When he had gone, Lorenzo remarked, "Don't you think you had better look the matter up? Wouldn't I be one of his heirs, don't you know?"

"I don't know," said Mr. Steele rather sternly to him.

"I should think you ought to, or something of the kind."

"So that there would be more money for you to waste, I suppose," replied his father.

"Oh, money is only made to be wasted," said Lorenzo.

"Well, my brother had a wife and child," said Mr. Steele, "so you see your nose is knocked out of joint."

"Oh, no, father, my nose is all right," replied Lorenzo, pulling that feature with his thumb and forefinger. "But don't you think my uncle's wife and daughter might have got struck by lightning or something of the sort?"

"Struck by lightning or something of the sort," snarled his father; "I wish you could have been struck by some sense."

"Oh, my father kept all the brains, as he does all the money, and didn't leave any for his children."

"No," said Mr. Steele; "if I had left any brains for you, you would squander them for a low price, to gratify your lazy, extravagant tendencies."

"Oh, now really, do you think so, father? Then I'll go and get another cigar."

CHAPTER XV

ODORIFEROPATHY FAILS; CUBA DOESN'T

"Some men are born to luck," the old proverb says, but it fails to state the kind of luck apportioned to each. The luck that fell to Elisha Steele had always been good luck until one raw afternoon he contracted a cold, and such a cold! He coughed and sneezed, and his bones ached as though he had been beaten all over with a stick. His head ached; his skin was hot and dry. A restlessness took possession of him. He could not sleep. Disconnected ideas ran through his brain. Visions of great financial enterprises haunted him and tired him whenever he dozed for a moment.

Dr. Sneakleaf was summoned, and found Mr. Steele in a deplorable state. The doctor always carried his own medicines in a great leather case filled with tiny vials holding liquids of every conceivable odor. Red pepper, musk, ambergris, pimento, cinnamon, ammonia, in fact, every medicament that was known to have a *smell*, could be found in the doctor's case. He sounded Mr. Steele's chest, making it resound like a bass drum. He felt of his pulse, looked at his tongue, took his temperature, and then gave him two little vials to smell of at intervals during the night. Mr. Steele was much averse to the regular school of practice. He declared that more men were killed by medicines than were ever cured by them. On this night he sniffed at his little vials, and sneezed and sniffed, and sniffed and sneezed; but the vitalizing health-giving odors did not allay the racking pains in his back and head. Food was repugnant, and it was a principle of Dr. Sneakleaf's to allow no drink excepting cold water.

As Mr. Steele grew weak he fancied his life was fast ebbing. Physically there was utter incapacity, mentally nothing but black despair. Dr. Sneakleaf called in a consultant. The consultant was, of course, a member of the odoriferopathic school. He, too, examined Mr. Steele's chest, much to the patient's discomfort. After the examination was over, he announced that there was "hypertrophic rhinitis," a "catarrhal laryngitis," a condition of "bronchitis," which in its turn had given rise to a condition of "bronchiectasis." He said that the pains in the bones were due to an "ostalgia," the pains in the muscles he called "myalgia," the pains in the nerves he called "neuralgia," and the pains in the skin he called "dermatalgia." He declared that the complexus of the bodily conditions, together with the mental depression, were all due to the inhalation by Mr. Steele of the odors which emanated from the many basement restaurants near his office.

The physician argued, therefore, that as these odors more or less permeate the air of the city of Boston, and even when very diluted could serve to keep up the irritation they had started, it was necessary for Mr. Steele to seek a tropical climate, where other and sweeter odors would bring back his lost vitality. Mr. Steele was therefore bundled into a railroad car, and hurried away to the sunny South in Dr. Sneakleaf's company. He reached Florida worse than when he started; but as the odors in Florida were not strong enough to counteract the effect of those which Mr. Steele had inhaled in Boston, the Bermudas were next tried. Not finding satisfactory odors here, they went to Havana. The sanitary (?) conditions of this great city pleased Dr. Sneakleaf immensely. He declared that the delicious odors which emanated from the streets of Havana would bring Mr. Steele back to health. So here Dr. Sneakleaf was content to leave him, while he (Dr. Sneakleaf) returned to Boston and to his many patients. (Mr. Steele did not like the hotels very well, but in his depressed state of mind neither did he like anything else.) He cursed and swore at everything, and even wept because he could not eat. But gradually a measure of strength returned, and the pains in his bones grew less. For twenty minutes in the day he again felt that life possibly might be worth living. He liked the looks of the rosy-cheeked, dark Cuban girls; he also liked to be away from his family. He enjoyed admiration; as he was known to be wealthy, he received plenty of this. He enjoyed looking at the cocoanuts on the trees; the orange-blossoms with their freshness seemed to woo him back to life. His appetite gradually returned. Iced claret began to taste good to him, and it seemed as though he had once more entered the springtime of life.

CHAPTER XVI

"SANCHEZ CLUB" AND "EL BLASON"

What balmy air can be found in the interior of Cuba! Perpetual spring there holds eternal sway. To Robert the Cubans were most hospitable and kind, like their own balmy climate.

Señor Alvarez was purchasing tobacco of the farmers, and Robert was of much assistance to him in his selections. All day long he would sort the big leaves which were to serve as wrappers for the very large, French "after-dinner" cigars. These leaves must be without blemish. Robert learned that those which were the darkest were not necessarily the strongest, as he was taught in the United States. The dark tobacco is simply that which is ripe, and usually has much more of an aromatic flavor than that of a lighter color. Much of the tobacco which these Cuban farmers raise is deliciously aromatic; but if the leaves are defective in form they can be used only as "fillers" for cigars, or in the manufacture of cigarettes. During Robert's visit in the Vuelta-Abajo district he met an old man who was much distressed. He told how he had cared for his crop in the fall, and killed the insects, and pruned the plants, cutting away the superfluous leaves; he had watched it by night and had watched it by day, but alas, while the flavor of the tobacco was superb, there were but few perfectly formed leaves in the whole yield. He solemnly insisted that "never before did tobacco possess such a flavor as this," and Robert went to the hut where the tobacco was tied up in packages and felt of it. His touch told him that it was not quite so dark in color as the most of the tobacco in that region. It was not yet thoroughly cured; but Robert perceived by its odor that it was certainly a different variety, and taking some of it, dried it in the sun, powdered it between his hands, then rolled a cigarette and inhaled the fumes. How delicious it was! No incense burned to appease an angry god ever had such a delightful odor. It was sweet and clean as the odor of fresh-roasted coffee, while its perfume was as delicate as a rose. Robert called the attention of Señor Alvarez to the tobacco. He looked at it, and said that the leaves were not sufficiently perfect for cigar wrappers, but added that it was certainly a very fine quality. The old man heard the conversation; and his spirits were made brighter by Robert's praise of the tobacco, which all three smoked.

People from far and wide marvelled at the skill of the blind American. But what of his inner life? Far away from home and friends and all that he had ever loved, his very attempt at earning a livelihood had been only an experiment. The few who had been interested enough in him to predict anything had all prophesied failure. Robert worked hard, concentrating his every energy upon his occupation. Seconds seemed the length of minutes; minutes the length of hours; a day appeared an eternity. Robert felt sometimes as though the whole world were narrowed to the little circle of his existence. He did not see the morning sun kiss lovingly the tops of the mountains; green nature had no charms to woo him from himself. There were no books in that locality which he could read. He knew only a few words of the Spanish language, and hence felt as though he were cut off from the world. His hope of a college education, too, was gone.

"Must I spend my life sorting tobacco?" he would sometimes ask himself, bravely repressing his emotions as he worked. Finally he sent a message to Havana, thence to New York, telling of the wonderful tobacco he had discovered on the *vega* of the old man. He found some more of the same quality on an adjoining *vega.* Señor Alvarez bought the perfectly formed leaves to make cigars, and Robert purchased the tobacco which was not so well formed, to be used for cigarettes and pipe-tobacco. The big bales were tied up with strong ropes, and Señor Alvarez completed the contracts. The tobacco was shipped, some to Havana to the factory of Señor Alvarez, and the rest to Robert's employers in New York. Sometimes men know a good thing when they see it. Robert's employers realized that he had made for them a good trade, and they regretted only that there was such a small amount of it. After weighing it, they estimated that there was enough to fill not more than a million and a half small packages.

"What shall we call the brand ?" the senior partner of the firm asked, for they must have a suitable name for this new tobacco; and as they debated over the matter, Robert, thousands of miles away, was trying to find more of the same quality.

One suggested the "Cuban Boatmen's Tobacco." A Spaniard suggested "The Sanchez Club," and this name was eagerly adopted. The first sale of tobacco was to a noted firm in New York, and soon everywhere men praised its virtues. The Jew tobacco merchants rushed to the wholesale stores to purchase it. Business men were talking "Sanchez Club" tobacco at their lunches; gouty old gentlemen smoked it in their pipes after dinner; Englishmen said it was "damned nice tobacco;" and the reputation of this new brand spread like an epidemic over the United States.

Mr. Steele received a letter in Havana from a man in New York asking him to find out from what part of Cuba the tobacco came. Even Havana caught the craze. Just at this time cigars were sent to Park & Tilford, and other leading grocers of New York; and somebody discovered that the "El Blason" brand was the most delightful cigar he had ever smoked. Physicians and lawyers vied with each other in disputing as to which was the better tobacco, the "Sanchez Club," or the "El Blason" cigars.

As Mr. Steele sat in front of the Hotel Pasaje one morning, a man stepped up to him and asked him if he had ever heard of the blind American who could buy tobacco. Mr. Steele answered that he should expect a countryman of his, even though he were blind, deaf, and dumb, to distinguish himself; but he had not heard of the achievements of this particular one.

"Why!" said the man, "Messrs. Wilson & Fox of New York have made a small fortune out of the tobacco he selected in the western portion of Cuba. Your countryman, under the care of a native of Havana, Señor Alvaréz, visited the Vuelta-Abajo district; and the blind man bought, as I am told, such tobacco as has never been found before. Señor Alvarez is making cigars of it which will go to the States by the million. A New York firm has bought all of the rest of the tobacco in the leaf, and the 'Sanchez Club' tobacco and the 'El Blason' cigars are all the rage."

"Why, yes, yes," said Mr. Steele; "I got a letter only this morning asking me about the 'Sanchez Club' tobacco, and what part of Cuba it came from. Dear me, how interesting! I should like to have a pipe full of that tobacco myself."

At this moment a *coche* drove up to the Pasaje; and a dark-looking, middle-aged man got out of it, and then assisted a fragile-looking young man of about eighteen to alight.

"*Buenos dias*, Smyrk," said the man; and Mr. Smyrk came forward and grasped Robert by both hands.

"I am glad to see you back," he said; and his manner did not belie his words. "Did you have a good time in the tobacco district?"

Before Robert had time to answer, a messenger came up with a cablegram for him, which Mr. Smyrk opened, and read aloud, —

"Buy all the same quality tobacco obtainable now."

The Spanish mail-wagon drove up. Mail-bags were unloaded, and some letters were handed to Robert. He entered the hotel with one arm drawn through that of Mr. Smyrk; but the interpreter in his excitement did not lead his charge as carefully as he should have done, and Robert accidentally stepped on Mr. Steele's gouty great toe.

Mr. Steele said, "Damn it!" then apologized, and said he did not mind his feet being stepped on by a blind man. Robert apologized in his turn, and entered the shaky elevator, and was soon back in the room he had left some four months before. The mail brought Robert good news that morning in the form of a draft which called for five hundred dollars; and his employers said a similar one should go to him also for his personal use if he could find as much more of the same kind of tobacco.

Robert went out of the window upon a little stone balcony which looked down upon the courtyard. "*La Lucha!*" dismally shrieked a newsboy. "*La Discusion!*" called another. An old Chinaman sold dancing-dolls made of dough to the guests in the dining-room below; but Robert's ear was attracted by a voice which said in broken English, "I tell you the rich are oppressing the poor. The capitalist has no love for his employees, and treats them worse than dogs."

While recognizing the voice of the Italian criminal whom he had met in the interior, Robert put his hand in his pocket, and felt of the draft for five hundred dollars, and thought his employers did not treat him worse than a dog. There was noise everywhere. *Coches* rattled along the rough pavements. Wearying of the commotion, Robert decided to go down to breakfast. How delicious were those delicately cooked fish! The meats with their dainty sauces and the "just done to a turn" potatoes! The pineapple, the guava jelly, and the "scraped cocoanut"! His fare in the country had been simple, as the natives rely mostly upon bananas, and such other fruits as they can get. After he had finished eating he took some tobacco leaves out of his pocket, and began to crush them between his hands. Mr. Steele at the next table had been watching him with great curiosity.

"Hello, where did you get that?" he said.

"In western Cuba," Robert answered.

"Don't see very well?" pursued Mr. Steele, not unkindly.

"Not at all."

Then Mr. Steele asked how he had lost his sight, whence he had come, where he was going, how he happened to come to Cuba, and when he expected to go back, how long he had been there, his name, and whatever gave him the idea of learning to select tobacco. To himself he said, "How in the world did the boy ever get any ideas, anyway?"

Next to eating and drinking, Mr. Steele derived the most pleasure in life from what he saw; and for once he felt a genuine sympathy, such as it was, for the blind boy.

"Give me a pipeful of tobacco, will you?" he said.

"Shall I powder it for you?" Robert asked.

"Yes, I think you had better; I have rheumatism in my hands."

Robert took some of the leaves out of the skin pouch he had in his pocket, and stripped and shredded them for Mr. Steele.

"Shall I make you a cigarette?" Robert asked.

"You make a cigarette!" Mr. Steele answered. "However can you? You will be making one of these Panama hats next. I prefer to smoke my pipe, thank you."

Robert emptied the tobacco from his hands into Mr. Steele's handkerchief which was held for the purpose, and Mr. Steele filled his big meerschaum pipe which was just beginning to color. Robert rolled a cigarette, and they began to smoke. Mr. Steele knew good wine when he had not taken too much of it. He knew good food; in fact, he was quite an epicure. He was fond of a good smoke, and he had never tasted such tobacco before. Then he thought of his letter from New York, inquiring about the "Sanchez Club" tobacco, and remembered about the blind boy buying it.

"Did you buy the tobacco which makes the 'Sanchez Club' brand?" he asked.

"Yes," answered Robert rather proudly.

"Well, it has been a great thing for the firm for which you bought it. I hope they appreciate you."

"They seem to."

Robert lost much by not being able to see his companion's face that morning; and if Mr. Steele had looked at himself in the mirror it would have pleased his vanity, for his countenance had lost for the moment the assumed expression which it habitually wore. He was never refined. Although curious, he seldom relaxed his self-control enough to allow him to show interest in another. But the struggles of this blind boy touched all the good there was in him. Mr. Steele occasionally rubbed his nose; and he thought and thought, and was conscious of a half-formed desire that this young man had been his son instead of his fair-haired weakling.

"How much money have you got?" he asked of Robert. "Who counts it for you? Don't everybody that gets the chance steal from you?"

Before Robert had time to answer, he added, "I should not think you could go anywhere alone, anyway. Can you tie your own necktie? Who brushes your clothes for you? Pretty hot in the west of Cuba?" he finished.

Robert answered only the last question, and Mr. Steele then volunteered the information that he was going to Matanzas. He wanted to see the sugar plantations and the Yumari valley, and the caves and the donkeys and the *volantes*, and everything else there was of interest. He also informed Robert that he had been sick, and said that he nearly died. Dr. Sneakleaf was his physician. His wife, too, thought he was going to die, but he did not think he would; and that he guessed he would have some claret, and wouldn't Robert have some too? He called a waiter who could not speak English, and pointed to the name of the wine on the bill of fare with a quill toothpick, and asked Robert for another pipeful of tobacco. When he had drunk his wine and smoked "another pipe," he said, "Good-morning," and limped away to the desk, where he changed an American twenty-dollar gold-piece for Spanish coins, berating the Spanish pennies meanwhile for being so large, and the gold-pieces for being so small.

CHAPTER XVII

THE JONESLING UNIVERSITY AND DR. HEAD

Business is a plain, work-a-day thing, but it is the great motive-force of civilization for all that. Trade has built the ships which carry enlightenment to the heathen. One ship will take to these benighted creatures, rum, religion, and revolvers, and occasionally introduce some new pest as well.

Business was doing a good thing for Robert Netherland. His second trip to the interior of Cuba proved of more value than the first, and it was not so dismal. The natives were glad to see him. He now knew some Spanish; and besides all this, he had a great hope in his heart.

"I may yet go to college," he said to himself. "I may yet have a chance to study."

He found more choice tobacco and sent it to New York, and after sending it betook himself thither. His employers gave him a hearty welcome; for the "Sanchez Club" tobacco was selling high, and at a rapid rate. Great indeed was the change he found in the manner of the same men he had met some months before. He was now offered a large salary by the same Jew who said that he could only make fifty per cent on the tobacco with his eyes, but Robert preferred his old employers. One day he was at work in the store examining some tobacco, and Mr. Wilson, the senior partner of the firm, sat watching him some distance away. His pale face was expressive, if we may except the eyes. He appeared to look with them, and yet did not see.

"I wonder what will become of him," thought the man, as he looked at Robert. "That is hard work he is doing, and it is hot too."

The tobacco lay in piles before him on the bench. He felt of it, selecting the perfect leaves from the others.

"These are Sumatra wrappers," he said to himself, "and a pretty good lot of them too."

"I say," said his employer.

"Yes, sir," Robert answered.

"Don't you think you have done about enough of that for one day?"

Robert did not think he had.

"Go and wash yourself, and I guess we will go out for a while," said his employer.

"What are you going to do with yourself?" asked Mr. Wilson as they entered a restaurant, and sat down at one of the tables.

"Does that apply to the immediate present?"

"No; I mean are you going to do this business all of your life?"

"I do not know," said Robert dreamily. "I hope to go to college. I hope to learn to do something besides buy tobacco, and yet I am not discontented."

"How much money have you?"

"About nine hundred dollars," Robert answered frankly. "I have deposited it in the savings-bank, and when I get enough I am going to school some more, anyway."

"When you get enough you are going to school, anyway. Well, I will lend you some money, old boy," said Mr. Wilson kindly; "and you may pay it back when you can."

Robert's face flushed; his lip quivered; his expression was at once pleased and pained.

"I thank you," he said; "but I would rather have the money after earning it than before."

"I am not sure that you have not earned more than you have received," said his employer. "If you want to attend school this fall, you shall have the chance. Where should you like to go?"

"I do not know," said Robert; "but I cannot afford to go to school in a large city."

"That young man acts," thought the merchant, pleased with Robert's directness, "as though he wanted to take care of himself. I will see that he has an opportunity."

The autumn found Robert preparing for college, having added two hundred dollars to his scant store. Mr. Wilson advised him to attend college at Smithville, N.Y.; for, he argued, "The living at Smithville is inexpensive, and your money would go farther towards completing your education than if more were spent for board;" the logic of which Robert saw the force.

Smithville is like thousands of other "villes" in the United States. There was one rich man in the place whose name was Jones. First an academy was built in Smithville, and named the Jones Academy. Jones College succeeded the academy; schools of law, medicine, and theology were added at a later period.

"How did it happen that these schools were added," asked Robert of the garrulous postmaster at Smithville.

"Why, in this way," he replied. "Now, Mr. Jones he up and died. He made a will a-leavin' a million of dollars to that college, the int'rust of which was to be used as an endowment, provided certain perticklers was observed. The fust pertickler Mrs. Jones insisted upon. She was a soft-hearted woman, and writ poetry fer the magazines. She said to Mr. Jones as he lay a-dyin' and makin' his will, 'Now that musn't be called the Jones University. That sounds kind of hard. Let's provide in the will that it shall be called the Jonesling University.'

"There was another pertickler that had to be observed too. Mr. Jones was a pious man, and he didn't like them there infidels a bit. Every professor in that school had to be a preacher; every book had to be a good book, and no bad ones."

Robert was anxious to meet the faculty, also to find a boarding-place. He was staying at the little country hotel, where the students were daily arriving, and he wished to find one who would read to him. He asked the postmaster if he knew of any one who would be glad to earn a little money in this way, as they stood on the veranda.

"Why, law me," said the postmaster. "There's my son Bucy. He's nigh on to the best reader I ever heered. He's been in the college three years. He's going to make a preacher, and I tell you the Devil will jump when he gets at him. As fer boardin', you can have a nice room at my house, and my Sally will jist lead you about over the town. Sally's a little gal, you know, only about nine years old, and Bucy, he'll do anything fer you that he kin."

Robert was greatly pleased with his new acquaintance. His name was Tom Guzzard; he was familiarly known over the village as "Guz." Mr. Guzzard boasted of the fact that he came from Vermont. He went to California and worked in the gold-mines in the early days, when the mines in that district were just being opened. He had accompanied his father, and was proud of his travels too. He had visited Texas, Mexico, Louisiana, Florida, Georgia, Michigan, Iowa, Illinois, and Canada, and finally settled at Smithville. He told Robert laughingly that he was "jack of all trades," as he had been a house carpenter, shoemaker, and druggist, had kept a grocery store, could play the fiddle, and could "jist teach dancin' such as you never seen."

Mr. Guzzard was long, lean, lank, and withered looking. No man could guess his age by his face. His hair was very dry and yellow. His nails were long; the skin upon his hands looked parched. Next to Mr. Guzzard's height, his feet were the most conspicuous feature, for they were too large for so slender a man.

Robert agreed to visit Mr. Guzzard's home that afternoon, and in pursuance of the agreement Mr. Guzzard brought a buggy around to the small hotel, and from thence they drove to the cottage. It was a little white structure with green blinds and a front veranda.

Mrs. Guzzard was a sweet soul, and met the blind boy kindly. Sally, a little creature of nine years, but with the intellect of four, was also introduced.

"Sally's not bright in some ways. She can't read yet, but she's a good heart," the mother said, petting her darling.

When Buey came in, Robert was presented to him, and liked the boy's voice in spite of the fact that it was very peculiar. He thought as he heard the tones that he must be very sad; but to his amazement he found his new companion full of bright, homely wit.

"Buey is not handsome," said his mother. "If you could see him, Mr. Netherland, you would find that he has a crooked nose, and his hair is as stiff as the bristles on a hog's back; but law, he's a good boy," which Robert had not a doubt of.

After they had chatted a while, Buey took Robert to the room which had been assigned to him by Mrs. Guzzard. It was neat and sunny, and had a green carpet on the floor, with simple, plain furniture, and a big stove in one corner; "For the winters are cold at Smithville," said Mrs. Guzzard, when she showed him where the stove stood.

Now, Mr. Wilson had corresponded with the president of the Jonesling University. This profound thinker did not believe "that any blind man could master the many and abstruse subjects taught by the efficient corps of professors who had the honor of guiding the youths committed to their care by Providence." He wrote this fact to Mr. Wilson; but Mr. Wilson, nothing daunted, did not think it necessary to tell Robert of his correspondence. Consequently Robert was much surprised the next morning when he heard of the correspondence, and learned the conclusion of the president, the Rev. Dr. Head, an exceeding great personage, who always signed himself, "President of the Faculty of Jonesling University." The president was a big man, with an impressive, deep bass voice, large vacant eyes, and massive features.

In vain did Robert argue with him. Dr. Head insisted that no man without sight could ever graduate from his college. He told Robert that he would be a "clog upon the classes," and rising, impressively said, "My young man, there is little for you in this life; you must seek your reward in the world which is to come."

"I have to live in this present one," objected Robert.

"True; but it is merely a temporary stopping-place," said the president. "You will soon pass on, and receive a crown of glory."

The promised crown did not encourage Robert as much as the president hoped it would, and the interview closed very unsatisfactorily for Robert. The Rev. Dr. Head was much pleased with himself that morning. He was always pleased with himself. He was a great man, and the consciousness of this fact never left him. The married ladies of Smithville thought him "splendid," the spinsters thought him "adorable," while the young misses simply worshipped him; the faculty were afraid of him, and the simple folks thereabouts said that what the doctor did not know was not worth knowing. A big man in a little place, he dominated over and shaped the thought of the neighborhood.

What was Robert to do? The president refused even to let him take the entrance examinations. He declared that as Providence had committed that school to his guiding, he would not permit its work to be hindered by the halt, the lame, or the blind. Robert went back to Mr. Guzzard's house, and told the good postmaster of Dr. Head's decision. Mr. Guzzard was uneducated; but he was a plain, common-sense, practical man, who above all things loved fair play.

"Why, law," he said, "that doctor is bustin' old Bill Jones's will into smithereens. One of the perticklers in that will declares that 'no person, no matter what their previous condition has been, whether they be black or white, male or female, shall be refused the benefits of this school on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.' That old Bill meant to give everybody fair shakes," said Mr. Guzzard, "and you shall have them. If you don't, my name ain't Tom Guzzard."

It was not clear to Robert how Tom Guzzard would get him "fair shakes." Tom's notions about it were quite lucid, however, and he saw the lawyer, Mr. Frizzle. Mr. Frizzle had made the will, and was the only man in the village who was not pious. Moreover, he was not afraid of Dr. Head. All the ministers in the village had been praying, and trying to save him from the wrath to come; but to no avail.

Mr. Frizzle went over to the Circuit Court House to get the will; and having possessed himself of this document, he next went to Mr. Guzzard's house, and invited Robert to ride over with him to see Dr. Head. Many people thought Mr. Frizzle a crank, for the reason that he insisted in the town meetings that "one man is as good as another." Red haired, red bearded, and red skinned, he was not prepossessing in appearance. His manner was abrupt, and fear was not a component element of his nature.

He led Robert into the Rev. Dr. Head's parlor. The doctor was having a nap up-stairs, and was angry at being disturbed. He was proud of the fact, however, that he was always righteous even in his anger, and entering the room, said solemnly, "The godly must ever be disturbed by the sinner."

"Just so," said the lawyer sharply. "Do you see this document?"

The doctor saw it.

"Do you see this clause?" queried his opponent.

The doctor read it.

"Now, by the holy smoke," said the lawyer, "this boy shall have a chance to pass those examinations, or I am not Frizzle."

"He is blind," said the doctor somewhat crestfallen.

"I am not," said Frizzle, "if he is. I wrote this will, and if you do not let him go to that school it will get no more of Bill Jones's money. I will apply for an injunction to-morrow morning."

Mr. Frizzle did not like Dr. Head. He had been waiting many a year to get even with him. He had no faith in his pretended knowledge and goodness, and the doctor knew it.

"Now, what will you do?" said Mr. Frizzle. "Will you, or won't you, comply with the conditions of this will?"

"St. Paul says, 'Servants be obedient to them that are *your* masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling.' I will obey the will."

Dr. Head was one of those men who are very brave and very stubborn when they encounter those weaker than themselves. He instinctively knew that the lawyer read him, and he always studiously avoided a conflict with him. He added to Robert as they left, "God bless you, young man, God bless you. I hope you can pass the examinations."

"Thank you," said Robert.

"Thank him for what," said Mr. Frizzle as they entered the buggy.

"For his kind wishes."

"Look here, young man, don't you take any stock in old Head; don't take any stock in him, I tell you.

He is a lazy hypocrite. If they don't treat you fair at the college, let me know."

The morning was dark. Students were assembling in one of the schoolrooms of the college. There were light young men and dark young men; tall young men and short young men; and as this college was for the benefit of both sexes, there were also young women seated in a portion of the room especially assigned to them. Buey Guzzard led Robert in, and they seated themselves at two desks half-way down the aisle. Students continued to arrive till the room was well filled. Dr. Head then entered, and a solemn hush fell over all.

The doctor opened the Bible, and, after he had read a chapter, prayed fervently. He invoked the blessing of God, and asked that he would protect the lambs of his flock from harm, and keep them in the paths of rectitude, and open their minds to the great truths which would be taught them. The prayer over, examinations were begun. They were soon over, for the entrance examinations were easy. The Rev Dr. Head watched Robert furtively as he answered the questions propounded to him; and when he began translating a passage from Virgil which was read to him, the doctor walked a little nearer. When Robert worked his equation in algebra the doctor approached yet closer.

A little thin man was conducting Robert's examination, which was necessarily oral. Turning to Dr. Head he said quietly, "I cannot understand it; such a memory."

"A gift of Providence," answered the doctor. "You know when one sense is taken away the others are rendered keener; for God is always just."

"And merciful," added the little thin man.

An idea was beginning to dawn upon the president. It would be a great advertisement for the college to graduate a blind man. He came to Robert, and put his arm protectingly around him as he was standing. All could see him.

"You have done well, my son," he said. "I trust your example in the school may urge your fellow-students to work all the harder."

All eyes were upon them.

"How fragile the boy looks as he stands beside the president," said one student.

"He can't see," was sympathetically whispered all around the schoolroom.

"Where does he come from?" asked another.

A benediction from Dr. Head closed the session for that day. The students bustled out. Robert was leaning on the arm of Buey Guzzard. Several young men came up to speak to him. They inquired his name, where he was going to live, and which course he expected to take, and generously offered their services if they could do anything to help him along.

Guzzard rather resented this, and answered that he was going to do Robert's reading for him, and that Robert was going to live in their house, adding, "We'll take good care of him too."

Jonesling University had a base-ball team, a foot-ball team, and an athletic association. The students were very fond of rowing on the lake, as there was not much of general interest at Smithville.

There were many old maids and few young girls in the village; and for some reason, not quite clear to the mind of Dr. Head, there were very few marriages at Smithville. The young men came and got their education, and went away; but it was a very rare occurrence for one of them to take a wife from the many daughters of this enterprising village. This troubled the doctor very much. He had nine marriageable daughters, or rather, all of the nine daughters had been marriageable, but some of them were now past the age of their blooming beauty. The youngest was twenty-five years old, and very soon expected to be engaged to Buey Guzzard, although she was three years his senior. The reason for this expectation was not clear to Buey. True, he had walked home from church with her one night; but as this was the only attention he had ever shown to the young lady, he did not understand why busybodies were circulating a rumor of his attachment to Miss Geraldine Head. It did not trouble him, however. The Devil was at this time occupying most of his thoughts, so to speak, for he had constantly in his mind a book which he meant to write. He was to be ordained the next June, and he longed to grapple with "his Satanic Majesty." He would remark by the fireside at home, "My hands are just itching to get at him."

"You'll git him," said his father.

"He will not git you," said his mother; and then all laughed.

Robert began his work at the college, and Buey Guzzard read for him. A new world was now unfolding itself through Buey's sing-song, monotonous voice. Mathematics seemed to him but play; Homer was as sweet as music, although the Greek was pronounced abominably by Buey; and he was studying French and German as well. Patiently Buey Guzzard worked, and read and re-read the passages Robert did not catch at first, and Buey was proud of their work, although he did not have a good memory himself; and as Robert was reciting in the class-room, Buey exchanged proud glances with his fellow-students, and looked pleased. When the recitation was over, and Robert would go back to his seat, he would say, "Good; well done, old fellow, well done."

Buey was not very popular with the students; for while his eccentricities amused, they kept him out of sympathy with them. Robert liked him, although he was abruptly frank and fanatical as well, and forgave his fanaticism because of the good he found in him.

The school year passed, and when June came Robert led his class much to Dr. Head's gratification. The students all talked about it; the villagers marvelled at it. The faculty were not aware that Dr. Head at first had refused to receive Robert as a student.

Dr. Head did not know much of his blind student's history; but before the lad went back to his work in New York he invited Robert to supper, and after the simple meal inquired if Robert's father and mother were living. Finding that they were dead, he hoped that Robert had a sufficient competency. His pupil did not care to take this man into his confidence, but he could not avoid answering the very direct questions which followed.

"You are coming back to us this fall?"

"I hope so," said Robert.

"You are not sure of it?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"Because I haven't the money," answered Robert simply.

"How did you get the money to pay your last year's tuition then?"

"I earned it."

"Earned it! How?" said the minister, showing great surprise.

Robert then related the history of his life.

The minister had never earned any money for himself, and was too mean and selfish to appreciate the blind bóy's efforts. He had a comfortable living easily obtained, and consequently knew nothing of life's bitter struggle; but he was shrewd, and offered Robert a scholarship the next year.

"I shall pay my way, or I shall not return," replied Robert with dignity. "I thank you, sir, for your kind offer, but I cannot lose my self-respect by accepting it." He added, "Perhaps you can find those who will do more good with the education after they get it than I can."

"No, no, no," said the reverend president: "we shall look for you in the fall."

CHAPTER XVIII

"WHO'LL BELL THE CAT?"

By means of a second trip to Havana Robert replenished his finances, and Dr. Head greeted him warmly when he returned to Smithville. The Guzzards one and all welcomed him. This was Buey's last year.

"When the year has passed he will be a full-fledged divine," Buey's father told Robert proudly.

A new feature had been added to the Jonesling University, for the students had organized a brass band. Dismal noises could be heard in Smithville by night, as the students "got their lips." In time the moans and the groans became tunes; and "Yankee Doodle" and the "Star-Spangled Banner" were, under the professor's direction, gradually evolved from the chaos of sound. The other boys were jealous of the members of the band; for the young ladies smiled upon them, and the children would point them out on the streets. Dr. Head was proud of the band, Mrs. Head was delighted with it, and Miss Geraldine wanted Buey to join it; but Buey thought joining the band was next to joining the Devil. One of the things he did not have was an appreciation of music, although he tolerated psalm-tunes because they were religious. He said secular music was an "abomination in the eyes of the Lord."

Robert daily found greater pleasure in his studies. He had finished mathematics, at least that branch of the subject assigned to him in his course. Languages, too, gave him but little difficulty, and he could understand Buey Guzzard's pronunciation of French and German readily; but one day while he was studying his German lesson the little music professor called upon him.

"Oh, Deutsch," the professor said, and began reading.

Robert could not understand a word he read.

"That man doesn't know how to talk his own language, anyway," said Buey with disgust, proceeding to read the passage himself. Robert then translated it easily, while the little old professor laughed heartily at them. Buey did not like him, for in his eyes he was not a godly man. Now, some of the villagers had seen a case of lager beer going to the professor's house; and Dr. Head, hearing of it, said that beer was the Devil's own broth, — but he also *had* to drink it for dyspepsia, "by the doctor's orders."

Buey read to Robert the history of the conflict between science and religion, the reader insisting all the while that the Devil's prime minister wrote it. He indorsed the writings of Emerson because he could not understand them. "Now he is a godly man, and a profound thinker," was Buey's comment one night upon Emerson.

The school year was nearly over; and as Buey was soon to be ordained, all was commotion and stir in Mr. Guzzard's household.

The village tailor was making Buey a suit of jet-black broadcloth, and his father had bought him a half-dozen shirts and a new white necktie at "the store." Now the conflict with the Devil was to come. The Commencement exercises came first, however; and the band played, not psalm-tunes, but waltzes and marches, which caused Buey much annoyance, while Dr. Head unconsciously beat time with his foot as the band played between each mighty oration.

"Now, Rob," said Buey, when the Commencement Day was past, "I am going to preach in the church next Sunday. Don't go back to New York until you have heard me. You are not converted yet, and I want to save your soul from the Devil's snare, and I'd like to have you the very first rich morsel I snatch from his mouth."

Robert said he would stay and hear him preach.

"What a beautiful Sabbath morning," thought Buey as he looked out of the window. "How green the trees are, and the grass too. I will give the Devil quite a scuffle this day, I will."

"Why, law, it's most time for you to be off," his mother called up the stairway. "I guess you are just a-dreamin'."

"Yes, I was, mother;" and presently he came downstairs in all the magnificence of his new suit.

"Why, he is almost handsome," said his mother, putting her arms around his neck.

"He *is* handsome," said little Sally; and the flattered Buey stooped and kissed her.

"He ain't a bad-lookin' man," was his father's comment.

Robert went with the family to church, where the whole of the village had gathered to hear Buey Guzzard preach. Buey had requested Robert to play the organ that day for him, which his friend did, and the

Rev. Dr. Head announced the first hymn. A prayer by this gentleman followed; another hymn, the con tribution, and Buey's opportunity came.

When he had finished reading the Scripture, he said, "Darkness was over the land of Egypt. The Angel of Death was hovering in the air. Pharaoh slept in the palace, and the peasants in their huts. All was well; but the angel watched and waited, and hovered yet a little nearer;" and then Buey exhorted his hearers. He said, "The angel may be hovering near us this day."

The young man's address was at first studied and conscious, then he warmed to his subject and forgot himself. He had prepared some notes, and he forgot those too. "Sin envelopes the world to-day," he shouted, "like the dark mantle of that fearful night in Egypt."

One of the ladies yawned. Tommy Guzzard smiled. The preacher's face became flushed. His dull eyes were bright. He pleaded earnestly for the first-born of the land. To him all sinners were of the first-born, and were liable to be slain. "The Angel of Death hovered still nearer, and impressed an icy kiss upon the lips of the prince in his palace, and upon the babe at its mother's breast. Everywhere was death."

"To-day," he said, "this land is on the brink of ruin. Depraved man will not turn to his God." He had finished, and the benediction was over.

Mr. Frizzle said that Buey would make a good preacher in time, and everybody shook hands with him; everybody told him he had done well, but Buey was not pleased with himself. The Devil was to him a reality. Men were all sinners, "and a good many women too," he would add. He had hoped to make a profound impression upon his hearers. He did not like the kindly but calm congratulations which were given him.

"I am afraid the Spirit of the Lord has not saved any souls here to-day," he thought. "I will go and preach to the heathen."

His mother objected to this, and said, "Why, law, you can save as many souls here as you can anywhere else."

"There are more to look after them here," was his answer to this.

There are in our lives a few events, a few landmarks, which stand out in our memories, and mark the different periods in life's long story. The most of our days we forget. One is so like another, and yet so different. We eat, we sleep; and some of us work, some dream, some idle. We all die.

There was no particular event that summer for Robert to remember. He spent his days in sorting tobacco, and slept soundly at night. His employers were kind, and the summer was hot.

When Robert again reached Smithville his vacation seemed like a half-forgotten dream. The money he had earned was the only substantial thing about it. He had to find a new reader that year; for Buey had carried out his intention, and had gone to preach the Word of God to the heathen. Mrs. Guzzard wept as she told Robert all about it.

"He went to India," she said; "and I do not quite know where that is."

"The students are getting more worldly," said Dr. Head.

A committee from one of the larger colleges visited the school, and organized a secret society. Dr. Head was a member of the Freemasons, and of the Oddfellows, and the Knights of Pythias. He said that such things were good enough for healthy, adult minds, but secret societies were not good for boys. The society was organized, however, in spite of his protest. It was the avowed purpose of this society to uphold the honor, protect the credit, and care for the sick students of Jonesling University. There was one thing about the school which gave rise to much complaining.

The organ in the chapel was a wheezy old affair, which had been presented twenty years before by Miss Alvida Jones, daughter of Bill Jones. The keys rattled every morning as the professor endeavored to accompany the students with it, and it had been tuned but once in all these twenty years. The school was prosperous, for there were now three hundred students, and everybody but Dr. Head wanted a new organ. Dr. Head insisted that he would not tolerate such an extravagance. Now, it happened that a meeting of the secret society was called one night as a new member was to be initiated. This new member was Robert Netherland. Every man was supposed to earn his right to his membership in that society by some valiant deed. Some at their initiation drank soda-water which had received an abundant supply of soap, salt, and pepper. Another earned his right by climbing the belfry and stealing the bell's big clapper, which he carried over and hung on the front door-knob of the venerable president's house.

"How shall Robert earn his right?" asked the grand chamberlain of the society.

"He has a good head," said the secretary; "let's talk with him about the organ."

Robert had now passed some of the ceremonies,— his head had been rubbed with soft soap; he had been treated to various sudden cold baths, administered in a way calculated to startle the unwary; he had smoked a pipe in which asafœtida was mixed with tobacco, and the boys said he was a "sterling fellow." The society was sitting. A member arose, and declared that the organ in the chapel was an outrage. Another said that it was a shame. Another called the president "a stupid old pate," and said he was too stingy to live.

"But he keeps on living just the *samee,*" remarked a student.

A bright young man made a motion.

"Mr. Chairman," he said impressively, "I move that this organ be destroyed."

A red-headed young man seconded the motion, and it was unanimously carried.

"Very good," said the chairman; "but who'll bell the cat? We meet in solemn conclave as did the Scottish chiefs. They would destroy the Earl of March, a traitor. We would destroy an old organ, a nuisance," he added.

"There is some difference in the amount of valor required for the two deeds," said one smart-looking young man.

"Sit down," shouted another; and the smart young man was loudly hissed by his fellows.

An idea flashed upon Robert's mind like a ray of sunshine in the darkness. When at the school for the blind he had learned a little organ- and piano-tuning, as all of Mr. Willoughby's pupils had been obliged to learn some trade; so it happened that Robert understood how to take the reeds out of an organ, file them, and put them back.

"Gentlemen, I'll bell the cat," he said. "The old organ will moan only once more. You shall hear its dying shriek to-morrow morning at prayers. Give me only a small pair of pliers, a light hammer, and a screwdriver, and I will put the bell on that cat;" adding that he knew how to tune an organ, and put one *out* of tune too.

The bell in the belfry struck twelve. The key to the chapel had been surreptitiously taken down from its hook, and put into Robert's hand. In the darkness he opened the chapel door softly, while two students guarded the door below. The little rickety old instrument was soon reached, and the screws holding in the front board of the reed chest were deftly loosened. A mouse ran across the floor and startled Robert, but he did not desist. He put the big bass reeds where the treble reeds belonged; the C reeds took the place of the D reeds, and the F reeds took the place of the B-flat reeds, and the work was done. The front board was then fitted into place, and Robert crept noiselessly to the door, and found his friends below.

"It is over," he whispered.

He stayed with a friend near the college the rest of the night; and when the bell rang the next morning the students assembled, and certain ones looked knowingly at each other as they entered the room.

Dr. Head opened the big leather-covered Bible. The bald-headed music professor put on his glasses, and sat down to the little organ.

"We will sing 'Nearer my God to Thee,'" said Dr. Head.

The little German began filling the bellows of the organ with the pedals. He pulled out three stops. He turned the pages of the hymn-book — and then such a noise!

"*Mein Gott! Mein Gott!*" shrieked the professor. "Vat ish de matter mit dot organ?"

Dr. Head frowned. "Remember where you are, sir, and before whom you are speaking."

"I am very sorry," said the professor, with a roll of his r's. "I'll shust play de scale on dot ting, and see vat de matter ish."

He put his hand on the middle C of the organ. A high squeak was heard. He struck the letter D next to C, and the organ gave a low growl.

"I cannot tell vat it ish; but de Devil has had dot organ, and he has shust changed de wrong notes in de wrong places. Ven I play C de ting says E-flat, two octaves above. Ven I strike dot E-flat up dere, it shust growls and grumbles like a scoldy old woman."

Dr. Head received a sudden idea like an inspiration.

"Some child of sin has misplaced the reeds of this organ," he said. "Let every man here hold up his hand."

All hands were up.

"Is there a man here who refuses to pledge his word and honor to tell the truth?"

There was not.

"I shall ask each one of you, as your name is called, if you did the deed. When I find the right one, I shall wrestle with the Lord and pray for him."

"Allen?" was called.

"No, sir."

"Allard?"

"No, sir."

"Allett?"

"No, sir."

"Alley?"

"No, sir."

"Baker, Brown, Black, Back, Ball, Blaine," all said "No;" and so on through the alphabet until the letter N was reached.

"Netherland?" the secretary was about to say.

"Stop," said the doctor; "God in his mercy and forethought and wisdom rendered such a deed impossible for this blind young man. He could not have injured the organ, and he would not if he could. Take warning, take warning lest the wrath of the Lord descend upon you like lightning from the clouds above."

Oliver, Pop, Quicksley, all said "No."

Roga, Rogan, Roger, Robinson, and Rimby, Starr and Stiles said "No."

Tickles and Timmon and Valve and Vincent, Weagles and Weekly, Yawl and Young, Zell, Zevel, and Zoll, all said "No."

The president was furious, but he remembered an old melodeon hidden somewhere up in the storeroom. It was more than a hundred years old.

"I will have an instrument here this day," he said. "It was made when men were more honorable. It came forth from the maker's shop while brave patriots were shedding blood for their country and their country's God. Spiggins, fetch the old melodeon."

The janitor returned slowly, carrying a strange-looking instrument.

"Look upon this precious instrument and be ashamed," said the doctor, with tears in his eyes and a tremor in his voice.

The music professor looked upon it, as did the students, with much interest. It looked as if it might have been an overgrown accordion. It was about two feet square, with two rows of small circular keys running lengthwise upon the top of it. The first row of keys was continuous from beginning to end. The second row was grouped in twos and threes like the black keys of a piano, but they were not elevated above the first row. The top of the instrument was broad enough to allow the arms to rest upon it; and one, while playing it, had to press it with the right arm, to fill the bellows with air.

"I don't know what to do mit dot quaint old ting. I shust do not know how to play dot," was the professor's sad comment.

"Play the keys with your fingers, and use your arms to press the bellows," commanded Dr. Head angrily, forgetting his dignity.

"Dot ish shust vat I cannot do," said the professor. "It ish like eating soup mit two spoons, and balancing a glass of beer on either elbow at the same time. Please excuse me."

Robert felt guilty.

"I think I can play it," he said, half hoping that the president would suspect him of the deed.

"God be praised!" said the minister. "Verily, verily, thou hast been sent here to-day to reproach us."

Robert took the old melodeon upon his lap, and pressing the bellows, it began to hum "Nearer my God to Thee."

The doctor prayed long and fervently, and the students called Robert a "brick" when the services were over.

CHAPTER XIX

IMPORTANT DISCOVERIES ARE MADE

One day Schneip was at work in the laboratory where he had been examining some sugar with a polariscope, and had studied the refraction of the rays of light from the different crystals until his eyes were tired. Mr. Gilbraith was mixing a dark-blue, sirupy liquid in a test-tube. A big galvanic battery stood on the table near at hand. Schneip took down a bottle of sulphuric acid, and began pouring a little of it into some of the sirupy liquid which Mr. Gilbraith had given him.

"See the beautiful colors!" exclaimed Schneip, as the mixture turned first bright yellow, then a fine sediment settled in the bottom of the tube, and then a blue ring formed around the top of the liquid. Below this ring of blue there formed another of bright scarlet, and then the scarlet ring gave place to one of brilliant green.

"What in thunder is that?" said Gilbraith.

They watched it for some moments, both noting down the result of Schneip's experiment.

"Ha! some new organic compound," said Schneip; and then they divided the contents of the tube, and decanted and filtered and tested the specimens with all sorts of chemicals, and when they had finished Schneip had about one-half teaspoonful of a white powder in the bottom of his tube. Looking at the substance through the microscope, they discovered that the powder was composed of very minute rhombic crystals.

"You have something or nothing, I cannot tell which," said Mr. Gilbraith rather vaguely.

"Nothing is invisible," said Schneip; "and whatever this may be it is certainly visible."

The powder was found to be soluble in water; and Schneip, by way of experiment, added some crude brown sugar to the water, and then another chemical reaction took place. A white powder again settled in the bottom of the tube, while the liquid turned a bright blue. This precipitate proved to be white sugar.

"By George!" said Mr. Gilbraith, "can you do that again?"

The experiment was tried and retried, and they found that a little of this drug would remove from crude brown sugar its impurities.

"You have a fortune in that," said Mr. Gilbraith.

"*We* have, you mean, if there is a fortune in it," said Schneip.

"You discovered it," said Mr. Gilbraith

"I would not have done so had you not been mixing that hydrocarbon," said Schneip; and then they began generously to argue vociferously, each trying to convince the other that he was responsible for the discovery. Finally they agreed to share it between them. They worked and worked, and the hours of the day advanced; and when the day was ended, there was in that laboratory something new "under the sun." A half-ounce of innocent-looking white powder was securely bottled up in a little glass vial, which Schneip hermetically sealed over with a Bunsen burner.

Once more the greatest of all sciences, chemistry, gave to the world a new method of utilizing one of the great food-products which nature has prepared for mankind.

That night Schneip did not go home until late. The two chemists figured and worked in the laboratory. They analyzed their new discovery volumetrically and quantitatively, and determined that one-half ounce of the chemical would refine in a few minutes two hundred and fifty pounds of crude sugar. This new discovery would reduce the cost of refining sugar to a mere trifle when compared with that of the methods then in use for this purpose.

"What shall we do with this discovery?" asked Mr. Gilbraith.

"Refine sugar with it, of course," replied Schneip.

"Yes; but if we do not patent it, you and I will get no benefit from it; and we both need money."

"How much money?" innocently inquired Schneip.

"Why, you foolish boy," said Gilbraith, "do you always expect to plod and work for a salary of twenty dollars a week?"

"Why, really, I never thought of it," said Schneip; "I live very comfortably."

As they left the laboratory late at night Gilbraith told Schneip that they must keep the formula of the discovery a secret, and apply the next day for a patent. As they turned into the street where Schneip lived, a man accosted them.

"Will you give a poor devil twenty-five cents to pay for a night's lodging?" he said.

The two men looked at him very closely. There was no mistaking that smile on his dark, swarthy face. He repeated his request.

"Can't you earn a night's lodging?" asked Mr. Gilbraith.

"I have earned a good many," the man replied, "and got them too, and was sorry for my pay."

Schneip told Gilbraith in German that he knew the man, and briefly related his adventure in the beer-saloon.

"What have you been doing?" asked Gilbraith.

"Walking the streets, drinking, gambling, and stealing."

"Can't you find a better occupation?" again said Mr. Gilbraith.

"It seems not. A man once in jail is ruined forever. I am known by everybody as a thief. 'Once down, always down,' is the motto of the rich; and they have another which suits the first one well, 'Once up, stay, if you can beat the Devil.'"

Mr. Gilbraith gave the vagrant a quarter. He left them; and they were soon in front of Schneip's door, where they parted.

Schneip went into his little home; there was his pretty girlish wife who had never before looked so handsome to her husband. He hung his hat and coat on a peg, and sat down and told his wife in his native tongue of his new discovery. He was not the only one who had made a discovery that day. Kneeling on the floor by his side, his wife laid her head upon his knee, and Schneip learned that some day from the realm of the great unknown there would come to him a little one. What a strange thought! Emotions that he had never felt before went through his breast. Life had for him a new purpose. He had plodded, he had worked, and found in his work all the happiness he had ever experienced. Then came his marriage, and now was to come the highest fulfilment of true love. Deep down in his consciousness Schneip, without realizing it, had marvelled at all the phenomena of life. He had believed that all life was the result of chemical action. Things usually regarded as inanimate possessed for him life and consciousness. Bits of hard, cold metal, would, under the hands of the chemist, resolve themselves into living, active substances, obedient, it is true, to inflexible laws; but now the most wonderful of all things in the world, an intelligent. vital, sensate being was to come to him. and be his own.

Schneip lifted his little wife and placed her upon his knee, but did not speak. Thoughts crowded upon him. to express which his language was inadequate. His face was transformed. As he mused some one rang the bell, and opening the door he beheld Lichmann.

"You are wanted," said the policeman, "to identify a man."

Schneip hurried away with him till they stopped before the door of a great hospital, both breathless from haste.

There on the surgical table Schneip recognized his friend Gilbraith. He was breathing heavily, and his clothes were soiled and muddy. A white-capped nurse was washing the blood from the side of his head, while two young physicians were feeling of his legs and arms. Schneip felt himself growing dizzy, and would have fallen had he not been steadied by one of the physicians.

"*Mein Freund!*" he ejaculated. "My God, what has happened to you?"

"That is just what we are trying to find out," answered the physician. "Some one has struck him a terrible blow on the head."

The human mind sometimes jumps at conclusions quickly; and Schneip intuitively knew that the ever-smiling, dark-skinned rascal had dogged his friend after he had left him, and had dealt him that blow. He tried to collect himself, remembering that he saw the man turn into an alleyway after Mr. Gilbraith had given him the money, and related the occurrence.

Lichmann said, "I know where we will find that man. Come, let's go. The physician will do better for your friend than we can."

Away went Schneip and the officer; and they soon were joined by another, to whom Lichmann gave some directions. They went on, and stopped in front of a low, dingy house on a back street.

"We will get him here," said Lichmann; "but we must be careful that he does not escape. Take this," he said, handing Schneip a revolver. "Allow no man or woman to go out of the door."

The two officers went to the back of the house, while a third joined Schneip at the door. In a few minutes a noise was heard in the hallway. The front door opened, and a man tried to push his way by Schneip and the officer. The latter seized him by the throat, and Schneip struck him on the head with the butt of the revolver. He reeled, then with a superhuman effort extricated himself from the officer. Schneip stooped quickly, and seized the man around the thighs. Then putting forth all his strength raised himself, and hurled the man over his head. Before he could get up, both Schneip and the officer were upon him.

"Help!" shrieked the villain; and as if by magic they were surrounded by a motley throng.

"You sha'n't have him!" screamed a woman, viciously scratching the officer with her sharp fingernails. A long-haired, filthy-looking man hit Schneip on the face with a bottle. The officer kept hold of the prisoner; while Schneip as if trained for a policeman, took the officer's club, and beat back those who were trying to rescue the offender.

"Pull him off! Pull him off! Kill de cop! Smash him!" was heard on every hand. Women shrieked and cursed; and Schneip heard, as they scuffled, the sound of blows, and saw several policemen beating back the crowd with their clubs, and then the prisoner was secured. The next Schneip realized he was at the station-house. There was the sergeant who years before had locked him up. Officer Slinkworthy, looking much as he did the night of Schneip's imprisonment, stood, or rather stooped, and eyed the party.

"I know this devil," said the sergeant.

"I know him too," said Schneip. "He is the one who struck my friend."

The prisoner still wore a smile. There was a great gash over his right eye, and the blood trickled down his dark cheek, and made it look darker.

"Search his pockets," suggested Schneip.

Lichmann drew from the pockets of the prisoner's trousers a little open-faced silver watch. The crystal was broken, and on the back of the case was Mr. Gilbraith's monogram. Next was a handful of coins. Then a pocketbook, which they opened. It contained a photograph of a young lady. Schneip even in his excitement did not like the appearance of the face. A letter addressed to Mr. Gilbraith was also found in the pocketbook. It was a long letter, written in a lady's hand, and was signed "Thankful Steele." There was also a small amount of money, a physician's prescription, and some chemical formulæ.

"Those belong to my friend," said Schneip.

"We will take good care of them," said the officer rather kindly.

The prisoner now began a confession; but while talking suddenly extricated himself from the officers, and would have escaped had he not run against a drunken man who was just being brought in by two policemen.

"Well done," said Slinkworthy; "but you will not get the chance to try that again;" and while speaking he fitted a pair of handcuffs onto the man's wrists, and the prisoner was led away to his cell.

Schneip left his address at the station-house, and went back to the hospital. He found his friend in a small room, lying upon a clean white bed, breathing heavily, with no signs of returning consciousness. A nurse was applying ice to his head, and a young physician was feeling of his pulse, while a stern-looking man stood at the other side of the bed.

"Poor fellow," said the young physician.

"I am afraid of concussion of the brain," said the elder gentleman.

Then a nurse came in, and said, "Dr. Lucketwell, the woman in the ward is dying."

"As there are fifty in the ward, which one do you mean," answered the physician sharply.

"The one in bed number five," responded the nurse.

Dr. Lucketwell crossed the hall, and entered the ward. He went up to bed number five, looked into the face of its occupant a moment, and felt her pulse. He said, "Not yet," and took a hypodermic syringe out of his pocket. From the box which contained the syringe he took a little glass tube which held some very minute tablets. The nurse then brought a little warm water; and the doctor dissolved one of these tablets in a teaspoonful of it, filled his syringe, and then, screwing on the wicked-looking little needle, thrust it into the arm of the patient. The woman moaned a little, and opened her eyes. The doctor thought he had never seen such eyes, so wistful, so pleading.

"May I speak to you?" she said.

"Certainly," said the doctor, and sat down by her.

"My name," she said, "is Janet Steele."

The doctor noted it down.

"I am dying, and I want to tell you before it is too late."

"You are not dying," firmly answered the doctor. "If you have anything you wish to say, however, I will hear it."

The woman told her story. She was married to John Benedict Steele, by whom she had a little girl. She lived with him for a number of years.

"He drank, and he beat me," she said. "We were in New Orleans. My husband was out of money. Living in the same house with us was a very dark man. I do not know what has become of him," she said incoherently; and then she recounted the story of her sin. At first only pleased with his oddities and flattered by his attention, she subsequently became fascinated with him, and lived that terrible life which only women of sin can know. Jealousy soon took the place of passion; and when the man who had wrecked her life left her, she drifted from one place to another, till in Chicago disease overtook her. She did not know what had become of her child; and the one remaining attribute of goodness, the mother love, now held sway over her depraved nature. She was becoming somewhat delirious and excited. Again the doctor applied his hypodermic needle; again the balance of her consciousness was restored.

"Doctor," she said, "find my child. Let me look once more on her face. A yawning chasm is before me. The twilight of an eternal night is coming on. Let the love from her eyes light my soul in the darkness of death's starless night. Perhaps the tones of her voice will restore a lost soul's final hope. Perhaps the love I feel for her, the only virtue I possess, may rise to the throne of the Divine Giver of life, and be the one plea for my soul's forgiveness. Tell me, Doctor, can you find my child?" she cried. "She is the only being in the world who never wronged me; and I deserted and wronged and left *her*, I know not where. If she is in heaven, do you think I can find her there? And if she is still living, where is she, oh, where is she?"

Dr. Lucketwell was accustomed to scenes of suffering, but the appeal of the dying woman touched him deeply. Her hair was snowy white; her face, once handsome, still possessed vestiges of its former beauty.

"Now control yourself," he said very kindly; "tell me where your little girl was when you left her. Tell me if you have heard from her since; and if so, where was she at that time?"

The woman endeavored to collect herself. Strange thoughts went through her brain.

"There! See! See! There is the man who smiled! Look at him! I see him! They are trying to catch him! They are grabbing for him! There is a policeman; they are hitting him with a club! See, there he is!" she said, pointing to a corner of the room.

Again the doctor resorted to his hypodermic needle. The woman became more quiet.

"Can you answer my questions?" repeated the doctor.

Her eyes closed; her features relaxed, but not in death. She slept; and the doctor returned to Mr. Gilbraith.

He opened his eyes, and called, "Thankful, Thankful."

"What are you thankful for?" the doctor asked, rather amused by his repeated utterance of those words.

"I will refine the sugar," he answered. "This method will refine three hundred times more than any method yet discovered."

"Where is Thankful?" he said again; "get Schneip to write to her."

Schneip bent over his friend, and, in tones as tender as a woman's, said, "What is it you wish me to do, Mr. Gilbraith? What can I do for you?"

"Oh, are you here, Schneip?" he said with a pleased smile passing over his face. Then he added, "We can refine more sugar by our method than can any other man."

He tried to raise his right hand, but found that the physicians had made it fast, as the arm, too, was broken. The nurse put some more ice on his head, and Doctor Lucketwell once more resorted to his hypodermic needle, and Mr. Gilbraith slept.

"He will live," the doctor said to Schneip. "It would be better to leave him with the nurse now. Good-night."

Schneip went back to his home. His little wife was waiting for him, and he told her of the assault made upon his friend.

The sun rose bright and clear the next morning, and its soft light fell upon Mrs. Steele's face as she lay in her bed close by a window in the ward of the hospital. Dr. Lucketwell was making his morning visits, and pausing before the bed looked at the features of the unconscious woman.

"Brain trouble," he remarked to himself.

At this moment her arm began to twitch; and then it was convulsed, and the features of the opposite side of the face were slightly drawn. The doctor opened her eyes with his fingers.

"Ah," he said, "irritation in the motor-cortical centre which governs the movements of her left arm."

The spasm of the arm lasted only a minute.

Dr. Lucketwell turned and said, "Miss Eda, look at that face. In it nature tells the story of the mind's creation. There is no more expression now upon that face than there is upon a pine board. If consciousness returns, as it dawns her features will wear an infantile expression. Then, as her reason comes gradually back to her, the expression will be that of a child six or eight years old. Her speech, if she ever speaks again, will at first resemble that of a child two or three years old; and, as her intellect ascends the stairway from the abyss of vacant nothingness, each individual stage of the ascent will show itself in her face."

As he looked at the nurse he was struck by the resemblance between her face and that of the patient.

"Why, she looks enough like you to be your mother," he wonderingly exclaimed.

"I suppose I had a mother," she said with some effort; "but she must have been a heartless one."

As she spoke, the patient gave evidence of returning consciousness.

"Watch that expression," again the doctor said.

"It is that of an infant," added the nurse.

The patient opened her eyes, and called for a broom. The doctor picked up one which was near by. The woman shook her head, and again said, "Broom, broom."

The doctor wrote the word down on a piece of paper; she looked at it, and shook her head.

"What's this?" he asked, taking his watch from his pocket.

"A hat," answered the patient.

"Ah, aphasia," said the doctor. "Write your name upon this piece of paper."

The woman wrote, "Janet Steele."

"Write down the name of this," again holding up his watch.

"Watch" was written.

"Tell me what it is," commanded the doctor.

"A stick," she answered; and again shook her head and looked troubled.

"You asked for a broom; write down what you wanted."

"Some cool milk," wrote the patient.

"She will not be able to tell you, Miss Eda, what she wants; make her write everything. See that she has plenty of food and drink, and allow no one to speak to her."

"This is a sad thing," continued Dr. Lucketwell; "the patient has a tumor which is pressing upon that part of the brain from which language emanates. She knows perfectly well what she wants to say; but owing to the pressure of the tumor upon the brain centre in which words originate, it acts like a cog-wheel when one of the cogs is broken, incorrectly and disjointedly. Fortunately the centre in the brain for written language is not destroyed. I earnestly hope it will not be. Think, Miss Eda, what the agony of this woman would be in her present condition, if she had important matters to divulge. She knows she does not say what she means, and yet has absolutely no command of her language."

CHAPTER XX

MOTHER AND DAUGHTER

Thankful Steele returned home late one cold afternoon from a shopping-tour, irritable and out of sorts generally. She complained that she could not find the articles she wanted, that the shopgirls were saucy to her, and that her head ached.

The door-bell rang sharply while she was speaking.

"There are my things now," she exclaimed; but she was mistaken; for the servant who had gone to the door returned with a telegram, which Thankful snatched from her and hastily tore open. It read as follows: —

CHICAGO, *Nov.* 15, 18—.

Mr. Gilbraith dangerously ill from blow on the head; wishes to see you.

SCHNEIP.

Thankful was shocked. She felt that she ought to obey the telegram at once, and yet the thought of the long, tedious journey rose up before her. She considered for a moment.

"I must go," she said at last decidedly to her mother; "but I cannot travel alone, and you are not feeling strong enough to go with me."

"No," said her mother languidly; "but if you must go, perhaps Lorenzo will go with you."

"Lorenzo! Lorenzo!" called Thankful, opening the door into the hall.

"Oh, dear, can't you allow a fellow to rest?" answered a lazy voice from a room at the end of the hall.

"Mr. Gilbraith is ill, and wants me to go to Chicago. Will you go?" she called.

Lorenzo opened his door, and showed himself clad in a long blue flannel robe.

"Oh! Go to Chicago," he drawled. "Beastly weather for such a beastly trip. Gilbraith sick, eh? I do hate travelling in the train, you know; but I suppose you must go. It would seem kind of heartless, don't you know, if you didn't. What time is it?"

"Half-past five."

"We shall have to take a Pullman. When does the train go?"

"You will have to look that up for me."

"All right;" and he closed his door.

The servants in the house were more excited than Thankful, who collected her wearing apparel, decided upon the trunk she would take and the gown she would wear, and, with Lorenzo, was at the station in ample time for the limited express, which left Boston at 7.15, and reached Chicago at 8.30 the next evening.

They drove at once to the Auditorium Hotel, and, after a hasty supper, to the hospital. After a brief delay they were ushered into Mr. Gilbraith's room. The patient was apparently asleep, but the nurse rose to receive them quietly.

"He is still feverish and restless," she said in answer to Thankful's inquiring glance.

"Too much medicine, I expect," said Miss Steele. "I wish that he had an odoriferopathic doctor;" a remark which the nurse apparently did not hear, or if she did, she did not understand.

"Henry, Henry," Thankful said softly as she bent over his bedside.

Mr. Gilbraith opened his eyes.

"Oh, you have come, darling," he said in a low, affectionate tone.

Thankful sat down by the bed, and took one of his hands in both hers.

"My darling," he murmured again. "I feel much better now that you have come."

The door of the room opened, and Schneip entered.

"Good-evening," said Schneip kindly. Seeing the young lady, he stopped.

"Miss Steele, Mr. Schneip," said Mr. Gilbraith.

The young man bowed in an awkward and embarrassed fashion. The nurse stood quietly by Thankful at the head of the bed as Dr. Lucketwell came in. who was struck at once by the remarkable resemblance of the two women. While their general cast of features was similar, their expressions were very different. The nurse was dark; Thankful Steele was dark also; but while the face of the nurse showed patience and kindness, that of Thankful looked irritable and impatient.

"She's anæmic," thought the doctor as he looked at Thankful. Thinking it well to leave the two by themselves for a few moments, the doctor asked the nurse to accompany him to bed number five in the next ward. Its occupant was Mrs. Janet Steele.

"Put out the lights!" she shrieked as they came near her.

"Does the light hurt your eyes?" the doctor asked.

She shook her head.

"Put out the lights, put out the lights!" again she shrieked.

"Give her a pencil, and find out, if you can, what it is she wants. I will be in again in a minute."

The patient wrote, "My head aches terribly."

She looked fixedly at the nurse.

"Catch it, catch it, catch it," she cried.

The pencil was given her, and she wrote, "Who are you?"

"That's right, that's right, that's right," again she cried.

Eda wrote her name. Tears were streaming down the patient's face.

"I will get it, I will get it," she said, wringing her hands wildly.

"Write," commanded the nurse.

"Were you brought up in the Brown Orphan Asylum?"

The nurse was startled, and answered, "Yes."

"Look out, look out, look out," the woman cried.

Dr. Lucketwell returned, and said, "Write."

"Were you left there one cold night?" was written.

"I have heard so," replied the nurse.

"Bring the lamp, bring the lamp!" the woman shrieked.

Dr. Lucketwell said, "There is no use for you to try to speak. You must write your wants."

"Let me look at your arm," the woman wrote tremulously.

Eda drew up her sleeve, showing a large red mole on the inner side of her arm. The woman gave a shriek of anguish, and held her arms out to the nurse.

"What is the matter here?" asked the doctor, puzzled. "Write again," he commanded her. "Keep cool and write."

"You are my daughter. I am your mother. I deserted you. Speak one kind word to me. Let me know that you will forgive me."

The nurse was deathly pale. Her hands shook. Her expression was stern.

"Can this woman be my mother?" she said to the doctor.

"Write," said the doctor turning to the patient, "and answer that question."

The pencil moved. Some indistinct marks were made. The hand dropped; the eyes closed. In a few moments she spoke again, and put her hand over her eyes. The doctor watched the gesture.

"Ah, bring a candle," he said.

When one was brought to him, he opened the eyes and held the light very close.

"That is pretty hard," he said; "the sight is gone."

"So quickly," said the nurse.

"Yes; there is disease of the retina."

"Of both eyes?"

"Yes."

The nurse was watching quietly. The patient made movements with her left arm; the right was now paralyzed. She touched her lips with her left hand. The nurse knelt and kissed her. She pulled the clothes from her chest, and drew a gold locket from her bosom.

"Your father," she murmured; then gasped and died.

The nurse was too much agitated to examine it. The doctor opened the locket. There was the photograph of a man whose features closely resembled Eda's.

"Take it, Miss Eda," he said very kindly, putting it into her hand. "Tell the head nurse I will excuse you from any further duty to-night. Go to your room and to bed."

"And leave the gentleman in the other room?" she said, weeping.

"I will find some one to take care of him to-night. Do as I tell you."

It was now eleven o'clock. Thankful and her brother bade Mr. Gilbraith good-night.

The days were long and weary to Thankful as she watched Mr. Gilbraith's slow recovery. At last he was able to be up.

Schneip asked the doctor one day if Mr. Gilbraith could not be moved to his house.

"A good idea," said the doctor. "I think such a change would hasten his recovery."

Mrs. Schneip fitted up a comfortable room, and on the day of his removal Schneip brought his friend a bottle of wine and some Malaga grapes.

"A good change," said Lorenzo. "It will be nearer than that beastly hospital; and what a plump, pretty woman Mrs. Schneip is, don't you know!"

"Just a darling of a man," was Mrs. Schneip's estimate of Lorenzo.

While Schneip did his daily work in the laboratory, Thankful and Lorenzo visited Mr. Gilbraith at Schneip's home, and on one occasion Lorenzo gave Mrs. Schneip a rose. Now, a rose is an innocent thing when innocently given. An innocent kiss is harmless when the intent is good. Accordingly Lorenzo gave Mrs. Schneip a kiss, and little Mrs. Schneip blushed.

Mr. Gilbraith was finally able to return to work, and Lorenzo and his sister went home; but Lorenzo said to the chemist's wife when he left, "I will see you again next fall."

CHAPTER XXI

"NO, DR. HEAD; I CANNOT BECOME A MINISTER"

Robert's new reader had been a different type of man from Buey Guzzard. This one was an ardent admirer of the works of Herbert Spencer; and many a night they sat until one or two o'clock reading and discussing Spencer's theories, one of which Robert found it exceedingly difficult to accept. He did not like to admit to himself that there could be a realm of the unknowable; for a knowledge of everything seemed possible. His family were Presbyterians; but as soon as he grew old enough to understand the doctrine of predestination the thought became hideous to him. He had never taken a strenuous hold of the religious dogmas of that church, and contact with life broadened his naturally pliable mind.

"Yet," he would reason, "forces are at work, governing, moulding, and changing even the human mind itself, many times against its own will. Am I, then, a free moral agent?" he would ask himself; and his mind would revert to his loss of sight, and he knew he was not responsible for that. His affliction had changed the whole course of his life. Do what he would, succeed as he might, his loss of sight prevented the full exercise of his best faculties.

"No more school," he said when the last examination was over. "Must I go back to New York? Is there nothing else I can do?"

The tedious work of selecting tobacco had become dull and uninteresting as his intellect expanded. Reflecting thus one morning, he walked down the gravel path in front of the college building.

"Good-morning, my son," said Dr. Head in a deep, impressive voice, taking Robert by the hand. "Let me have a little talk with you, if you please;" and leaving the gravel walk, they sat down on the grass beneath the shade of an old elm.

"You look dissatisfied," Dr. Head remarked. "What are you going to do with yourself?"

"I wish I knew," Robert said. "I do not know what I can do."

"I do not know what you cannot do," said the doctor. "There is one thing I want you to do. I want you to devote your life to God. It is my earnest hope that you will become a minister of the gospel."

"A minister of the gospel?" Robert said. "Why, I never thought of that."

"I hoped you felt the call of the Spirit already," said Dr. Head. "Now, you can do a vast amount of good as a minister. You can render yourself of use to your fellow-man in saving souls. I want you to consider it. Think for a moment. You are blind and alone in the world. Now, give your life to your Creator."

"I should give back but a maimed, deformed thing to my Creator, and giving, would only return to him his own imperfect work. Were I perfect, and did I owe my perfection to the superior Being, I would lay my life at the foot of the throne and do his bidding. No, Dr. Head; I cannot be a minister. If God is responsible for my loss of sight, and has assigned me to a realm of physical darkness, I cannot thank and praise him for the deed."

"Your affliction may be a blessing in disguise, my son. You may work wonderful things in the name of the Lord. Possibly you may do more good than you would have done if you had had your sight."

"All men are ultimately selfish," said Robert. "I would gladly work for my fellow-man. I should be glad to save them here and hereafter, if there be one; but an eternity of bliss can never repay me for nineteen years of anguish. Neither could any amount of good which I might do compensate me for a lifelong night. Given the spirit of a man, I have had to feel the physical superiority of those who are mentally far beneath me. If I became a minister I should be half marvelled at, half patronized, by my parishioners; but they would clearly understand the fact that I was blind, and they would feel, that owing to my loss of sight I had selected the ministry for the reason that I could do practically nothing else. Therefore I should not have the moral force for good which I should have were my sight perfect. No, Doctor; I cannot be a minister."

"But what can you do? It seems to me there is scarcely any other alternative left for you."

"If there is nothing else, then certainly I will not preach the Word of God in order to live. I would rather starve or beg. How could I preach the Word of God, whose gospel I *must* teach, or want for my daily bread? No, Dr. Head; never."

"I am very sorry," replied the doctor. "I am very sorry. Some one has been putting infidel ideas into your head."

"You are quite mistaken, sir," replied Robert hotly. "I am not an infidel; I have learned one important lesson at your school. I have found the immensity of what I do not know. There may be in the universe some explanation for all that seems so wrong. There may be a reason that makes it right for men to live and suffer. I do not know that that reason exists; and until I do I will not believe that suffering is right and best."

"My son, reason is the Devil's own weapon."

"Who gave him the weapon, then?"

"The Devil, you know," answered the minister evasively, "was once an archangel, and he fell as a result of his own wrong-doing."

"I know that such an idea is advanced in Milton's 'Paradise Lost.' I read it with my fingers from a raised-print book. I suppose, Dr. Head, you will admit that foreknowledge is a necessary attribute of divinity?"

"I do admit it, most assuredly," said the doctor.

"Then God created the Devil with a perfect foreknowledge of what he would do."

"That follows logically," said the minister; "but you must not inquire into the ways of Providence. You are a worm of the dust. Simply believe, and have faith, and work."

"Must I work along the lines of my faith?" asked Robert.

"Faith without works is dead," replied the minister.

"Suppose I believe an error, then my work is bad."

"The Christian faith is not an error," answered Dr. Head. "It has brought the world from the darkness of barbarism into civilized light. It has taught man the best he knows. It has made home and property safe."

"Possibly you are right; but from what I have read I have been led to think that there might have been other forces at work in the world which developed our civilization. It has seemed to me sometimes that Christianity has been civilized, instead of being a civilizing agency. There are bigots in our own time calling themselves Christians who would commit the same excesses which have blackened the pages of mediæval history, were it not for the finer feeling and good sense of the common, work-a-day humanity."

"You are very wrong, you are very wrong, my son," said Dr. Head. "I trust that your spirit may yet see the light. I wanted to offer you a home in my house, and a scholarship in the theological school; and possibly I might have had influence enough to get you a church when you had graduated. But the soil is not ready for the seed. Good-morning."

When the reverend gentleman had left him, Robert pressed his hand upon his head in his perplexity.

"What shall I do? I cannot teach an ordinary school; I cannot even drive a horse and wagon; for that matter I cannot plough the field over there. It does not require a thimbleful of brains to do any of these things, except to teach; but I cannot do them. Be a minister! Be indebted to Dr. Head for my education and my board! The idea is simply repulsive."

Robert's painful thoughts were soon interrupted by a commotion caused by some students gathered about a man on the grounds.

"Now, that's handsome," said one.

"That looks as much like Lord Byron as it does like old Head," said another. "See, Netherland, here is a small plaster cast of Lord Byron. It looks just like his picture doesn't."

"Would you like to look at them?" said the peddler in broken English.

"Why, I have heard your voice before," Robert answered.

"Will you feel of this?" the man answered evasively.

It was a little cherub.

"I heard your voice last in Havana," said Robert.

"I saw you in Havana."

"I guess I'll take the little cherub home to Sally. How much is it?" asked Robert.

"Ten cents," replied the Italian.

As he gave him the money, Robert touched his hand.

"What long fingers you have," he said.

Other students bought casts; but Mr. Spiggins had seen the peddler in the distance, and made great haste to drive him off.

"Go along with you. We don't allow peddlers and tramps on these grounds," he said.

Saracci picked up his basket and moved along.

"It's 'go along with you' everywhere there is a chance to make any money," he muttered vindictively.

CHAPTER XXII

"I AM MRS. BISCUIT; SO I HAVE COME TO TAKE YOU HOME"

In spite of Robert Netherland's newly acquired knowledge, for the want of something better he again sought employment with Messrs. Wilson & Fox in New York.

It was with a desolate and lonely heart that he returned to his former occupation of buying and sorting tobacco.

The hours dragged monotonously for the sightless young man. The more so because his ambitions were greater; but one day a telegram interrupted his tedious existence. It bade him return to his home, as the death of a near relative had been the means of improving his fortune to the extent of a few thousand dollars.

While his affairs were being settled for him, he became interested in the law; and determined for weal or woe to adopt the legal profession for his life's vocation.

Again he met discouragement from those around him; but when he returned to New York, Mr. Wilson, who had unbounded confidence in the young man's ability, strongly urged him to keep to his resolve, adding that the Harvard Law School in Boston was the place for the young man.

With his usual kindly forethought, Robert's former employer at once remembered an acquaintance in Boston, who, while not well off in this world's goods, would give the blind young man kind care, so wrote at once and completed arrangements for Robert to board in the family of Mr. and Mrs. Biscuit; so the blind law-student started upon his journey to Boston, which seemed long to him.

His loss of sight peculiarly isolated him, as he could not enter easily into conversation with those around him.

"I shall be glad to get there," he said to himself, as he curled up in the seat for a nap.

At last the train rolled into the Boston and Albany Station.

"Mr. Netherland ?" he heard a lady's voice in shrill but kindly inquiry.

Receiving an affirmative reply, she added, "I am Mrs. Biscuit; so I have come to take you home. I hope it will prove a homelike place to you."

"Thank you; it cannot fail to if you are at the head of the house," said Robert rather gallantly.

After they were comfortably seated in a street-car, the little lady went on to say, "I hope you will get your sight while you are in Boston. I had a pain in my foot for ten years, which was cured by a metaphysical healer, and my husband had dyspepsia, and used to be so cross that I could hardly live with him. He ate and drank nothing but dry bread and sour milk for two years, and then he was led to believe in the glorious teaching of Metaphysical Science. Now he enjoys a plate of beans, and fishballs and eggs, and a doughnut, for a Sunday morning breakfast as well as I do; and he will eat a boiled dinner too, and enjoy it, and it does not hurt him. Mr. Biscuit will be at home when we get there."

"How do you do, Mr. Netherland?" said Mr. Biscuit, meeting them at the door. "I am glad to welcome you to my humble abode. We will make you as comfortable as we can. It is too bad that you suffer from the delusion of believing that you are blind. You are a child of God. God is omnipotent and omniscient, and all things are the manifestations of his Spirit. Now, as God is perfect, and as your spirit comes from the Spirit of God, your spirit is perfect. Hence, as there is naught but spirit, you cannot be blind; for in spirit there is no blindness. Disease is merely a reflection of mortal thought," he emphatically repeated, as he helped Robert to take off his overcoat. Continuing, he said, "Boston is a city of progress and culture, and disease is vanishing before the advancement of knowledge. The only knowledge, sir, that is worth having, is spiritual knowledge. There is nothing but spirit. Have a cup of tea?"

Mr. Biscuit kindly drew Robert's arm through his; and Mrs. Biscuit led the way to a basement dining-room, where they had a typical New England indigestible meal, consisting of tea, cold corned beef, and bread with apple sauce.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE COLLEGE OF FINE ARTS AND HIGH CULTURE

The years which had elapsed since the death of Farmer Block's wife had been crowded with events for both John Block and his daughter De'Ette.

Subsequent to the death of his wife he sold his farm, and betook himself and his daughter to Chicago, where he made money rapidly as a dealer in grain. His daughter was placed at school, and for a number of years her life was a routine one in many respects. But as she approached womanhood she gave evidences of a delicate constitution. The physician told Mr. Block that the climate of the sea-coast would be beneficial to her; and as Mr. Block had money enough to enable him to go into business anywhere, he decided to change his residence, and selected Boston for his future home.

Now, De'Ette had heard and read much of Boston.

Her whole life, in fact, had been a life of hearing and reading and seeing, the exercise of this latter faculty having been confined mainly to the prairie land which surrounded her father's home. Her stay in Chicago had taught her a good many things; but the young girl knew little of young life, hence she seemed a great deal older than she really was.

One fine autumn morning she found herself entering the Boston College of Fine Arts and High Culture, an institution stigmatized by its enemies as a large boarding-school for young ladies, with a music-box attached. The building fronted upon a beautiful open square, and had been used for a sanitarium, which, however, did not prove a success; it was sold, therefore, to the trustees of the College of Fine Arts and High Culture.

The building seemed to De'Ette very large and elegant. The long corridors filled with bustling humanity, with the sound of musical instruments heard in every direction, seemed like a new world to this simple Western girl. The college had a large and very miscellaneous corps of teachers, among whom were Germans, Italians, Frenchmen, and Americans, as well as those who possessed a distinctly Hebrew cast of countenance. This college was very complete in its appointments; and the students could here purchase books and music, shoebuttons, thread, and chewing-gum, the latter a privilege that many of them seemed to enjoy very much.

De'Ette was very desirous of learning to play the violin. She looked down the list of instructors in the catalogue. The queer foreign names caught her eye, and she found her lips moving involuntarily as she tried to pronounce them. She was at this time standing in a large reception room with about forty other pupils, and the remarkable appearance of some of them soon called her attention away from the catalogue. There were maiden ladies of about forty years, — some were even older; there were dissipated-looking young women who had indulged in late hours and much rouge. She noticed insipid-appearing young men with music-rolls in their hands, many of whom had on gayly colored neckties. Some, like herself, were honest students, earnestly desiring to obtain knowledge. Everybody was talking about his or her capacity. One simpering woman of uncertain age said that she was waiting for Professor Moriarty to try her voice, while another was waiting for an instructor on the piano. All were restless except De'Ette. She looked around her with great curiosity. There was a statue of Beethoven, with his long white hair; and in one corner of the room hung a picture of Bach, whose stern face rather pleased De'Ette.

A young man who had been watching her for some minutes made up his mind that he liked her looks, and that he would try to strike up an acquaintance, so bade her "Good-morning."

De'Ette was not shy, mainly because of her purity and innocence. She was also fearless. Returning the salutation, she looked at the young man frankly. He had on a pair of green goggles; in his left hand he carried a violin case, in his right a small cane. He wore a flaming red necktie. His chin was remarkably conspicuous by its absence. His mouth was exceedingly small, and his voice sounded when he spoke as though he had been half choked the greater part of his life. His nose was distinctly of the Jewish type.

"Going to take violin lessons?" he asked, and without waiting for a reply added, "I am going to take lessons of Mr. Chymosky. I am from Louisville, Kentucky. When I have been here a year I guess I can play as well as any of them. I can play nearly as well now. I have taken lessons for four years on the violin, and learned to play the French harp before I was six years old. I have written two songs. Will you believe it, fifty copies of one of them have been sold in four years?"

De'Ette was amused by her new acquaintance. At the same time there was something intensely repulsive about him. At this moment an odd-looking man came up, and spoke to her companion. He was very tall, and looked as though he did not have three pounds of flesh on his bones. His fingers were very long, and the skin seemed exceedingly loose upon his bony hands.

"Hello, Thresher!" he said; "when did you get here?"

"Hello, Palmetto!" Thresher answered; "I got here this morning."

Mr. Palmetto turned to De'Ette, made a low bow, and asked Mr. Thresher for an introduction. Now, as Mr. Thresher did not know the name of the young lady to whom he had been talking, he naturally could not comply with the request, so he proceeded to introduce himself.

"My name is Thresher," he said; "and this is my friend Mr. Palmetto, who recommended this place to me. As we are all to be fellow-students here, tell me your name."

De'Ette complied, and immediately walked away, leaving the two men looking blankly after her as she went down the hall.

Mr. Palmetto remarked, "Rather an independent girl."

Just then they were joined by a third man, who was about as tall as Mr. Palmetto, but looked much healthier.

"Hello!" he said; "what do you suppose it is going to cost a man to live in Boston and study music a year?"

Mr. Palmetto had studied music several years in Boston; but as he labored under the disadvantage of having a very bad digestion, his diet was necessarily simple, so he found living inexpensive. Mr. Thresher had no idea of the expense of living in a great city, and the third person evidently had no idea of what it would cost to live anywhere. Eminent musicians are proverbially poor the world over. The stories of poverty and suffering endured by the great composers have played upon the sympathies of many a lover of music after these composers were dead, and were beyond the need of sympathy or ready cash; but these three young men were no geniuses languishing from the neglect of an unappreciative world. They represented a type of students which cannot be produced by any other country than the land of the Stars and Stripes. They possessed but little talent for music, and much less for anything else. Brought up principally on farms in the South and West, and too lazy to work, they fancied that by coming to Boston they would find an easy method of learning how to obtain a living without hard labor. They were under the impression that in the "Hub of the Universe" there were methods of instruction which would make great pianists, great violinists, great singers, in a short space of time, with but little outlay of money, and less work.

Professor Highwrist was all the rage at the college at this time. He had been studying in Germany a number of years. He had acquired the latest ideas of the proper position of the hands upon the piano. He gave instruction at a fabulous price; and whether a pupil played well or played poorly, when they came to him their technique was invariably pronounced "abominable." He held his own hands very peculiarly indeed, so said the critics in the Boston daily newspapers. Others even dared to intimate that his touch was woodeny; but critics are all bad, and professional pianists are all good, at least in their own estimation.

There were many in the faculty who were jealous of Professor Highwrist, and they said his method of playing the piano was no method at all. In fact, every teacher had his own method. There was one professor, however, who dared to assert that musical talent was necessary, and that no method would make a pianist without a large amount of intelligent practice. He came near to being mobbed on the morning of which we are now writing by many irate students and some members of the faculty for his ridiculous assertions. When the board of trustees heard of it, they immediately requested his resignation.

If there was war among the piano-teachers as to which was the best method of holding the hands while playing, there was a struggle to the death between the instructors of the voice. Professor Ablebabble from Maine, who could not, and never had been able to, sing a note, insisted that one could never learn to sing without at first closing the mouth and running up the scale, emitting the tones through the nose. This instructor had once looked at a work upon the anatomy of the throat, and from it he had gained an inspiration. He claimed that all voices must be produced out of the throat; and, as the nose is above the throat, he argued that by singing through this organ the throat would be entirely relaxed, and head tones would be produced. He declared that when singing, the vowel "o" should always terminate in "oo." He was a very popular instructor, and there were many who were jealous of him.

Some pupils were singing "base, ball, bat, base. ball, bat," all day long. Others shrieked "ah-ba, ah-ba, ah-ba," while others shrieked "i-oo, i-oo," until the noises heard in the vocal department in the college resembled those heard in the violent ward of an insane asylum.

Messrs. Palmetto, Thresher, and Ham all adjourned to the lodging-house of Mr. Palmetto. They had paid for a part of their tuition, and had gone in debt for the rest. Passing out of the college, they turned to the right, and went down a long street, and ascended the stone steps of a house which had once been an elegant residence. It was now used for a lodging-house of a somewhat questionable character.

Mr. Palmetto introduced his friends to the landlady; and, in response to the inquiry if she had any more rooms, she informed them that her back attic was empty. Mr. Palmetto occupied the front one. They went up five flights of stairs, — and long flights they seemed too. The fat landlady opened the door, and showed Mr. Thresher and Mr. Ham her room. It was one of those attic rooms to which a sloping roof and a short window give a singularly dismal effect.

The paper on the walls was soiled; and the pattern, consisting of big red roses against a dark background, added to the grotesqueness of the room. The carpet was the most remarkable thing in the room, which contained but little else. It was composed of three different strips. A long strip with a green ground was under the one window. The middle of the room was covered with a square piece of an uncertain dirty red color. Near the centre of this piece of red carpet was a large black spot, which was not put there by the designer, but was the result of an overturned ink-bottle. The strip of carpet leading from the central piece to the door was comparatively new, and was gayly colored. Near one corner of the room there was a hole in the wall about the size of a man's head, designed originally for the passage of a stovepipe. There was a rickety bedstead, which contained a mattress so flat and thin that it suggested to an observer the idea that an elephant might have at some time sat upon it. In fact, so little hair was there in it, that a lodger once asked the good landlady if she had not made it from an old wig. The only two chairs in the room were rockers, grown somewhat old and fussy with age.

The two gentlemen seated themselves in these by request; and when they began to rock, the shrieks and groans of the chairs reminded Mr. Thresher of the sounds he had heard that morning in the vocal department of the college while the pupils were exercising their voices. The gentlemen agreed upon a price for the room; and Mr. Palmetto then invited them to go into his room, which smelled strongly of kerosene. This room, which very much resembled the other, was Mr. Palmetto's kitchen, dining-room, sitting-room, and bedroom. He cooked most of his meals upon the kerosene stove which stood in one corner. He washed his dishes in the bathroom one flight below. His meals were frugal, for he suffered with chronic catarrh of the stomach; and no matter what he ate the larger portion of it was subsequently regurgitated, as Mr. Palmetto would proudly explain to his friends and to every physician he happened to meet. Mr. Palmetto had been to Germany, and to China too, for that matter. He had made his living by giving a few lessons upon the piano. No one ever heard him play, but he knew the different methods of all the great instructors. He could teach pupils to play with their wrists up, or with their wrists down, with the fingers curved or straight, or with the knuckles elevated, or with the knuckles depressed; and as he seldom or never practised, these various technical methods did not confuse his style of piano-playing. He invited his guests to have a cup of coffee. After lighting the kerosene stove, he opened a closet in one corner of the room, and took out a tin can. He raised his window, and took in a box which had been previously precariously lodged on the window-sill outside; and from this he took a half-loaf of bread, some butter, and a few dishes, which did not look too clean. Having heated some water, he made some coffee. He opened a trunk, and fished out a tumbler, a coffee-cup, and a tin dipper which had lost its handle. He filled these with the delicious beverage, and opened the tin can, which contained some cooked tomato; he then buttered the bread with his pocket-knife, and summoned the gentlemen to their sumptuous repast; and they discussed Beethoven, Bach, Schumann, and Mendelssohn with their meal.

CHAPTER XXIV

DE'ETTE FINDS BOSTON INTERESTING, AND LEARNS MANY THINGS

When De'Ette left her newly formed acquaintances in the parlor of the College of Fine Arts and High Culture, she went down to the other end of the building. On each side of the hallway were long lines of young women sitting upon upholstered settees, and a few young men were mingled among them. They held a variety of musical instruments and strange-looking packages, and were, each in their turn, being assigned to classes. A bald-headed gentleman would put his head out of a door and call, "Next," after the manner of a barber when he has finished with a customer, and is ready for another.

Feeling a touch upon her arm, De'Ette turned, and saw a queer-looking little woman about twenty-six years of age. Her face was as round as an apple; her hair was cut close, and was of an uncertain yellow. Her eyes were very small, and were almost expressionless. The little creature was stout, and De'Ette observed with much astonishment that she wore a bifurcated garment which was a curious burlesque upon a man's trousers. Her feet, which were large, were encased in a pair of shoes made of stout leather, which De'Ette noticed were not very clean; and the whole person of the woman, without being exactly uncleanly, gave De'Ette the impression of a want of tidiness. The little lady held in her hand a bundle of papers.

"What is your name?" she asked De'Ette; and, without waiting for a reply, said, "My name is Mabel Cracylight. I am an authoress. You doubtless have read several of my books. My latest, 'How a Woman Should Dress in Order to Live a Thousand Years,' is making a great sensation in the fashionable world. I am to study elocution, preparatory to giving a course of lectures;" and De'Ette wondered if she were to lecture in that costume.

"Next," shouted the bald-headed little gentleman;

and, as it was De'Ette's turn, she was ushered into a large room elegantly and substantially furnished in oak and leather. The floor was highly polished, and De'Ette noticed a gayly colored rug in the centre of it. She also noticed a door at the farther end of the room. The bald-headed little gentleman was the "director of the college," as he called himself. He started in life as a musician. He founded the "School of Fine Arts and High Culture;" and as he was a successful advertiser, his school rapidly grew into an enormous "college," as he was pleased to term it. He was a man who never forgot anybody. He spoke unkindly to no one, and he did speak kindly to a great many. De'Ette was a little afraid of so great a personage, but one glance at his face dispelled all her fears. Words cannot convey the impression his face made upon her. The first thing she noticed was his small mustache, the next was his kindly blue eyes, then his immaculate toilet, and then his polished head, which shone like ivory. Before De'Ette hardly realized what he was doing, he took from her hand a card which had been given her at the desk.

"Miss De'Ette Block, I am glad to see you," he said. He had said the same thing to about two hundred young ladies that morning, and in truth he looked what he said. Such a smile as he gave her! It was complacent, a little patronizing, affectionate, and fatherly. When he spoke, his tenor voice was silvery and sweet. His soft, effeminate, velvety hands were exquisitely formed, and in keeping with the rest of his personality.

"You wish to study the violin?" he said. "Are you going to make your home with us in the building? I hope so; for we try to keep a parental oversight of the pupils who board in the house. You know in a great city like Boston there are many temptations for the young, and we cannot so well look after the pupils who board outside." He added, "We only take young ladies in the building."

He was a man who could read human nature readily; and he learned from De'Ette's sweet, pure, simple face that he was dealing with a character with whom plain, direct methods would be best. The director had no difficulty in estimating the intellectual and social status of his pupils. He thought that Miss De'Ette could probably play only indifferently well; and in this, as in most other things, he was correct.

She took her violin from the case, tuned it, and played a simple selection very simply to him.

"Class B," he said to a stenographer, whom De'Ette noticed for the first time.

"De'Ette Block," he said again; and De'Ette was handed a schedule of her lessons. "French and drawing as well?" he said, looking again at her card which she held in her hand. De'Ette assented; and the bald-headed little gentleman led her to the door, and called sweetly, "Next;" and De'Ette's little friend, Miss Cracylight, passed in by her through the great door.

De'Ette sat down again in the corridor to wait for her father, who had promised to meet her. She took little note of the passing of time as she carefully scanned the faces of those around her. Had De'Ette been older, and could she have understood the peculiar influences at work in the great body politic of these United States, she would have found her study even more interesting than it was to her. The constantly moving throng, with its ever-varying types of face, showed how unsettled, how cosmopolitan, are the individuals evolved by this American civilization. Ninety per cent of the throng of students were from the West and South. There were among them many refined faces. There were many which were the reverse. Most of the women were gaudily and vulgarly dressed. The majority were exceedingly self-conscious, and their accents were affected in the extreme. Now and then a mischievous, girlish face would appear; then a sour-looking woman of about forty; and occasionally a refined, sensitive, artistic-looking girl would be seen. A young lady had just passed De'Ette, and entered the room of the director; and De'Ette heard the tones of a piano rise above the din of all the rest of the noise and babble. The music stirred the depths of her being as the rich chords of the Liszt transcription of the Tannhäuser march came forth clear and melodious. It seemed to De'Ette that heroes of the past were marching in armed ranks before her. In fancy she was transported to a different age. The martial strains intermingled with chords of pathos stirred her profoundly; and then the notes ceased, and the young lady who had so edified De'Ette with her music came forth. Her eyes met De'Ette's, and she stopped and scanned her carefully for a moment. The other frankly returned her gaze; then she came and sat down beside her, and De'Ette asked, "Was that you playing?"

"Yes, for the director," was the answer.

"I never heard such sweet music," said De'Ette.

"And I never saw such a sweet face as yours," answered the girl. The tones of her voice were as soft and pathetic as the minor strains of the great Tannhäuser march. De'Ette and her companion knew that each had found a friend. How? By voice or by look? No. Those two girls, one from Texas, one from Illinois, knew by that curious instinct which is sometimes mistaken for love, that each had found a kindred spirit; and they sat a few moments in silence.

"Where are you going to stay?" asked De'Ette.

"Why, here," she said.

"I meant where are you going to board?" again inquired De'Ette.

"Oh, not in the building," her companion answered; and then they recited to one another their ambitions and desires; and they decided that they would live together out of the college, for De'Ette wished, if possible, to make a home for her father and herself while she studied. Her new friend, Frieda Graham, desired to live in the same house with her, so that they might, in a measure, pursue their studies together.

Mr. Block was seen at this moment coming down the hall. He looked painfully embarrassed as he tried to pick his way; and avoid collisions with the bustling throng of young ladies who would keep neither to the right nor to the left. De'Ette and Frieda went together to meet him, and he was soon extricated from the entangling throng. Frieda was introduced as the three left the building; and after a brief discussion, a place of future meeting was appointed. It had been agreed that Frieda, De'Ette, and her father should occupy the same house.

De'Ette and her father went to their hotel; and after luncheon Mr. Block concluded to find the home of his sister, and arrange some plans for the future. The house was easily found. After an undemonstrative and yet affectionate greeting from his sister, Mr. Block explained the situation. She at once proposed that they should all take a flat and live together; for, she argued, and not unwisely, that a boarding-house was no place for De'Ette. Her own means were limited. She had taught school, and had managed a millinery shop, and had made dresses, and in all of these occupations had accumulated a little money. She wished very much to see her niece, and accompanied her brother back to the hotel.

De'Ette instinctively disliked her aunt, whom she had never met before, although there was no apparent reason for such a feeling. She was five or six years older than De'Ette's father, and was one of those individuals who look exactly like thousands of others, and was one of those women who frequently make a component part of a throng without adding anything characteristic to it. She was practical and reticent.

De'Ette and her aunt went house-hunting that afternoon, and as they were in search of a suite or a flat, did not pry into the mysteries of the boarding-house. Up and down flight after flight of stairs they climbed, and walked through many series of connecting rooms. Some could be had furnished, others with carpets and window-shades, and some entirely unfurnished. At last they found a suite on Columbus Avenue which suited them. The rooms were sunny; and there was room enough for all, — De'Ette, her father, her aunt, and Frieda.

Each new experience in life is interesting to a young girl, and De'Ette found her life full of interesting experiences. They were soon comfortably situated, and De'Ette was ready to begin her studies. The week had gone rapidly, and it was now Sunday morning. Aunt Mercy wanted De'Ette to go to church; and, as

De'Ette was willing to go anywhere, she accompanied her. Aunt Mercy was a member of Mr. Learney's church, which, by the way, was one of the finest edifices of its kind in the Back Bay. They walked to Huntington Avenue, and, turning up a side street, soon found themselves within the portal of the sanctuary. As they did not own a pew, they were among those who had to remain standing until the regular proprietors were seated; but as the organ began, a polite usher showed them inside to a seat. De'Ette noticed in front of them an elderly looking gentleman, a very dark young lady, and a very light young man. The young man observed her as she came down the aisle, looking at her with impudent curiosity not unmixed with admiration. De'Ette did not mind his gaze at first; but it soon became annoying, as her face probably showed. He removed his eyes from her face just as the minister ascended the pulpit steps. De'Ette did not usually take profound interest in religious services; but there was something in the countenance of this minister which attracted her, or rather which interested her. She saw in the dim light which came through the stained-glass windows a man with a high forehead, deep-set eyes, straight nose, and a heavy mustache. He was above medium height. Looking more closely, De'Ette saw that the effect of the very high forehead was caused partly by the front of his head being bald. The usual church service preliminary to the sermon had been read. The preacher began to speak without taking any text from the Bible; instead, he read a passage from one of the writings of Professor Wallace.

This interested De'Ette, and held her attention. The minister said that the only revelation of which he was sure was through nature. He stated that he did not believe God had spoken through chosen prophets in any single age, but instead was ever speaking through all the ages by revealing his wonderful natural laws to those whom evolution had made ready to understand them. De'Ette was indeed surprised. She could not understand a minister who did not preach from the Bible. She wondered who the fortunate ones were that were made ready by evolution to comprehend the Word of God. She was not familiar with the doctrine of evolution as it is now taught. Her attention wandered for some minutes from what the minister was saying, as she studied the faces of those around her; but again and again the word evolution forced itself upon her consciousness, while the young man in front cast furtive glances at her as often as he dared. De'Ette was wondering about the value of some large solitaire diamond earrings worn by a big woman some distance in front of her, when her attention was attracted by the utterances of the minister. He declared that blind faith stood in the way of human progress; that reason should be triumphant in the human brain;

and in the next breath he began to demonstrate how the faculty of reasoning was developed from the crude instincts of the primordial ape. The sermon was soon over, for Mr. Learney believed in short sermons; and then followed a strange prayer, which called upon God to guide and watch over his children; and De'Ette wondered how a God who had never revealed himself could be expected to exercise such a guardianship over them. After the benediction, the organ sounded again, and De'Ette was walking down the aisle with the blond young man just in front of her.

He stopped so suddenly that De'Ette nearly trod upon his heels.

"Why, Miss Cracylight!" he exclaimed.

"Why, Mr. Steele! Dear me, how good it is of you to speak to me to-day! Are you going to attend the meeting of the Christian Scientists this afternoon?" And before he had time to reply, Miss Cracylight, officious little body, recognized De'Ette, and turning, called her by name, and greeted her effusively.

They were blocking up the aisle; and Mr. Steele the elder suggested very mildly that they would be less in the way out-of-doors, as others wished to get out; and with that suggestion the party moved on. Young Mr. Steele asked for an introduction to De'Ette. Miss Cracylight was always glad to introduce anybody to anybody. Everybody was her friend, no matter whether she had known them one year, one month, or one day. She had met the Steele family for the first time that summer, but felt as though she knew them well; and it gave her great pleasure to introduce Miss Thankful, and she also presented the elder Mr. Steele. He had not lost his fondness for young ladies, and received her graciously. She then introduced Lorenzo.

De'Ette did not like the party. She felt a peculiar antagonism to Miss Thankful Steele. Those snaky black eyes had in them no kindly light; and the dark, sallow, muddy face wore perpetually a fretful, false, discontented expression. Aunt Mercy thought Mr. Steele was such a beautiful man; and how lovely his son was; and what a pretty girl was Miss Thankful. The young man addressed some remark to De'Ette, which she did not catch. He asked permission to call. Aunt Mercy readily granted it before De'Ette had time to answer.

"Come, Lorenzo," said Mr. Steele to his son; "we must get home; we must tear ourselves away." And as the carriage had driven up, Mr. Steele and the other members of the family got in. De'Ette pondered over all she had heard. She was too young and too inexperienced to understand much of it; so she began questioning her aunt on the way home as to what the minister meant by all that he had said.

Now, Aunt Mercy was one of those people who always enjoy a sermon; and she particularly enjoyed

Mr. Learney's sermons, and insisted that he was the "dearest man alive." She told De'Ette that he was "*just beautiful*."

"But that does not answer my question," said De'Ette. "What is evolution, aunty? And doesn't Mr. Learney believe in the prophets and in the Bible?"

"Oh, dear, dear, yes; dear me, oh, yes; I think so. Whatever he says is all right, anyway; you may be sure of that."

That Sunday and many more like it passed, and De'Ette learned at the College of Fine Arts and High Culture a good many things besides the branches she went there to study.

CHAPTER XXV

"SHALL I EVER HEAR THAT VOICE AGAIN?"

The faculty of the Harvard Law School treated the young blind student much as they would any other student; and after procuring a reader, Robert again settled himself to the monotony of hard, laborious study. He was, however, diversifying it by making a number of interesting acquaintances; and at least three metaphysical healers were giving him silent treatment for his eyes, with the hope and promise of restoring his sight.

One evening Mr. Biscuit was reading the paper. He had read the foreign despatches, the local and suburban news, an extract from one of Mr. Learney's sermons upon the "Social Evolution of the Race," and many other things of interest, when the remarkable heading of one advertisement caught his eye: —

PROFESSOR WONDER,

THE WORLD-RENOWNED MAGICIAN,
WILL DO THE IMPOSSIBLE AT THE BOSTON THEATRE
THIS EVENING, AT EIGHT O'CLOCK.

Blindfolded people will read and see. Pianos will float in the air. Heads of living men will be amputated in the cervical region, and readjusted without harm to their owners. Reserved seats, $1.50.

"What do you suppose he will do?" asked Robert.

"Why, the most wonderful things," said Mr. Biscuit. "He will swallow fire, take canary-birds out of your sleeves, roast a piece of beef in a man's silk hat without hurting it; he will float in the air, and cut off a man's head and put it back, and read the newspaper blindfolded."

"I'd like to go. Will you come with me, Mr. Biscuit?"

Mr. Biscuit said he would, as Mrs. Biscuit had gone to prayer-meeting; and putting on their heavy coats, they wrapped up their necks, and braved the chill of an early autumn evening.

Robert did not find much interest in the performance until the experiment of reading blindfolded was reached. A woman was blindfolded, and her back turned to the audience. Articles were held up which the woman accurately described. Figures were made on a blackboard placed some distance back of her, and she added the columns correctly. Then she played some music upon the piano as it was written on the blackboard. Robert was not familiar with the cunning of the prestidigitator.

"I wish I could learn to do that," he remarked to Mr. Biscuit.

"Marvellous, marvellous, even miraculous," said Mr. Biscuit. "She is one of the fifth-race women." Robert had never heard of a "fifth-race woman."

"Then you are ignorant of theosophy?" Robert sorrowfully confessed he had never heard of it.

"You have never had any of Madame Blavatsky's writings read to you?"

"I never heard of her."

"Dear me, dear me, how sad!" said Mr. Biscuit. "Poor boy, you may be a reincarnation of Homer, or of Julius Caesar, or an Indian chief, or all of them."

"A reincarnation? Why, what do you mean?" asked Robert in amazement as they left the theatre.

Mr. Biscuit talked about it all the way home, using strange, high-sounding terms which he had learned from the writings of Madame Blavatsky. "There are the first-race men and women and second-race men and women. One person may go through eight hundred reincarnations."

Robert wondered why he stopped at eight hundred, rather than at eight hundred thousand, or any other large number.

"I tell you, sir," explained Mr. Biscuit, "life is one eternal cycle. It begins its ascent at the lowest point of vegetable life; then, by successive steps, it ascends the biological scale, and emerges into active, conscious existence. At first this consciousness is elementary, then the knowledge of the universe expands, until perfect man is again absorbed in God's eternal infinity. Thousands and millions of years it may take to make the ascent. Then the soul is called from Karma, and repeats the cycle, ascending yet higher in the ultimate Divinity."

Robert went to bed that night, but not to sleep. "Oh, I would that I could get one look at this world, if only for one minute. I should like to see the sun as it sinks in a flood of gold, or the clouds of which I have read. They say that many of them are white and fleecy, and float through the sky. I have lost something, and I cannot make it up."

He got up, and felt of the hands of his silver watch; it was two o'clock. "I might sit here, and but for the sounds which I hear, a day and night might go by. Oh, I wish I could see the morning light! I wish I could know what it is to see with my eyes just once!"

The room was pitchy dark, but the darkness did not trouble him as he walked back and forth.

"How was it done? How did she read the paper blindfolded? If she could do it, I do not see why I cannot. Is it all a trick? Is there such a thing as spirit, anyway? If there is a spirit, can it see without bodily eyes?"

He was familiar with the teachings of Darwin; and, in a way, he believed that man had been evolved from a lower animal plane.

"Knowledge may be boundless; space is illimitable," he thought. "May not the time come when by some discovery the blind will see and the deaf hear?" he said aloud. There was a rap upon his door.

"Are you ill?" inquired a voice kindly. Robert was ill, but he scarcely realized it. His head ached, but he had not thought of it.

"I hope I did not disturb you," he said.

"Oh, dear, no," said Mr. Biscuit, as he opened the door and came in.

"You are all alone here in the dark. Why in the world didn't you light the gas? That's so; you don't need it, do you?"

"No," said Robert, "I do not need it; I do not even know where it is in the room."

"By Jove!" exclaimed the man, "do you know that my wife has been giving you silent treatment for your eyes?"

"She told me so."

"Why won't you believe?"

"I will, if she does me any good; but I cannot believe as you do unless I have sufficient evidence."

"Why, there is no such thing as evidence. Rise above this darkness of mortal thought, and you will see," said Mr. Biscuit.

"I do not know the way to rise above this mortal thought. I would gladly know the light of day."

"Then you have never seen?" asked Mr. Biscuit kindly.

"I have no memory of having seen."

"Now go to bed, old fellow, or you will catch cold," said Mr. Biscuit, his good sense contradicting his metaphysical philosophy. Robert noticed it, but did not say anything.

"It is no use to argue," he said to himself as he crept under the blankets. "It is all a delusion. My body is too palpable, too real, to be ignored."

He fell into a half sleep and dreamed. But there was no light in his dreams either. He lost his way, and wandered in a strange city, feeling his way as he went. The cold wind blew. He awoke, and found that he had uncovered himself. "If there is no matter, why should I not see in my dreams?" he asked, and fell asleep again. He heard a voice in his dream, and a strange, sweet voice it was; but when he awoke he could neither remember the voice nor what it had said to him.

Winter was reluctant to go that year in New England; and though March had blown itself away, April still wept at the chill air.

One day Robert was walking down Washington Street alone. Teams rushed by, people hurried, and occasionally jostled him. "Is this the realization of my dream?" he said.

Some one passed him, and he heard a voice. There were two ladies. One said, "Miss De'Ette, did you enjoy the concert?" and a sweet voice said, "Yes," and was lost in the din.

There on the busy street the doubly distilled liquid music of the tones which Robert heard came like a flood of sunshine to his lonely, weary spirit.

"I heard those tones in my dream," he mused, as he felt his way along slowly. "That voice was sweeter than all the music which has ever come from the minds of the great composers."

The rumble of the wheels in the street was lost. The difficulties of motion, too, were forgotten by the blind young man, as the tones expanded and broadened, and filled every nook and cranny of his consciousness.

"Shall I ever hear that voice again?" he mused. "Was it only a fancy? and the name De'Ette."

And as the lectures of the Law School came one by one, that one sweet note from the stranger's voice rang in his mind, and soothed and cheered him, and bade him hope.

CHAPTER XXVI

ROBERT GRADUATES FROM THE HARVARD LAW SCHOOL

Our sightless hero's student life in Boston was made interesting, and its monotony varied, by the unusual ideas advanced by every new acquaintance he made.

Deprived of the sports with which young men ordinarily brighten their early lives, Robert Netherland sought in the companionship of those around him solace for his otherwise lonely condition. This loneliness was heightened by an illness which came upon him; and becoming disgusted with the Christian Scientists and metaphysical healers by whom he was surrounded, he implored Mr. Biscuit to take him to a regular practitioner.

Now, Mr. Biscuit regarded Dr. Sneakleaf as the very embodiment of carnal knowledge, so he said, "If you must be earthly, I will take you to the most spiritual of earthly doctors;" and Dr. Sneakleaf was straightway consulted. This medical faddist was nevertheless an educated man, and took his blind patient to a competent oculist, who relieved the acute suffering, and the doctor became forthwith a warm friend of Robert

Netherland. The students at the Harvard Law School were, in a way, kind, and with reading and work he found himself again upon the eve of graduating, and this time from one of the greatest institutions of its class in the United States. And yet this glorious achievement was scarcely known outside of his very small immediate circle of acquaintances. Standing one day upon the steps of the Law School building, Robert was inquiring of Mr. Biscuit, his kind landlord, as to the best location for an office, bearing in mind, he said, "my very slender means."

Mr. Biscuit replied, "Oh, means are a small matter in this world; flesh is naught; all is spirit. But I will take you to Mr. House, my friend, who will let you an office reasonably."

Therefore Robert called upon Mr. House with Mr. Biscuit the day before his graduation, and found him a pleasant man, with a voice full of kindliness. "I have just the office you want," he said, "and at a reasonable rate too. Come over with me and see it."

As they went out of the door they met Dr. Sneakleaf.

"Hello," he said, "I am glad to see you," taking Robert by the hand. "Have you heard of Professor Vandiere? He is the greatest man on earth, or in the skies either for that matter. He knows the secret of life, and plays with magnetism and electricity as a child plays with its toys. Now, I want you to come to my house to-morrow evening, and we will go over to the house of a friend to meet him, where I shall not be interrupted by the door-bell. Do not forget the engagement; I have more than I can attend to. Good-by."

Mr. House let Robert a cosey office, which the young lawyer thought would be just large enough.

"So you graduate to-morrow," said Mr. House, when their business was completed. "I wish you well, and I think you will do well. There goes your car."

At last the day of graduation came, and the blind young man who had struggled so hard had become a lawyer. "Another diploma," he said, as he held a roll of parchment in his hand.

Dr. Sneakleaf had attented the commencement exercises; and Mr. and Mrs. Biscuit, who were there, led Robert away after the ceremonies were over.

CHAPTER XXVII

SARACCI GROWS TROUBLESOME

Mr. Steele had acquired an enviable reputation for shrewdness. When a man gets the reputation of having one quality, it is easy for him to acquire the name of possessing the rest of those traits which form the character of a good and great man.

Tom Jones said to Bill Smith that Mr. Steele was a shrewd man; Smith told his wife that Mr. Steele was a smart man, and Mrs. Smith told the parson that he was a good man; so the parson said to his next door neighbor that he was a good and great man. Elisha Steele paid taxes on seven million dollars' worth of property. Most of it was in real estate; over a million of it, however, was invested in stocks, bonds, mortgages, etc. If Mr. Steele was plethoric of purse, he was more so of body. His face was now habitually red. Entering his office one morning he took up the morning paper, and looking down the different columns, he noticed the announcement of his daughter's engagement to Mr. Gilbraith.

"Going to make a good thing out of that," he said aloud unconsciously.

"Out of the engagement?" asked a man who was standing by him unobserved.

"Why, good-morning, Mr. Kennedy. You came in as still as a cat. I did not hear you."

"Congratulations," was Mr. Kennedy's abrupt answer.

"Oh, yes, thank you. By the way, though, we must get this thing a-moving. Now, here is this invention. You can take a little powder, and refine crude cane sugar at a mere fraction of the cost of the present process. It is labor-saving and time-saving, money-saving and money-getting."

"Oh," ejaculated Mr. Kennedy sceptically, "are you not a little enthusiastic over it?"

"I am never enthusiastic. I look coldly at everything. I am a man given to analysis. You know my daughter's 'intended' made this discovery."

"Well, I will help you sell the stock when it is on the market."

"The stock is all ready. The company was chartered under the laws of the State of Illinois. My son and myself went out to Chicago — and I left him out there, lazy fellow," he added.

"His father has energy and push enough for both," observed Mr. Kennedy.

"And my son evidently thinks I have money enough for both, and to spare."

A lady interrupted them by coming timidly into the office.

"Oh, good-morning, Mrs. Manson. Pray excuse me, Mr. Kennedy; I must attend to this lady, so come in again."

Mrs. Manson had very white hair, a remarkably young-looking face, and a mature, matronly figure clad entirely in black. Her complexion was clear, and her skin as sweet looking as a young girl's. She had large blue eyes. Her voice was kindly, but troubled, as she spoke to Mr. Steele.

"My husband is gone, you know," she said, "and I have no one of whom I can ask advice. My pastor said you knew more about business than any other man in Boston."

"Sit down, do sit down. Pardon me, I was so interested in your conversation I forgot my politeness."

The lady sat down and told her story. Alas! it was one which is too common in Boston. She had invested in stocks and securities West, and she had a little money in a New York concern, and a little money in a New Orleans enterprise. She had loaned some money on real estate in Alabama, and had an interest in a cattle ranch in Arizona. She owned some horses in Colorado, and some mining-stock in Idaho. All of this *promised* well, but the income was not forthcoming. Her husband had left her a hundred and forty thousand dollars well invested, but at a low rate of interest.

Mrs. Manson had two daughters; she wished to send them abroad. She had one son, whom she wished to send to college, and had often said to her bosom friends, "I want my boy to have as much as any of the fellows."

Mrs. Manson was fond of the seashore in early summer, of the mountains in late summer, and of the Bermudas in the winter; and it did delight her heart to go to Japan, and stop at Honolulu on her return.

Mrs. Howard and Mrs. Burnie told her one morning after they had attended a lecture on "Hoodooism," which lecture was delivered by a Hoodoo priest with a very black face and little intellect, that she ought to realize twice as much on her money. "Why, if you will only invest in the East and the North and the South, you will have twelve thousand dollars a year," they said, "instead of six."

She attended a lecture the next day upon the "Poetry to be Found in the Religion of the Digger Indians;" and after the lecture was over, Mrs. Burnie introduced Mrs. Manson to Miss Stick, a person who made her living in an unusual way. "Ladies' Stock Broker" was printed on the card which she handed to Mrs. Manson.

Miss Stick could supply her with any kind of good securities. She had no bad ones. After they had talked the whole matter over, while Miss Stick lunched, at Mrs. Manson's expense, at the Parker House, Mrs. Manson decided she would see a fortune-teller, and perhaps the fortune-teller could look into the future, and advise her what to do. In due time the fortune-teller lifted the mystic veil; and Mrs. Manson bought stocks and bonds and ranches, which, in the future, were expected to yield her great financial returns. The yield was still in the future, and poor Mrs. Manson was pressed for money.

"What shall I do? What shall I do?" she said to Mr. Steele after she had narrated her story, the tears streaming down her sweet and innocent face.

Mr. Steele was moved by tears whenever they came from a pretty woman's eyes. "Don't cry," he said; "dear madam, don't cry;" and took her hand.

"What a comfort you are, Mr. Steele. You will help me out some way, won't you?"

"I'll try. Bring your securities to me so that I can look at them, and I will then advise you what to do;" and Mr. Steele in a very fatherly way kissed the handsome widow before he opened his office door.

"Good-by," she said, blushing, and heaving a deep sigh as she entered the elevator.

The elevator took Mrs. Manson down, and brought Mr. Doolittle up; and Mr. Doolittle brought himself to Mr. Steele's office.

"Oh, ho, Doolittle, you are just the man I want."

"Why, I am the man everybody wants. My services are in constant demand. I advise more people in a day about more things than any other man in the city of Boston. Brains pay, I tell you, brains pay."

"Well, have you heard what I am about?" asked Mr. Steele.

"You are engaged in so many different enterprises, I really do not know to which one of them you refer?"

"The Sugar Refining Alkaloid, you know, and my daughter's engagement to the chemist who discovered it, and the amount of money there is in it."

"I hope your daughter may realize a good deal of money from her engagement," sarcastically remarked Mr. Doolittle.

"I want to see her well fixed," replied Mr. Steele, ignoring the sarcasm. "I want you to assist me in the organization of a stock company, with a paid-up capital of five hundred thousand dollars. The invention is worth three hundred thousand. We want two hundred thousand dollars in money."

"You want a great deal more than that."

"Oh, no, we don't; no, we don't. We do not want too many fingers in the pie."

Mr. Doolittle departed on his mission, and Mr. Steele resumed his reading.

"Good-morning," interrupted a voice in broken English.

"Oh, Saracci?"

"Yes," assented the Italian.

"Well, you're looking somewhat the worse for wear, Saracci."

"I do not understand you," said the Italian.

"You look as though you had been having a hard time, as though you had not been getting along very well."

"No," said Saracci; "I have not. I am poor. You are rich. You took my invention. I want some of the money you have — only a little of it."

Mr. Steele looked closely at him. "Take your hand from under your coat," he commanded sternly.

The Italian was startled.

"Now, look here, Saracci, if I owe you any money, I will pay it to you. If you are a beggar, I will give you some. I paid you what you asked for your invention; I did not ask you to take more nor less. You said you would sell it to me for three hundred dollars. You said you wanted to go back to Italy, so I gave you the three hundred dollars. Now, I did not steal your patent — and I keep *this* for just such rascals as you."

Mr. Steele took a large revolver out of a drawer in the desk. Saracci was not in the least disturbed. He cast his eyes down, and his face wore a very determined, dogged expression. Saracci was not a coward. Standing up against the wall, he said, "When I sold you the patent for three hundred dollars, I wanted money."

"Do you not want money now? I believe that was your request," replied Mr. Steele angrily.

"Yes; I want money now."

"And always did, and always will," added Mr. Steele.

Now, the circumstances of the trade which resulted in so great an advantage to Mr. Steele and so little to Saracci were these: Saracci wished to go back to Italy to follow a much-abused wife, who had run away from him because of his ill treatment. He was not the inventor of the hair-clipping machine, but had bought it for a mere trifle from a barber, who might have been an Indian, or a Chinaman, or anything else except a white man.

Saracci sought to place the patent; and not knowing its value, he thought three hundred dollars a large price for it. Some one, ever ready to spread discontent, gave him a fabulous idea of the amount of money which Mr. Steele had made by the transaction of the patent. Saracci had little moral sense and less honor. If one man made so much more money than another, Saracci thought he was the man to be killed. He had made three hundred dollars on his patent. Mr. Steele, by his shrewdness, had made nearly three hundred thousand dollars, and it was utterly incomprehensible to Saracci how this was done; and because he could not comprehend it, it was necessarily wrong. Mr. Steele had this money, and by an adroit cunning had robbed him of it, so Saracci thought.

Saracci knew his inferiority to Mr. Steele. Always a servant, he had been accustomed to a certain kind of generosity from the rich.

"How long do you expect to stand there?" asked Mr. Steele, getting rather tired of the man's presence.

"Till I am through," the Italian answered very quietly.

"Well, are you through now?"

"Not yet; will you hear me?"

"Be brief."

"You have made money; I have starved."

"I have worked; you have not."

"I am willing to work, but I want some play. You play all of the time."

"You fool!" said Mr. Steele. "The hardest work in the world is brain work; but as you have not much of that commodity, you cannot understand it."

"Won't you give me some money?" again asked Saracci. "It is mine."

"Take your hand out of your coat," commanded Mr. Steele, laying his hand on the revolver.

Saracci held up both hands, displaying long, wicked-looking fingers.

Mr. Steele felt instinctively that Saracci intended him no good. His clerks were out, so he rang the telephone, watching Saracci narrowly the meanwhile.

"Yes, yes. Send a man up here at once. I have work for him," he said in response to a voice from the telephone.

"Are you sending for a policeman?" Saracci asked.

"That is just what I am doing."

"That is the way with you rich men, you cowards," muttered Saracci. "You hire men who are worse than cur dogs to fight your battles for you."

"Come, come, come," said Mr. Steele angrily, "I have heard enough from you this morning. Take your hand out of your coat."

Saracci stood firmly, and showed no indications of going. "I will stay here until I am dragged out by the policeman. I wish I knew more of your language."

Mr Steele made him no reply. The door opened. "Good-morning," Mr. Steele said to his caller. "Sit down, please. I am waiting for an officer," looking significantly at Saracci. "I do not care to do any business until he has gone."

He did not have to wait long for the officer, for a powerfully built man soon came in dressed in policeman's uniform.

"Well, well, good-mornin'; it's a foine mornin' I'm wishin' yez."

"Take this man out, Mr. McGonigal," pointing to Saracci.

Officer McGonigal walked up to Saracci, and unbuttoned his coat, and drew from his inner pocket a wicked-looking knife. He held it up. Its edge was as sharp as a razor; it's blade was curved.

"It's a nate instrument," said the officer; "an' it's mesilf that'll sind it to the museum."

Saracci showed no indications of moving. "That man is a robber," he said, pointing to Mr. Steele; "he has robbed me."

"Well, faith, an' why don't yez go to coort, thin?" responded the bright officer.

"I have no money," said Saracci.

"Och! that has nothin' to do wid it. If any mon has been a-chatin' yez, the coort is the proper place. Come along wid you."

Saracci did not come. He wanted to say something, but he could not find words either in his own tongue or in the English language to express his sentiments.

Perhaps he wanted to say that there was a right higher than that which governs ordinary business transactions. A man of finer feeling than Mr. Steele might have done something for that wretch. What could be done for him? Give him food and drink — that was all. Such a man was from birth devoid of the finest moral sense. Was Mr. Steele any better? Saracci had been a brute to his wife. The only methods he understood were methods of force. Mr. Steele understood also methods of cunning. The latter had a bad temper, but knew how to control it. Saracci had a bad temper, and was vindictive withal.

Mr. Steele was, moreover, stubborn. If Saracci had used more tact in dealing with him, the capitalist would probably have given him a little money; but, as it was, the man's unreasonable demand was an insult to his common-sense.

Officer McGonigal was an expert. He had for two years served as an attendant in the violent ward of an insane asylum, and it was his boast that he could handle a man twice as large as himself. He weighed two hundred pounds.

Throwing one arm around Saracci's neck, bringing the forearm under his chin, he grasped him round the waist with the other; and as the Italian began to struggle, the officer merely increased the pressure on his throat, bending the prisoner's head back at the same time.

"I don't want to scuffle wid yez," said the officer, "and yez might as well understand it first as last."

The policeman's grip was steadily tightened, until Saracci cried out with pain. The grip still tightened.

"Now, faith, an' will yez coom along?" asked the policeman. "Ah, that's a mon."

Saracci hung his head on his breast, and slunk along with the officer.

CHAPTER XXVIII

A WEDDING AND A BURGLARY

"The house is topsy-turvy," was Mr. Steele's inward comment, as he looked at the bundles, packages, boxes, and bags which were to be seen everywhere; "and Thankful is to be married to-morrow. What an amount of stuff young people need to go to housekeeping nowadays. Why, there are dishes and glassware enough to fit up a china shop."

Though he grumbled, Mr. Steele was gratified; for his daughter's wedding-presents, which were constantly arriving, pleased his vanity. There were cut-glass and jewels and silver. There were knives and forks, big spoons and little spoons, and silver pitchers; in fact, everything that money could buy; for Mr. Steele had a large acquaintance, and most of his friends were wealthy.

"I am glad that all of 'em haven't marriageable daughters," he said jocosely to his butler; "it would take a lot of money to buy such presents, if I had to buy one in return for every one Thankful has received. Well, it ain't any such wedding as I had. Things have changed; things have changed."

Mr. Steele was sitting in the dining-room. He had breakfasted, and had consumed some oysters, some steak, a chop, two plates of hot cakes, and two cups of coffee. "Dr. Sneakleaf says I eat too much," he remarked confidentially to the servant who was clearing the table, "and perhaps I do; but there wouldn't be any fun in living if I couldn't eat."

The door-bell rang again, and there were more presents. "See, father, isn't this beautiful?" said Thankful, coming into the room. She held a pin in her hand, an exquisite design, all set with emeralds, rubies, and diamonds.

"It is awfully handsome," said Lorenzo. "I wish men could wear such things, don't you know."

"Why don't you get married?" Mr. Steele said to him.

"Oh, I couldn't get anybody to have me, don't you know," he responded.

"Oh, yes, you could. Now, if you would get married, I would do the handsome thing by you."

"What would the 'handsome thing' be?" asked Lorenzo, in the drawling tone that often exasperated his father.

"Oh, I would buy you a house, and give you an interest in my business."

"Why don't you give me an interest in your business now, father?"

"I have been thinking about it."

"I wish you'd do it."

"Would you go down to the office and work, if I did?"

"Oh, dear, I suppose so."

"Do you suppose that you could add up a column of figures?"

"Possibly one, if it were not too hard."

"Well, now, let's see," said Mr. Steele; "if you had twenty-five houses, and one of them brought fifteen dollars a month, another twenty dollars a month, and five of them fifty dollars a month, and each of the others a hundred dollars a month"—

"How many others would there be?" interrupted his hopeful son.

"Why didn't you set down what I gave you?"

"You talked too fast; writing always did tire my head, anyway."

"Yes, and thinking would tire it more," his father added sarcastically, as Lorenzo went to his room to recline and smoke. Mr. Steele went to his office, and returned in the evening. His foot was giving him much trouble.

"There is no place in the house for a sick man," he muttered.

Miss Thankful was tired. She told one of her friends that she thought she was born tired. She never felt rested. She was tired when she went to bed, and she was too tired to get up. All day she was tired. People tired her, reading tired her, and writing tired her too. Such an accumulation of presents tired her, and the thought of the approaching wedding tired her.

"Girls must marry," she told her mother.

"Oh, yes," was the reply; "it is quite the thing to do."

"I hope Henry won't keep house; servants are such a bother," commented the prospective bride.

Mrs. Steele had found them a bother. As Thankful mused, there were no dreams of a happy home in her mind. The future gave her no sweet promise. She was too selfish and lazy to make an effort great enough to enable her to enjoy what she had. She was really wearied by trying on her wedding-gown.

At last the hour arrived, and it required four maids to put on her bridal costume. It seemed as if she were in a dream as she walked up the broad aisle of Mr. Learney's church, listening to the strains of the Lohengrin wedding march. When the ceremony was over, and she found herself at home again shaking hands with everybody, she was quite overcome by the numerous congratulations.

The house was full of guests, and still guests arrived. An intruder slipped in unobserved behind one of the caterers who came through the back door, which was carelessly left open for a moment. Saracci, for it was he, hid himself in a closet and listened to the bustle, and was made hungry by the odors from the delicious food in the dining-room.

The guests were now departing, and finally the house grew quiet. One by one the lights were turned out, and Saracci began to think it was time. He opened the closet door a little way, and peered out into the darkness; then took a little dark lantern from his pocket, lit it, and creeping stealthily down the hall, entered the dining-room, where he found on the sideboard a little oak case filled with silver. He did not perceive in the dim light a cut-glass vase which stood near it.

Crash!

He had knocked it over onto some china. The house was lit as if by magic, and it seemed to him as if all the bells in Christendom were ringing. Then the report of a pistol was heard; he shrieked, and throwing up a window, jumped out.

Mr. Steele had not slept well. He felt a strange sense of uneasiness, and thinking that a glass of gin might prove a soporific, he went down-stairs. He heard Saracci's stealthy tread, and instead of getting gin, he got a pistol. He followed him to the dining-room; and just as the thief was taking the case of silver, Mr. Steele touched a button, and the burglar-alarm rang, while the gas was simultaneously lighted by electricity.

Mr. Steele was a good shot with a pistol, and Saracci found it out to his sorrow. He ran like a deer down Beacon Street, and turned into an alley, and was quite out of sight by the time the police were on his track. He went to the North End of the city, but by the time he had reached a safe hiding-place was faint from loss of blood.

CHAPTER XXIX

DOMESTIC INFELICITIES

Miss Thankful Steele was now Mrs. Thankful Gilbraith. She was too weary to go abroad, hence their wedding-tour consisted of a trip to Lakewood. Mr. Gilbraith felt very uneasy about his wife. She looked well, but took no interest in anything; and after the short bridal tour, they returned to Boston, and occupied comfortable apartments.

The stock of the new company was selling well. A large factory was in process of construction which was to manufacture the alkaloid in large quantities. Chemists approved of it, and sugar refiners were delighted with it. After Mr. Gilbraith returned to Boston, Johannes Schneip followed him thither, with his wife and baby, and all their simple, homely belongings.

"It seems like a dream," said Schneip. He had a new place, and he liked it. He worked hard, and so did Mr. Gilbraith, who one day asked Schneip to come and see him that evening in his new home.

"You remember, darling, my assistant who has been so kind to me?" he said to his wife at dinner that evening.

"Yes," she answered.

"Well, I have invited him to come over and spend the evening with us."

"I do not see what you can find attractive in that stupid German," she exclaimed petulantly.

This caused the first shadow which had fallen upon their happiness.

Mr. Gilbraith was a patient man, but her ceaseless unrest had begun to wear on his nervous system. Since their marriage he had never felt quite at ease in her company, and now her cool, sarcastic manner caused him to feel a shade of displeasure.

"Johannes Schneip may be stupid, but he is industrious and good," he said rather sharply.

"There are millions of industrious and good people," answered Thankful; "but I do not see why we should be bored with them because of these qualities."

"I am speaking of my friend, Johannes Schneip. He has been a true friend to me; but I will not trouble you with him further, after this evening. I will entertain him at the club."

"As you please," said his wife. "I do not care to see him, so will go to my room."

She was angry, or rather the smouldering anger had found an occasion to break forth. When a woman is hateful by nature, the tones of her voice can rasp and irritate much more than those of a man in a similar mood.

Johannes Schneip arrived in due time, and Mr. Gilbraith welcomed him warmly.

"What a beautiful home!" exclaimed Schneip.

The carpets, and the big easy-chairs, and the bright, polished andirons were strange to him; but the pictures interested him most of all.

"These pictures do not amount to anything," said Mr. Gilbraith. "You ought to go to the Art Museum. By the way, I have never asked you how you like Boston?"

Schneip looked thoughtful for a moment before answering.

"Why, down town they have crowded the city too close together. You start for somewhere, and if you are not careful you will bring up somewhere else.

Such strange little streets, having no particular beginning, and ending in front of a brick wall. (There is Dorchester Street, Dorchester Park, Dorchester Avenue, Dorchester Hill, and plain Dorchester.) I do not see how people get their letters here," said Schneip; "but I never expect any, for I do not write to anybody."

"You are a queer boy," said his friend. "You have never seemed to attach yourself to any one but your wife and myself."

"Why, I never think about anybody. I work all day, and I enjoy it. I love to read; but I do not care for people."

"Do you really dislike anybody?"

"No; I think not," replied Schneip.

A servant entered, saying that Mrs. Gilbraith wished to see her husband up-stairs.

Schneip excused himself and said good-night, hoping he had not stayed too long.

"Have you basked long enough in the sunlight of Mr. Schneip's beautiful eyes?" Thankful asked as her husband entered the room.

"Pray, Thankful, if you must be sarcastic, at least do not be vulgar."

"Oh, when did you become a teacher of manners and good-breeding?"

"I had the instinct of a gentleman always, and when I first loved you I thought I had every incentive to make myself cultivated and refined."

"Thank you," she replied in a tone half-way between disgust and anger. "If you wish to cultivate refinement, considering father's social position, you might find better company than a German boy."

Henry Gilbraith had a bad temper, but not a quick one. He was slow to anger; but when it was aroused it lasted a long time, and his face invariably turned pale. He bit his lip, and looked steadily into the fire, exerting his strong will to control himself. He sat still for some minutes, till his wife remarked, "Can't you continue your interesting lecture on manners?"

"Not to-night," he said coldly, and left the room.

He went to the Go-When-You-Please Club, and met his father-in-law; and for the first time in his life he drank more liquor than was good for him. Indeed, he drank so much more than was good for him, that he decided to remain at the hotel over night instead of going home.

"Call and tell Thankful I shall not be at home to-night," he said confusedly to his father-in-law.

Mr. Steele said, "Look here, young man, you have got a Tartar for a wife. Now, if you take to staying away nights when you are drunk, it will be mighty lively for you when you do go home. Keep the upper hand in your own household, keep the upper hand, my boy. My wife used to fret and fume and scold when she thought I'd had a drop too much, but now she says nary a word."

Mr. Gilbraith was intoxicated, and he was ashamed of himself; but he followed Mr. Steele's advice, and went home.

Schneip went home earlier than he expected, and was surprised to find a large bouquet of roses on his wife's little table. His surprise became amazement when he found a note, written in an effeminate hand. It read: —

> MY DARLING, —
>
> I send you a few flowers. When can I see you?
>
> Yours, LORENZO.

What did it mean? His wife was out. She soon returned, however, and Schneip asked her in German what it meant. The woman blushed, and looked down, and then up, and everywhere excepting into her husband's eyes.

"Who sent you these flowers, dear?" he asked.

There was not a shade of unkindness, not a tone of suspicion, in his voice. Schneip knew chemistry well, but he was ignorant of jealousy and distrust. He would have as soon suspected himself as the woman he loved.

"They are beautiful flowers," he said, taking them up and smelling of them.

"Mr. Steele sent them to me," she replied in a half-frightened way.

"Why, that was very kind of him," said Schneip; "but why does he address you as 'My Darling'?"

A little pain came in his heart. Alas! that little pain was to grow into a terrible anguish. The baby began to cry, and Schneip took the little one in his arms. He did not hold it awkwardly now, for his arms were used to the little form.

"Precious one," he murmured, laying the infant down. "Come, Katinka;" and took his wife upon his knee.

"How shall I say it?" he thought. He looked into her blue eyes. Their expression was not quite natural. There was no affection in those eyes now. Schneip had only a theoretical knowledge of the wrong in the world. It had never entered his being as a reality.

"My treasure," he said in German, "beware of that man Steele. He may write you affectionately, but he does not mean you any good. You are handsome, and you may attract him now, but he cannot love anybody very long."

"He does not love me," said Mrs. Schneip.

"I know he does not love you; but he would play with you, and then throw you aside, and if you starved it would not cause him one pang."

His wife was too cowardly to admit even to herself the feeling she had for Lorenzo Steele. She was also afraid to defend him to her husband, although her first impulse was to do so.

CHAPTER XXX

ONLY THROUGH LOVE'S EYES

Mr. Steele went to his door, and found his evening *Transcript*. The newsboy was late that night. He was anxious about the stock market. His large interest in the N.M.C.A. & O.R.R. gave him some uneasiness. Mr. Steele was not the only anxious one in Boston that night.

He opened his paper. "A Blind Man Graduates With High Honors At The Harvard Law School," he read. "Robert Netherland Receives His Degree; Commencement Exercises," etc.

"Netherland — Robert Netherland — why, that's my friend I met in Havana. 'Graduated with honors at the Harvard Law School.'" He frowned — an innocent photograph was the cause of this frown; it was a picture of Lorenzo.

"H'm, *he* couldn't even graduate from anywhere, and as for *honors* — h'm, h'm."

A vague wish again took possession of Mr. Steele, as he recalled the breakfast and smoke with Robert in Havana. The better part of his nature was uppermost for a moment. The shrewd, hard, close-fisted, independent, stubborn Yankee appreciated Robert's success.

"I'll bet five dollars," he said, "that boy didn't hang round some rich man to borrow the money for his tuition, then after getting through college canvass books through the Back Bay. I'd like to see him; wonder where he is." He had forgotten his stocks for a moment; remembering them, he looked at his paper.

"'Steady, firm; advanced a point.' Guess I'll 'unload;' taking on too many branches. Them lines o' railroad are too nigh parallel."

Mr. Steele's eyes had wandered to the telephone — just why, he did not know. He was dimly conscious of two little brass bells, the black box, and the earpiece which hung by it. The bell rang. Mr. Steele said, "Hello — Oh, Dr. Sneakleaf, how-d'ye-do? Yes, yes; I think so. Well, do. Yes, yes — say, that's visionary. I read it. Come over this evening; bring him over with you — yes, be very glad to see them all. Yes, good-by; that's all. Seven o'clock."

As Mr. Steele hung up the receiver, Lorenzo came in. His father handed him the paper, saying sarcastically, "If your eyes don't hurt you, perhaps it would do you good to read this," pointing to the announcement of Robert's graduation.

"How in-ter-est-ing," Lorenzo drawled.

"Does anything interest you? You act as though you had lived through all that life had to give you."

"Not quite, fa-ther."

"What do you intend to do with yourself, anyway? Succeed to my business, eh? H'm! Get down to the office one hour in every six months, and spend all the time when you are there looking at yourself in the glass? You'd make a nice business man," Mr. Steele said, looking angrily at his son.

The young man was touched for the moment, but all feelings were transitory with him.

"I am what I am. I did not bring myself here. I am not responsible for living. If an apology for my existence is needed, you are the one who should make it," he said with some heat.

"Oh, I shall not apologize for your being; I merely regret it."

"So do I. father; so do I."

The maid announced Dr. Sneakleaf, Mr. Robert Netherland, and Professor Vandière; and Mrs. Steele came down to receive them.

Boston was passing through three epidemics at the same time, — a rage for psychical research, a craze for "N.M.C.A. & O.R.R." stock, and a strong propensity for talking "evolution." All agreed that man had "tumbled up" from nobody knew quite what. Everybody was sure of the "tumble," but not quite sure of the "what."

More guests were announced, — Miss Cracylight, Miss De'Ette Block, and Mr. Block.

Introductions being over, Dr. Sneakleaf said, "Mr. Steele, this is an age of progress; the telephone, the telegraph, and the electric light have all come to make us comfortable, you know — you know" —

He scratched his head, not being quite pleased with his attempt at eloquence.

De'Ette looked steadily at Robert, and noticed that he looked at her without seeming to see her. His large brown eyes met hers, but there was no expression of intelligence in them. She addressed a remark to him.

"What a voice!" thought Robert, as he vaguely recognized the voice he had heard so long ago on the street. He immediately asked, "Are you a singer?"

"No; I wish I were."

How liquid the tones! There was in them warmth, beauty, strength, kindliness, and womanliness.

"I wish I could see you," Robert thought.

De'Ette's blue eyes again spoke to Robert's eyes, but there was no response.

"I read of your graduation," she said; "and I hoped to go to Commencement, but was detained."

"There," Robert thought again, "is a voice in which there can be no affectation. How I wish I could see her!"

Dr. Sneakleaf said, "Professor Vandière has come to bring us a little of the knowledge which is so plentiful in Paris. He is a pupil of the great savant, M.

Luys. I have the honor to be his unpretending student. Professor Luys makes inanimate things animate by transferring the subtle magnetic vitality from an animate being to a dead, insensate object."

Mr. Steele remarked, "I'd like to see it done."

"That is just what I hope to do this evening," remarked Professor Vandière in broken English. "I'll make a glass of water feel your headache."

"Yes; but I haven't any headache," Mr. Steele said. "Why don't you make our friend here, Mr. Netherland, see?"

"The gentleman does not see?" inquired the professor.

"Not with his eyes," said Mr. Steele; "but, by George! he saw more of Havana without them than I did with mine."

De'Ette, unconscious of the fact, was looking straight into Robert's eyes. He felt a strange sensation. He was conscious, not of a pain, but of a singular, pressing, strained feeling through his head and eyes.

"Upon whom shall we experiment first?"

"Upon Lorenzo," Mr. Steele replied sarcastically.

"Oh, dear, no," drawled Lorenzo. "Pray try some one else. I am a member of the Anti-Vivisectionists Society, don't you know."

"Oh, I don't know," replied his father; "but the professor does not intend to cut you up into little bits."

"I should hope not. What a horrible idea!" exclaimed Lorenzo.

"Let's experiment with Mr. Netherland," suggested Dr. Sneakleaf.

"What is to be the nature of the experiment?" Robert asked with interest.

"Professor Vandière is a telepathic specialist; he makes everybody do just what he wants them to do, and he knows everything we are thinking about. He'll put you to sleep, and — well, we'll tell you all about it when it's over. I am not a mind-reader, you know; and I can't tell what Professor Vandière will do until he has done it."

After this lucid explanation, Robert laughingly consented to be the subject of the professor's experiment.

Miss Cracylight looked disturbed and somewhat frightened.

"Take this chair," Professor Vandière said, wheeling one to the centre of the room, forgetting that Robert could not see it.

Robert arose, and hesitatingly took a step forward. De'Ette, instantly realizing his embarrassment, tactfully took his hand, and led him to the chair. Robert thought it the most beautiful hand he had ever touched. It felt soft and velvety, strong, but slender; warm and gentle seemed its touch. He had never held such a hand before, and was again conscious of an ardent wish to see De'Ette's face.

Professor Vandière held a strange-looking object in his hand. It was a metallic rod, upon one end of which was a small horseshoe magnet.

"You must concentrate your mind upon one thing," said the professor. "I will give you a number, — sixteen. It does not matter what figures are selected, but you must concentrate your mind intently upon whatever number is given. Think of sixteen," he commanded; "sixteen, only sixteen."

He waved the magnet in the air, and made passes with it. "Think of sixteen, — you are sixteen, you are two figures, one and six, — sixteen, sixteen, sixteen."

De'Ette watched Robert's face. It grew paler, his features became set, and his face wore an expression of terror.

"Sixteen, only sixteen; you are being merged into two figures, one and six, sixteen." The professor waved the magnet to and fro.

A tremor passed over Robert's frame. "Close your eyes." The lids fell.

"You cannot open them." Robert tried in vain.

"Your hands are icy cold." Robert shivered. Strange noises rang in his ears. He felt himself expanding. A terrible dread came over him; he tried in vain to throw it off.

"Sixteen, sixteen, sixteen, sixteen," rang through his head. "Sixteen, sixteen," again he heard; and then the voice ceased to exist for him. He felt himself whirling, whirling, whirling. He imagined he felt the figures, one and six, upon his finger-tips. "One, six; one, six; one, six," was all that he felt, all that he knew. Then another strange feeling followed. He was conscious of a bright light, but did not have a name for the sensation. Then a bookcase, a piano, and some chairs entered his consciousness. He knew them by their form, but why did they glow so? "What is this?" he thought; and then he experienced a sensation of pleasure. It was a new pleasure, an unnamable delight. There was a face! He knew it was a face because he had touched many. Such a face and such a form, wrapped in a maze of shadowy, delicate pink.

"Am I in heaven?" he asked.

De'Ette stood by him. The professor had first placed the magnet upon him, then upon De'Ette. Then, at the professor's suggestion, she took Robert's hand. At this moment Robert received the first vision he had ever known; for the first time he consciously perceived objects through a new avenue, by another sense. De'Ette, frightened, dropped his hand. All was darkness. Robert had never known darkness before, for he had never known the light.

"Again, again," he shrieked excitedly, holding out his hand. As it touched De'Ette's, Robert once more saw the light; but the objects were somewhat blurred. There were tears on De'Ette's cheeks, and Robert put up his hand to his own cheek as if to brush something away.

The professor explained that the movement of Robert's hand was due to the strong magnetic sympathy between the magnetized subject and the young lady. He could feel the tears on the young lady's cheeks as though they were on his own.

"Oh, how beautiful it is to see!" cried Robert.

The professor gave De'Ette a book, which she opened, and Robert read, "Let there be light." The professor quickly turned the pages of the book in De'Ette's hand, and Robert again read, "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea." He did not know how he perceived the words.

"Look at this," commanded the professor.

A photograph was handed to De'Ette. It was a woman's face; and Robert described it.

"See this." A highly colored spread was given her. De'Ette looked at it; the colors were bright.

"It makes my head ache," complained Robert.

"Sleep!" commanded the professor. He fell back limp into the chair.

Miss Cracylight was standing, and was looking at the group with great amazement. "Everybody will see without eyes," she exclaimed, "in the year three thousand four hundred and forty-seven!"

Dr. Sneakleaf remarked that "man will be evolved and spiritualized to such an extent sometime, so that he will not need bodily eyes in order for his mind to exercise its visual function."

Mr. Steele was much puzzled. "This is like making something out of nothing," he said. "Here is this man — can't see a wink through his own eyes, and yet he is able to see through the eyes of the young lady. I wonder what he would see through my eyes. Let him try it, Professor."

Robert touched Mr. Steele's hand. He became much agitated instantly, and exclaimed, "I am in a strange building. It is terribly dark. I am falling on the stairs;" he clutched with his right hand. "Oh, it is cold and clammy; it is a human face. I can't pull his hand off of his neck. A man is choking him; a man is choking him!" he shrieked. "Oh, help! help! I cannot find my way out. I am running around these halls — where is the stairway? What is this on my hands? What *is this* on my hands? He is choking him; he is choking him; I felt him choking him."

The professor touched Robert with the magnet. "Compose yourself," he said.

"I am in a broad hallway. I fell over two men on the stairs; one was choking the other. I cannot find my way out — oh, where is the door? I must get some one!"

"Sleep!" again commanded the professor. Robert fell back, and breathed heavily.

"His hands are very cold," said Dr. Sneakleaf, feeling of his pulse.

"What in thunder was the matter with him?" asked Mr. Steele. "He looked really as though he was scared."

The professor made no response; and Dr. Sneakleaf, holding a vial before Robert's nose, said, "Look out! the heart is beating rapidly; pulse one hundred and forty a minute."

Another vial was held before Robert's nose. "The pulse is growing steadier now," the doctor said. "Hadn't you better — well, I don't know what you call it, but I think you had better stop."

"Not yet," said the professor. "Will you touch his hand again, mademoiselle?"

De'Ette again took Robert's hand. Again he perceived that the room was illuminated with a soft, mellow light. "Oh, stay by me," he pleaded. "If this is sight, let me look once at least through your eyes at the world I have never seen before. Would that I might see the stars and the moon too."

"There is the moon," she said, looking out of the window.

"That ball of bright radiant light? It seems to be right here within my reach!" Robert exclaimed, putting out his hand as if to grasp it.

"How large is it?" asked the professor.

"It is immense," Robert answered.

"See his face," said Mr. Steele. De'Ette looked at it.

"Oh, don't look away," he said. "Let me see that glorious moonlight again."

"Come to the window!" commanded Professor Vandière.

"What is that illuminated, liquid, moving mass?"

"The moonlight reflected upon the river," answered De'Ette.

"And that?"

"A star gem," answered the professor.

"What are all those twinkling, merry little beams that seem to float dancing on the water?"

"The reflected lights of the city."

"What's this?"

"A rose," said De'Ette.

"Enough," said the professor; "sit down." Robert sank into a chair.

"Wake up!" commanded the professor sternly; and the dream was gone.

De'Ette could scarcely control her emotions, much less believe her own senses. "Has Mr. Netherland really been able to *see* through my eyes?" she asked.

"Yes, mademoiselle," replied the professor.

"I wish I could give him one of them," exclaimed De'Ette generously.

Such beautiful eyes they were that night, — womanly, brave, and as true as her own pure nature.

Robert heard the wish. "It was a beautiful dream," he said; "but I would not take one of your eyes, I would not diminish the scope of your vision, even if it would give me perfect sight; only let me touch your hand for a moment."

Again he felt its warm, gentle touch. Half-dazed, he raised it to his lips. Mr. Steele looked kindly, and smiled. Dr. Sneakleaf winked. Miss Cracylight looked shocked. Robert felt faint, and asked for water.

"I think brandy is what you need," said Mr. Steele.

CHAPTER XXXI

PARACUS A MUCH-MARRIED MAN

The blind lawyer found his work, or rather the lack of it, exceedingly uninteresting. In a few weeks after taking the office, he succeeded in letting desk-room in it to a former classmate; and as the young lawyer had as little business as Robert had, and both were rather studious, they occupied their time in reading. One afternoon as they were studying Kent's Commentaries, a man walked into the room, and asked for Mr. Netherland in a curiously weak, yet high-pitched voice.

"My name is John Paracus," he said. "I have been for twenty years in the employ of one railroad. I have served in the capacity of freight agent. I have been married three times, sir, and it is about that that I have come to see you."

He set down a heavy object on the table, with a bump. "That, sir, is a big music-box. I have twenty plates, and on each plate is one tune. Now, if you are fond of music, after I get through my business with you, I will put a plate in the box, and it will play 'Mollie Darling' with variations. I will put in another plate, and it will play 'Auld Lang Syne.'"

Robert was very much amused with his new client. "I shall be very glad to hear you play; but what is your business?"

"Well, sir, I have been married three times, and my three wives are dead. I have lived in Mr. Steele's block nigh onto twenty years. Whenever it gets out of repair, he is always willing to put it in order. I haven't been very well lately, and I have had a sore nose, and my eyes have been swelled up. In fact, my life has been bothered nearly out of me. My second wife's sister's nephew has threatened to sue me. I will just show him what sort of stuff I am made of. I will teach him a lesson such as he will never forget. I paid all them burial expenses; and my wife's sister lived with us five years, and she never turned her hand to anything while she was there. You understand, young man, that no man can run over John Paracus. I am a quiet man, and love peace; but when a man threatens to step on my toes, he'll catch it."

"Yes; but I want to get a better idea of your case," Robert said.

"Yes, sir; you can't see, and I am going to have you understand all about it. Why, Christopher Columbus! when my wife's sister lived to our house, I used to get up nights and fetch hot water for her to put her feet in — she used to suffer from the cramps. Many's the night I have been out to the drug-store to get her hot drops and peppermint, and ginger and mustard leaves, and oil of cinnamon, and St. Jacob's Oil, and St. Joseph's Oil, and Dr. Waddless's Sure Handy Relief, — all them things did her good; and the next morning she would say, 'O John! how could we ever get along without you!'"

"Yes," Robert said; "but I don't understand what you wish me to do for you."

"Now, that is just what I am coming at. You see, when I married the first time, my wife she had five thousand dollars that had been left to her father or her father's father by his oldest brother's second cousin; and he saved that money up for his daughter, and she had been a-saving that money all these years, waitin' for me to come. Now, she give me that money, and told me to invest it. And I did invest it. And she had another sister, and she had two brothers; and this sister, she had five thousand dollars, and I invested that. And then that sister, she went and died, and those brothers couldn't be found. And then my wife, she died one day, without taking sick, while she was sewing. And I went to a lawyer, I did. He was an impudent man. He says, 'Just you come to the point now.' I said, 'Just you give me time; I want you to understand all them details.' I stayed with that lawyer three hours that day and four hours the next day; and the upshot of it all was that he said I must advertise for them heirs of my first wife's sister. I advertised. I put my picture in the paper, like the doctor that makes patent medicines, and all the letters as I received you never saw. There were bundles of them, and barrels of them, and bags of them, and sacks of them, and carloads of them. Why, sir, I nearly read my eyes out. One said, 'Was the heirs black or white, tall or short, lean or fat; was the eyes black, or was they gray; was they blue, or was they brown; and did the heirs have big hands, or little hands; or big feet, or little feet?' Well, I hired a man to read them letters finally, and we couldn't get track of them heirs anyway. I put that money in the bank, and then I drawed it out, and I invested it all; and then the interest just kept a-compounding, and I just let it compound. And one of the days that it was a-compounding, I fell down on the ice, and put my wrist out of joint. Well, I saw the prettiest gal I had ever seen, and I asked her if she didn't want to marry me; and she said, 'No, she didn't.' — 'Why, yes you do,' I said. I just kept asking her every Sunday, and I wore her patience out; and finally she said 'Yes.' She had more relations than you could shake a stick at. What a family they was! They held a family reunion out to Woburn where they lived, and they had to hire two meeting-houses to get them all in. Well, somebody had left her some money; and she had a sick aunt, and that aunt wanted to come and live with us. Now she said, 'John Paracus, if you take care of me as long as I live, when I come to die I will see you all right.' And she just kep' livin' right along. She used to have the headache and the backache, and she just put on rheumatism for Sunday instead of her Sunday clothes. My wife and I did all the work for her, and we nussed her and rubbed her. Now, I was always a natural doctor. I had more receipts in a receipt-book than any doctor I ever saw; and as for pills, why I know the best pill, sir, that was ever made. If you get sick, sir, don't forget it. When you take one of them, you feel it all over you, in sections, just as soon as you swallow it. That pill works, that does. It makes you awful sick for the time; but when you get over it, it's like the toothache, — it feels good when it quits."

Though Robert was secretly pinching himself in order not to laugh, the man's interminable string of talk was growing wearisome.

"Now, Mr. Paracus, can't you tell me more directly what you want?"

"Well, sir, if you are getting tired, I will just play you 'The Sweet By and By' on this music-box; and when you have rested I will begin telling you about it again."

"I am not tired enough to need the music," answered Robert.

"Well, sir, I got married the second time" —

"I understood that," interrupted Robert; "and your wife's aunt lived with you."

"Yes, sir; as long as she lived. But would you believe it, she up and died! And such a snarl her affairs were in! She left three wills, all bearing the same date. She appointed me executor on all of them. By one my wife was the sole heir, in the other there were fifty legacies, and the third will left all her money to endow a home for superannuated cats. Now, sir, I have been trying ever since to get those wills straightened out, and her relatives are buzzing 'round my head like a lot of bees. Talk about bees — thirty-five of them are threatening to sue me. Now, sir, if you are the lawyer I want, you will have a chance to fight all those thirty-five lawsuits. Now, sir, I like a lawyer that is not afraid. If the lawyer on the other side lies, tell him he lies; talk sharp to him; and after you have done talking sharp to him, don't go out and have a dinner with him; and if you must have a dinner with him, have the decency to wait two or three days after the lawsuit is over — especially if you have won it. If you don't win it, cajole and cuddle him all you can, so it will come down kind of light."

Robert remarked dryly that he appreciated the gentleman's suggestions.

"Are you a married man?" asked the prospective client.

"No," replied Robert.

"Well, now, I am sorry for you. A man like you ought to have brain food. You ought to live on cereals and coarse graham bread, and take Dr. Chase's condensed milk for dessert. Now, that is brain food, sir. I owe all my success in life to the germs and meals, and oatmeals and cracked wheat," he said. "But to go on with the case. Now, my wife had some money, she had, — I mean my second wife, — and I wanted her to make a will; but she said to make a will made her think she was going to die, and she didn't want to die. Well, before her aunt died I invested her money, and the money that my wife had."

"And how much was that?" asked Robert.

"Good heavens, I don't know!" said the client. "You see, a man's memory is rather a skittish thing. Well, then, my wife and the aunt both died. Such a mess! Why, just the looking over the thing killed two clerks of the Probate Court. You see, I had so many accounts to keep for others, I never kept any accounts for myself."

"So your second wife's affairs have never been settled?"

"No; nor my third one's either."

"Oh! is there a third Mrs. Paracus with complicated affairs?"

"Yes, sir, there was; she's dead now; and I hope there may be a fourth, possibly a fifth in time. All three of my wives left relatives who claim to be heirs; and I want you to find out which of them is, and which of them isn't. Now, I'll leave you a hundred dollars; and if you can straighten out this very simple affair, I'll leave you some more sometime. I'm a generous man, I am; and you may feel sure you'll get paid for all the trouble you take for me. Goodness! it's almost my train-time, and I've got to get. Good-morning; see you later."

"What a man," said Robert to himself. "Can I ever straighten out those affairs? But I'll make a beginning, and try. The case is plain enough, if I could ascertain a few facts; but these facts I could never get out of Mr. Paracus. I must search the court records."

CHAPTER XXXII

"I KNOW HOW TO MAKE IT, AND I DARE TO USE IT"

Everybody in Boston was excited. The members of the Stock Exchange even shrieked, as they tried to bid up and down the stock of the N.M.C.A. & O.R.R., which everybody wanted. Astrologers and fortune-tellers predicted a great fortune for the road. Ladies bought it privately from lady stockbrokers in their rooms at the big hotels. The tickers all over the city said *that* railroad stock was going up.

Mr. Steele, however, was not enthusiastic over the prospects of the road. He had sold all of the stock of the Sugar Refining Alkaloid Company. There was a laboratory for its manufacture already completed in Lynn, and the company was opening offices in every city in the United States. This winter had brought great success to the business men of Boston. In fact, the tide of prosperity was at its height. It had not reached such a mark in years.

One day during this memorable period Mr. Steele was congratulating himself on his astuteness when he was interrupted by the entrance of Mr Doolittle.

"How do you do?" he said to Mr. Steele. "Have you seen this?" handing him a paper.

"RUMORS OF A SCANDAL!" read the big headline. "A YOUNG MAN IN HIGH LIFE RUNS AWAY WITH A GERMAN CHEMIST'S WIFE!" "The Chemist is named Johannes Schneip, and the Name of the Giddy Young Man is said to have a Metallic Ring."

"What in thunder!" exclaimed Mr. Steele. "Has that fool of a boy been and disgraced me in my old age? He told me he was going on to New York, and that he wanted some money."

"Has your son gone?" said Mr. Doolittle. "How unfortunate!"

"I hope he has gone for good," said Mr. Steele. At this moment a step was heard in the corridor; and a young man with a very white face entered the door, and said, "My name is Johannes Schneip."

"I believe somewhere I have had the pleasure of meeting you before, Mr. Schneip," responded Mr. Steele.

"Where is your son?" Schneip inquired sternly.

"Now, that's a question I should like to have answered myself. I don't know where the young man is," Mr. Steele replied. "What does this mean?" he added, handing Schneip the newspaper.

"I went home last night, and I found my wife gone," said the other; "and she left this note."

In his agitation it had not occurred to him that Mr. Steele might not be able to read German script.

"It is doubtless interesting, but I cannot decipher it," said Mr. Steele; "therefore, perhaps you will do it for me."

Schneip's hand trembled as he took the little piece of paper, and read aloud its contents, —

> "I have gone. Do not seek me. I do not love you.
>
> KATINKA."

"Your wife did not leave till last evening?"

"She was at home in the morning. That was the last that I saw of her."

"Well, now, Mr. Schneip, if your wife has run off with my son, I can assure you she has the worst of the bargain. I don't see that I am responsible for it; but if there is anything I can do for you, pray let me know."

"Thank you," said Schneip grimly; and left him.

Schneip had gone home the evening before at the usual hour. The fire was burning low. The baby lay crying in the little crib, and there lay a note. He was stunned. "My wife gone wrong!" he said. "Why, I loved her, and I have given her all I had. Is it that young Steele? I will know it before I make the accusation. Poor baby, what shall I do with it?"

There was no supper for Schneip that night. Everything was neat and orderly, and just as she had left it.

"My God! My God! Can it be true?" he cried.

"Where is my God, I wonder?" he added. "Blows and kicks all my childhood, and this one gleam of happiness gone!"

By reason of his stolid nature, Schneip's thoughts came slowly. He knew little of the intricacies of life among those socially his superiors. He had never wanted much money for himself, and therefore did not understand the temptations which were agitating the lower middle class. He called a woman who occupied the flat below him, and asked her to see to his baby for a little while, and told her that his wife had gone out.

She said that she would be glad to take care of the baby for a while; and he went out on the street dazed with the sudden, sharp sorrow.

"I beg your pardon," said a smart-looking young man. "I did not intend to run against you, but really, you were not looking where you were going."

"Do you know where Mr. Steele lives?" asked Schneip.

"What, Elisha Steele, the great financier? Why, on Beacon Street, of course. He is the most successful business man in Boston."

"His son is a rascal," said Schneip impetuously.

The young man took a note-book out of his pocket, and made a few notes with his pencil.

"Now tell me all about it," he said. "Let me know all about it."

Schneip told him the little he knew.

"Possibly you may make some money out of it — big damage, hush money, suit, compromise — thousands of dollars; young man, you're in it."

"I don't want Mr. Steele's money," said Schneip. "My home and life are ruined."

"Take a more practical view of it, young man. Good-evening; I must away."

As Schneip wandered on aimlessly, he felt a tap on his arm.

"Can you lend a man a quarter?" said a voice. There was the dark man who always smiled, — the same who had struck his friend, Mr. Gilbraith.

"Whom are you dogging now?" inquired Schneip, recognizing the man at once.

"If I am dogging anybody, it's a man with lots o' money. They are the only people worth dogging in the world. Come in and have a drink."

Schneip refused, but stood and watched him go into a saloon and come out. And after the man had left, he entered it himself. A dozen or more men were standing or sitting about the room.

"Our wives, mothers, daughters, and sisters," said one, "will have to sell themselves for bread, if these monopolies go on."

"They are going right on," said another voice. "There is old Steele — twenty years ago he was getting rich; ten years ago he was rich; now he is fabulously wealthy. The little merchant, the little blacksmith, the little everybody, are being ground down by those who by foul means have controlled all the industries of our country."

"Dynamite is the thing, I tell you," said a man with a German accent. "Those who would use it haven't the sense to make it."

"I can make it," said Schneip to him in German. A horrible thought had entered his mind. It came like a dark cloud, and rendered the darkness within his soul more intense.

"Somebody shall pay for the wreck of my home," he said. A voice from within whispered, "The rich are robbing the poor." Schneip spoke aloud unconsciously.

"My wife did not have to sell herself for bread."

"What is this you say? You look sick, man."

"I am sick."

"Well, have a drink, then."

Schneip took one, and another, and yet another. At this moment a little squad of musicians stopped in front of the saloon, and played "*Die Wacht Am Rhein*," and other military airs. The proprietor of the saloon then set six glasses of beer on the bar, and the thirsty musicians came in and drank it.

When they had left, some one remarked, "Men are cajoled and entertained while they are being robbed; and '*Die Wacht Am Rhein*' is a watch everywhere in Germany. The poor are being hounded like dogs; and the soldier, who should defend the fatherland, is the hired minion of the rich. Military bands allure men to battle; but when the fight begins, and blood flows, the music ceases, and hundreds of innocent men kill other equally innocent men without there being a grudge between them."

"The people are all a pack of deluded fools," answered another German. "Patriotism is a humbug; it is the rallying cry of the oppressors of the people; in the name of country its inhabitants are plundered instead of governed."

The liquor which Schneip drank intensified his anger. He walked the streets, and continued to drink during most of the night. The next morning he thought he would make sure of Lorenzo Steele's guilt, so sought out Mr. Steele. When he left that gentleman's office he muttered, —

"I know how to make it, and I dare to use it."

CHAPTER XXXIII

LORENZO STEELE DISGRACES HIS FAMILY

Mr. Steele was sitting by his fireside when the maid brought him a letter with a "Philadelphia" postmark.

"There he is; no mistaking it," said Mr. Steele, as he read aloud, —

"DEAR FATHER, —

Please send me some money. I have done wrong, I know I have; but if you will forgive me this time, I won't do it again.

LORENZO."

"'If I forgive him this time, he won't do it again,'" Mr. Steele sneered.

Mrs. Steele came in, looking ill and careworn.

"Here's a letter from your dumpling," he said, handing it to her. "'Send him some money, and he won't do it again.'"

"How much are you going to send him?" she asked.

"Not a red," answered Mr. Steele. "I will leave that for you to do."

"You are not going to kick the poor boy out-of-doors, are you?" she said, weeping. "I know that horrible woman led him on."

"Oh, no; I am not going to kick him out-of-doors. I shall provide for him, if possible, in a lunatic asylum."

"Oh, no!" Mrs. Steele gasped.

"Perhaps you would like the 'Home for Imbeciles' better?" he said.

"How can you be so cruel?"

The one last love of her life was dying. Everything had been a disappointment; and it was beginning to dawn upon her that her son, too, was weak.

"I will not believe it," she said to herself; and dry-ing her tears, wrote to Lorenzo, enclosing a check for five hundred dollars.

Mr. Gilbraith and his wife came over to visit Mr. and Mrs. Steele on this memorable evening.

"What are you going to do about it?" asked Mr. Gilbraith.

"Do about it?" repeated Mr. Steele; "I shall leave all the doing to my wife. Such a delicate young man should only be handled by a lady's tender hands. His mother would think me rude if I interfered. She has just written him a letter."

"I wonder where Lorenzo is stopping. Some comfortable place, I daresay; trust him for that," said his sister sarcastically.

"Oh, yes," Mr. Steele replied. "His mother provided him with sufficient money for all his present needs."

"I wish that German would break his neck," said Thankful.

"For once, Thankful, we are of one mind," her father replied.

"Her husband is too slow, however. He won't realize for twenty years after the woman is gone that anything has happened," said Thankful.

"You are very much mistaken," said Mr. Gilbraith angrily. "Johannes Schneip may be slow, but he has very fine feelings."

"How delighted I am to hear it!" said Thankful.

"His nose, then, is not an index of his feelings; neither are the rest of his features, for he is certainly coarse-looking."

"He has a warm heart," answered her husband; "and I cannot understand this."

"Cannot understand what?" snarled his father-in-law.

"Why, the fact that Mrs. Schneip could elope with your son, and leave him and her child. She was very kind to me when I was ill at her house in Chicago."

"Oh, she was," said Mr. Steele. "That was because of Lorenzo's benign influence upon her."

Mr. Gilbraith looked pained. "You may be right, father," he admitted; "but I believe there is some good in everybody. Mrs. Schneip, bad as she has proved herself" —

"Bad as Lorenzo has made her," interrupted his wife.

"Bad as Lorenzo has made her, then," pursued her husband, "I believe that she lacks more in judgment than in good intent."

"How charitable!" said Thankful. "Why, father, do you see what a future I have before me? I can do no end of naughty things, and my husband will always" —

"Look at the best side of your nature," interrupted Mr. Gilbraith, "and never misjudge you, if he can help it."

"Thank you, dear," said his wife, with an ironical smile.

"How beautiful!" said Mr. Steele. "If my son has made a mess of it, the happiness between you two is something delightful to witness."

"I wish I could do something to reclaim the woman," said Mr. Gilbraith.

"I am going to do that for you," said Mr. Steele. "You shall not outdo me in chivalry."

"I could not, if I tried," replied Mr. Gilbraith, smiling.

"I wish I had my hat on," said Mr. Steele, "so I could tip it to you."

Mr. Gilbraith bowed his thanks rather sarcastically.

Mrs. Steele did not care much about the fate of the German woman; her wayward weakling was her darling, whom everybody wronged. She knew this woman had enticed him away, she persisted in declaring. Her tear-stained, agonized face appealed to all that was manly within Mr. Gilbraith. "Have you any plan for Lorenzo's future?" he inquired, hoping to comfort his mother-in-law.

"I have plans for the near future," answered Mr. Steele. "I shall make an effort to save what little name I have left. It is pretty hard when a man is endeavoring to give his family position, to have all of his efforts destroyed in this way. I began life low down," he went on to say. "I have made money, and I, at least, am respected. I have endeavored to give my children position and education. Lorenzo would neither take the education, nor avail himself of the position I created for him. But the public is fair in its judgment," he added; "and it will not blame the rest of us for my son's misdeeds."

"Oh, he will do better," answered Mrs. Steele. "He will yet make a man of himself."

"I am glad if you think so," replied her husband.

CHAPTER XXXIV

"IS THERE AN ABSOLUTE STANDARD OF RIGHT?"

As Robert sat one day, finding his idleness very wearisome, and speculating regarding his next client, a young man entered the office. As he began to speak, Robert noticed that he had a German accent.

"I want to state my case to you," announced the stranger. "My name is Johannes Schneip. I read of your graduation in the paper; and I thought that perhaps your affliction might better fit you to understand the difficulties of my situation, or at least make you have more sympathy for me."

Then Schneip unbosomed himself, telling the blind lawyer in a few words his whole sad story.

"Do you want to bring suit to recover damages?" inquired the lawyer.

"No; I do not want any of the man's money," he said. "I want to do quite another thing."

"Well?"

"Where do men get an absolute standard of right? Can you tell me? What is right, and what is wrong? Is right another name for expediency, or is there an absolute right? Now, suppose a case; if I had a hundred dollars of your money, and I knew that it was yours, and you neither knew that you owned it nor that I had it, why would it be wrong for me to keep it?"

These plain questions puzzled Robert. "Your conscience tells you that it would be right for you to give up the money," he said.

"Certainly; but why? If I should spend the money, no one would know it. Where did I get a conscience?"

"Why, you were born with it."

"Yes," said Schneip, "I was born with it; but that is like saying God made it, and does not answer my question. Who made God? I know that a certain combination of chemicals will, under given conditions, produce a given result. If I apply a burning match, and turn on the gas, the carbon monoxide in the gas will be oxidized, and, in the process of oxidization, heat and light will be produced. I do not know why this is. I know that food and water are necessary to my system, but I do not know *why* they are. I know that I am growing older, yet my system has a mysterious way of repairing the wear upon it. Now, why does my machinery wear out when it is constantly renewed?"

"That problem belongs to physiology," said Robert, "not to law."

"Yes; but physiology has not solved it," said Schneip. "I have done a large amount of reading upon chemistry and physiology; I have read more than a hundred books on these subjects. I have only learned certain facts, but have not learned *why* these are facts."

Robert answered that Herbert Spencer claimed that "man cannot know the Infinite."

"Yes; but he meets it on every hand. Mr. Netherland, since my wife left me, I have struggled with myself. I have prayed, not for revenge, but for restitution. I have asked God to make good to me the fearful wrong I have sustained. I cannot wait much longer."

"What do you want to do?" asked Robert. "You can prosecute the man who seduced your wife."

"Oh, yes," Schneip answered; "possibly I might get him shut up for a little while in a prison, but that would not make good the loss to me or to my child. I appeal to you to-day for moral help. I am adrift in the universe; I do not know whether there is such a thing as right; I do not know of what wrong consists. Does might make right?"

"Might is certainly not right," said Robert. "That which is right, is that which is best for the individual and for society."

"Yes; but how would society be wronged if I spent the hundred dollars which belonged to you, and of which you were ignorant?"

"Every man must have a reason for his confidence in his fellow-man," answered Robert. "If there were no honest men in the world, if the fear of the law were the only protection against robbery, society indeed could not exist. Men would only have that which they could carry about with them, and defend by brute force."

"But that is not a satisfactory answer," said Schneip. "Why should I not seek revenge for the wrong I have sustained? The punishment provided by the law, even by the old standard of justice, is slight compared with the misery which my child and myself must suffer for Lorenzo Steele's deed."

"You may be sure of one thing," said Robert; "if you have sustained a wrong, you will find no satisfaction in doing another wrong for revenge. Wouldn't you find more satisfaction in trying to save your fallen wife?"

"I cannot find her. I would forgive her and take her back, if she would only give a mother's care to my baby. She surely loves the little one, if she does not love me."

"Have you tried every possible way to find her?"

"Yes. I advertised in the papers. I sent a letter to Mr. Steele, — to the old man, you know, — and asked him to forward it; but I have had no reply."

"Had you not better call and see Mr. Steele again?" Robert suggested.

"I never want to see him again. He was not unkind the day after my wife eloped, but he was indifferent. But to return to the question of right and wrong. Now, countrymen of mine are telling me that there is no such thing as absolute right."

"They are mistaken," said Robert. "There is a right inherent in life. Victor Hugo says, 'Let one man's liberty end where another's begins.' Make the most of your every faculty. Help your fellow-man. Forgive only where forgiveness will be a help to reclaim him; punish where punishment will do the individual and society good, not harm. Do nothing vindictively or maliciously."

"If I should punish young Steele," said Schneip, "what good would come of it? If I should kill him, I should rid the world of only one of the many who are capable of vast mischief."

"Yes; and injure yourself in so doing," replied Robert.

"Do you believe in a life after death?" asked Schneip; "and if there is one, can a nature morally blind suddenly be transformed into a perfect being?"

"I cannot answer that question," said Robert. "I am not a theologian."

"Yes; but if law is the embodiment of right, such right must be eternal."

"Not necessarily," answered Robert.

"If there is an eternal existence, if memory is eternal, all wrong and all right must be eternal," said Schneip. "If I commit a wrong towards you to-day, it will linger with me as long as my life lasts, whether that be a brief span or an eternity. Mr. Netherland, I am afraid you cannot satisfactorily solve my moral difficulty."

"I am not going to give up trying," said Robert.

"Now that my wife has proved false, I live without love. Love seemed to me to be the embodiment of all right, the great bond which holds society together," said Schneip.

"You love your child?"

"Yes; if pity may be called love," said Schneip. "I look into its innocent little face, and wonder if it has been cursed with its mother's moral weakness; and then I shudder, and curse myself for its existence. Mr. Netherland, I would rather be guilty of a thousand murders than of bringing a being into this world who must suffer as I have suffered. Suppose my baby becomes blind, as you are, or deaf and dumb; or suppose some fearful disease hinders its development, and renders it a hideous, deformed, helpless, unsightly thing; could there be any right in such a thing as that? The only right I know, the only thing I can understand, is to prevent suffering. Mr. Netherland, teach me a higher right if you can. I long to believe, more than I can express to you, that all will be well; but I can never believe that the suffering and misery of the world are right, until I can find a better explanation than the hypothesis of broken laws.

"Oh, I wish my child were beyond the possibility of suffering! You are a lawyer, and you are sworn to keep a client's secret. I am going to confide in you. A burning passion consumes my whole nature, — I want to make war on the existing order of things; I want to destroy those who now hold the wealth of the world, in the hope that another and better condition may be evolved from the chaos."

"How can that be," questioned Robert, "when the elements which have made the social order what it is still exist? A man with certain traits of character, some of them innate, others acquired, lives out his life. If these traits strengthen him, he will succeed; if they are such as will weaken him, he will go to the wall. This cannot be helped."

"But are the weaker all bad?" asked Schneip; "and are the stronger all good?"

"Not in the sense in which you speak. Good and bad are relative terms," Robert answered.

"Now, I was good to my wife," said Schneip. "I gave her a good home; I supplied her every want so far as I knew how; I never spoke an unkind word to her,

— no, I never felt an unkind thought even, — and she left me. Why was this?"

"Because her moral nature was not fully developed," said Robert. "The moth flies to the flame that destroys it. Passion too often rules the intellect, and both are consumed in its fire. There is an equilibrium which must be maintained. In this law of balance can be found the absolute standard of right. The passions we feel are right when exercised for the best good of all; they are wrong only when they are perverted. Owing to a weakness inherent in your wife, she was charmed either by the wealth, or by some group of qualities, or by both, which this man Steele possessed."

"But she said she loved me," persisted Schneip.

"Love, like most other things, is relative," again said Robert. "I love the being who is congenial to me; the component parts of the nature of the one I love, plus my own qualities, are the causes of that congeniality. Can you analyze the love you had for your wife? Can you tell why you loved her?"

"I loved her as soon as I saw her."

"Was she interested in your lifework?"

"I never talked with her about it," Schneip answered. "I worked all day, and brought her my wages. Then I rocked the baby, or read, while she prattled and sewed."

"Were you interested in the things that interested her?"

"Yes; for they were hers."

"Did you never tire of her 'prattle'?"

"No; I loved the tones of her voice, and it was a delight to look at her."

"Yes; but that is just the reason, probably, why your life was not complete," said Robert. "Has it never occurred to you that she might have felt wants which you did not feel? Have you never thought that there might be a side to her nature which you did not comprehend?"

"I never thought of it in that way," said Schneip. "If there was, it was never made known to me. I would gladly have laid down my life to have given her anything she desired. I entertained her in every way that I knew, and did all I could to fill her life completely. But I will act upon your suggestion, and see Mr. Steele once more. Perhaps he will help me this time. How much do I owe you?"

"What my advice has been worth," said Robert—"nothing."

"*Auf Wiedersehen*," said Schneip.

CHAPTER XXXV

SCHNEIP BECOMES INQUISITIVE

Schneip went to Mr. Steele's office a second time.

"Good-morning, young man," Mr. Steele said, not unkindly, but with a little trepidation visible in his manner.

"Did you forward my letter to my wife?" Schneip asked.

"Yes, sir, I did."

"And do you know where she is?"

"I know my son's whereabouts, and suppose she must be with him."

"May I not see her?"

"Why, that is not a question for me to answer."

"Will you send another letter to her?"

"As many as you wish," said Mr. Steele.

"If I could only see her!" said Schneip.

"I understand that you threatened violence on my son."

"If you will procure me an interview with my wife, I will promise you that I will not seek your son, or harm him in any way."

"Very good; I will try," Mr. Steele answered. "I wish you would keep quiet about the matter. It has created an awful scandal; and the more you stir a cesspool the stronger are its odors."

Schneip flushed, as he replied hotly, "Can the disgrace hurt you half as much as the ruin of my home has hurt me?"

"Why, yes, yes," said Mr. Steele. "You have no social position, you know. All you have lost is your wife. By the way, young man, you have some stock in the Sugar Refining Alkaloid Company. Don't you think you had better sell it?"

"Do you want to buy it?" asked Schneip suspiciously.

"No, sir," said Mr. Steele emphatically. "I have advised Gilbraith to sell all he had in it. The company is in debt, you know, and I give you the same advice. I have 'unloaded,' and if you are smart you will go down to a broker this afternoon. Your friend insisted that you must be made one of the board of directors, and you have never attended a meeting. Now, sir, resign and sell out. I have made lots of money in my day, and I don't want to make any out of you; and I am sorry for you. Now, sir, sell out, and go out West. Go somewhere where you are not known. Get a divorce, and try it over again; you may be more lucky next time. Do you know that stock of yours is worth somewhere near fifty thousand dollars?"

Schneip was dumfounded.

"Why should I sell it then?"

"Because it will not be worth fifty thousand dollars or fifty thousand cents a little later on."

"Why not?"

"For the sufficient reason that the company is over three million dollars in debt. The interest on the bonds will more than eat up the profits on the sales of the chemical."

"Who is to blame for that?"

"Why, you are, partly. You are one of those 'directors that didn't direct.'"

"You have attended the meetings, however. Why did you not prevent it?" asked Schneip.

"Overestimated the value of the discovery," was the rich man's response. "Do as I tell you; bring your letter here and I will send it, then sell your stock and go West."

"Somebody is going to lose money by this transaction," said Schneip.

"That's none of your business. Every man who buys stock takes a risk. Every one must stand his losses."

"A blind lawyer said that man must have a certain amount of confidence in his fellow-man, or business could not be transacted."

"Great Cæsar! That is a visionary idea," said Mr. Steele. "I have mighty little confidence in anybody; in fact, you couldn't discover it with a microscope."

Schneip did not think that confidence was a fit subject for microscopic investigation. He said that he thought the scales of justice was the proper instrument to use in such research.

"The 'scales of justice,'" said Mr. Steele. "I thought you had some sense. The blades of grass that grow in the field battle for supremacy; some live, some die; some men succeed, the greater majority of them do not. You are in the sinking boat with the majority, I should judge by what you say."

"Have you no honor?" asked Schneip.

"Honor? Yes, sir. I pay every dollar I owe."

"But you say you have no confidence in your fellow-men."

"No, sir; not when they are out of my sight."

"Where do you keep your money?"

"Do you mean that as an impertinent question, young man?"

"Far from it," said Schneip. "I would not insult any one, certainly not a man physically my inferior."

"Then, since you mean well, I will tell you where I keep my money. You couldn't find it, though, even if you tried. I buy houses — people can't steal those; I insure them in twenty different fire-insurance companies. If the houses burn, and all the companies bust, no one can run away with my land. I buy the best securities I can get; I have my life insured. I scatter my money about, sir."

"You are one man," said Schneip. "If fifty thousand or fifty million wanted to rob you, you would be helpless."

"Yes; but they will not."

"Why not?"

"Because a lot of other men own land. The government protects private property rights."

"And has to shield rascals sometimes in doing it," remarked Schneip.

"Yes; but nothing is perfect in this world," Mr. Steele went on to say. "We are all put here, and we must make the best of it."

"I will make the best of it," said Schneip.

"Then go West, young man; go West."

Schneip went out to the Safety Security vaults, where his friend Mr. Gilbraith had advised him to put his stock certificates, entered the big building, and, giving the number of his box to a watchman, was admitted to the vaults, and another man put a key into the little door of the box and turned it.

"Put your own key in," he said to Schneip.

Schneip turned the key, opened the little door, and drew out a long, black, tin box. There, in a long envelope, were the shares of stock.

"They are all just as I left them," said Schneip to himself, and closed the door and locked it; and as the watchman put his key in the keyhole to turn the double lock, Schneip got an idea.

"What," thought he, "is to prevent the president or some officer of this concern having duplicate keys to this box, or to any box, or all the boxes? Why can't the president go and unlock the boxes, and take out all the valuables? He certainly has not disturbed my shares, though." He pondered over this a few minutes, then asked, "May I see the president?"

"Isn't everything all right?" asked the watchman. "Have you lost anything?"

"No, sir; but I want to see the president."

"You may see him, of course," said the watchman; and the young German was shown to the president's office.

"Mr. Carver, one of our customers wishes to see you."

"Pray walk in, sir; pray walk in," said Mr. Carver very smoothly.

Schneip sat down, much embarrassed; for he had never been in such an office before.

"What can I do for you, sir?"

"I am a young man" — was Schneip's awkward beginning.

"So I should judge by your looks."

"I am in need of help. Will you answer me some questions?"

"Why, if I can, with the greatest pleasure," said Mr. Carver.

"What is to prevent your having duplicate keys to all the boxes here?"

"Oh, you are uneasy about your securities," said Mr. Carver.

"No, indeed," Schneip said. "I rented one of your boxes nearly eight months ago, and haven't thought of it since."

"You are perfectly safe. You can leave anything in your box you like, sir. None of the keys are similar; they are all tested, and, besides, we keep six watchmen. The first lock has to be turned by the watchman's key before you can put your key into it."

"Yes," said Schneip.

"Now, one man watches another."

"Then it is theoretically possible," asserted Schneip, "for those men to combine and rob the vaults."

"Certainly; but we endeavor to get men of high standing, and some responsible person is here all the time to watch the men."

"What is the test of responsibility to which you submit your men?"

"Why," answered the president, "some of the most responsible men in Boston are on this board of directors. There is Mr.—— and Mr.—— and Mr.—— and Mr. Steele."

"Mr. Steele one of the board of directors!" exclaimed Schneip.

"Yes, sir," answered Mr. Carver; "and there is not a more reliable business man in the community than Mr. Steele. You look surprised, young man; what is the matter? I hope that you have had no trouble with Mr. Steele?"

"No, I have had no trouble with him; but he gave me some advice just now," said Schneip.

"Well, then, you take it," replied the president.

"Then the trustworthiness of the Safety Security Company depends ultimately upon the honor of those who control it," Schneip went on.

"The security of all society depends on that," said Mr. Carver.

"What makes men honest?" queried Schneip.

"The Word of God, sir," answered Mr. Carver. "We employ good, Christian men — men who have families depending upon them."

"Then you think Mr. Steele has honor and honesty?"

"Yes, sir, I do," answered Mr. Carver.

"How much experience have you had with him?" asked Schneip.

"I have known him for twenty years. I have sat with him as a director upon six different boards. He is the keenest man I know. He believes in paying good salaries for good men. He believes in giving each good man a good 'looking after.' Why, young man, your property is as safe in these vaults" —

"As it would be anywhere else," interrupted Schneip.

"By the way, do you go to church? You were asking about absolute right; you will find it in your Bible. Read it, sir; let it be a 'lamp to your feet' in the darkness; let it guide your pathway, sir. Let its clearest light shine upon you; it will be the star upon which you can look as you descend to the valley of the shadow of death."

"I thank you, sir," said Schneip. "I will read it. Good-morning."

"Stay a minute. Poor boy, you look sick," Mr. Carver said rather kindly as Schneip was about to leave the room.

"I am heartsick," said Schneip. "I am adrift. Mr. Carver, I do not know right from wrong."

"It is easily learned, sir; I assure you, it is easily learned," said Mr. Carver. "I am just going out to lunch. Have you a Bible?"

"A New Testament printed in German," replied Schneip.

"Oh, you are a German. I might have known that by your slight accent. Young man, I want to present you with a Bible. Come up to a bookstore with me."

Schneip went with him, therefore; and as they walked into a store Schneip thought he had never seen so many books, and took up a gayly colored picture-book. "I must buy this for my baby."

"Oh, you have a little one?" Mr. Carver inquired interestedly; then to the clerk, "Please show me a Bible; good print and plain binding."

"Two dollars and twenty-five cents," said the clerk, handing him one.

"Step aside just a moment," Mr. Carver said to Schneip. He turned the leaves to the Sermon on the Mount.

"Blessed are the meek," read Schneip.

"Read these lines, and let the beautiful truths that they contain enter your heart and mind; then pray," said Mr. Carver.

"I have prayed many a day," answered Schneip.

"Perhaps not in the right way," said Mr. Carver, "if it has not done you good."

"Perhaps I do not know how to pray," said Schneip. "I do not think I do."

"Why, that's strange; will you attend my adult class at Sunday-school? Come next Sunday, come. I like your looks. Once more good-by."

"Blessed are the meek," read Schneip. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God."

"I have always meant to be pure in heart," he said; "but I have never seen God."

He walked down the street, and found a stockbroker.

"I want to sell this stock," he said to him.

"Very good, sir; I can find a purchaser," said Mr. Spittleworth, after examining the certificates. "You are a great big fool, though, you are. I would advise you to hold onto it. The stock is going right straight up."

"I want to sell it," insisted Schneip. "I need the money."

"All right, sir; I will give you a check," said Mr. Spittleworth; "I can dispose of it in fifteen minutes."

He opened a drawer, and took out a check-book.

"Ah, that is it — forty-eight thousand four hundred and fifty-three dollars and seven cents. Young man, what are you going to do with all of your money?"

"I have not decided that."

"Can't I sell you some securities? I have some that are now bringing a handsome premium, and paying a seven per cent dividend."

Schneip did not know what a seven per cent dividend meant.

"How do you spell dividend, sir?" he asked innocently.

"O my Lord!" said Mr. Spittleworth; "I will teach you how to spell it. It is one of the sweetest words in the English language. Coupon is its twin sister, sir. Stocks fathered these twin sisters, and bonds gave them birth. I went down and cut my coupons this morning, sir, and I collected my dividends. Good-day, good-day; I am in a hurry."

The check was drawn on one of the largest banks in Boston. Schneip found, when he reached the bank, that he would have to be identified; so he went to the Safety Security vaults, and asked if some one would go to the bank and identify him.

"I will step right over with you," said the president.

The check was promptly paid, and Schneip returned to the vaults. He opened his box, then counted out first the crisp thousand-dollar bills, — there were thirty of them, — and fourteen of the hundred-dollar bills; there were eight fifty-dollar bills; small bills and some coins completed the amount.

"I suppose the men who have control of the bank are honorable and honest too," he thought. "They have counted the money correctly."

He closed the little iron door. The same watchman in uniform locked it. Schneip went to the desk, and told the clerk that if anything happened to him his baby was his heir. He said, "The baby's name is Johannes Schneip too. Tell the gentleman 'with honor and honesty' to find the baby if anything happens to me."

He had a heavy heart as he walked away.

"Go West, young man, go West," rang in his ears. "I have money enough to live anywhere I please," he muttered to himself. He leaned against a lamppost, and watched the crowd as they passed.

"*H e r-a-l-d, G-l-o-b-e,* and *R-e-c-o-r-d,*" shouted a boy. "*T-r-a-n-s-c-r-i-p-t* and *T-r-a-v-e-l-e-r.*"

"I will have a *Herald,*" said Schneip. He opened the paper.

ASSIGNS!

LIABILITIES THREE MILLIONS OF DOLLARS!

Sugar Refining Alkaloid Company in the Hands of a Receiver. Assets very Small.

Schneip instantly thought, "Who will lose that money?" He saw another heading.

N.M.C.A. & O.R.R. IN THE HANDS OF A RECEIVER!

AFFAIRS IN A FEARFUL CONDITION.

Its Stock Takes a Sudden Drop in the Market at 12 M. to-day.

"Who does the money belong to?" Schneip said to himself again. Some one ran against him. It was Mr. Spittleworth, who was trembling like a leaf.

"Good heavens!" he said; "you are the man that sold me that stock this afternoon. Did you know the company was going to fail?"

"No," said Schneip; "I did not know it."

"I shall bring suit to recover the money; I tell you, I shall bring suit to recover it. I shall have you prosecuted, sir. I say, officer, I want you to take this man's address. He has unloaded a lot of worthless stuff on me."

"I will give you my address with pleasure," said Schneip to the officer.

Officer McGonigal eyed Schneip curiously.

"Faith, now, an' did you make any false representations to the mon?"

"I did not make any representations to him at all," said Schneip.

"Well, now, shure, an' if yez don't tell nobody, I am moighty glad you've stuck him."

Mr. Spittleworth rushed madly down State Street.

"What can I do? What can I do?" he kept saying to himself. He entered a big building, and saw the name, "Robert Netherland, Attorney-at-law."

"He is not my lawyer, but I must have some advice right away." He was in a dripping perspiration as he rushed into the room.

"Good heavens, sir, I must have help!"

"Are you ill?" asked Robert.

"No; but a rascally deed has been done. I want the law, sir, I want the law; I mean, I want the help of the law. A young man came in to-day and sold me a lot of worthless paper, and he took my check. There is nearly fifty thousand dollars worth of it."

"A case of obtaining money under false pretences?" asked Robert.

Mr. Spittleworth thought.

"Had we not better secure a warrant for the arrest of the young man at once?" said Robert.

"Ye-e-e-e-e-es," he stammered, his teeth chattering.

"Tell me the facts of the case."

"Why, he came into my office, and he had some stock in a Sugar Refining Alkaloid Company. Now, the stock was quoted at one hundred and twenty one-half hour before, and nobody could find a share of it. I, knowing a man who would pay me a handsome premium, bought the stock. My customer had gone down the harbor; and the company, not the stock, has gone up."

"Did the young man make any especial pretences about the value of the stock?"

"No, no," he said. "He was a shrewd one. I'll bet a hundred dollars he was one of old Steele's agents. He was a German, and did not look as though he knew beans. He would make a clever actor. When I gave him that check, he looked as though he had never seen one before."

"I do not see how you can make a case out against him."

Mr. Spittleworth just realized that the lawyer was blind. "Why, my God, you cannot see! Of course you cannot see how I can make a case out against him. Oh, dear! You could not make a case out of anything. What luck! What luck!"

"I can make out a case," said Robert, "if the facts will warrant it."

"I suppose I owe you a fee for your information. Well, here it is. Oh, what luck! What luck!"

Mr. Spittleworth ran down a long corridor. "Closed for repairs," said a card at the elevator door. He ran down several flights of stairs, which a scrub-woman was cleaning. She tried to get her pail of water out of the way when she saw Mr. Spittleworth coming, but he was too quick for her; his right foot went into the pail, and his head went down the stairs first. The woman shrieked; Mr. Spittleworth groaned.

"Oh, I have spoiled my patent-leather shoes," he cried. "What shall I do? Where is a lawyer — I want a lawyer," he said to a man.

"You look as though you needed an insanity expert."

"What, Kennedy, is that you? Do you know what has happened to me?"

"I should judge that you had had a bath before you were ready for it," remarked his friend.

"Well, I tell you I am a ruined man. A fellow has unloaded a lot of worthless paper upon me."

"If I might judge from your appearance, it was water, not paper, that was unloaded upon you."

"Oh, I wish that water was all. I would that I had been drowned!" said Mr. Spittleworth.

"Now, look here, quiet yourself, and tell me what has happened."

"Oh, I don't know that I can. I bought some stock from a young man in a Sugar Refining Alkaloid Company."

"Whew!" whistled Mr. Kennedy, holding up both hands; "and you have got stuck, by George! Well, come, let's have a drink. First you better go somewhere, and get some fresh clothes."

"I want a lawyer; I want to prosecute the young man."

"How did you hear of the failure of the company?" Mr. Spittleworth related the occurrence.

"You have got your feet right into it, old man. A lawyer can do you no good."

"Oh, dear, dear," he said, "you are a regular Job's comforter. I want to see one, anyway." A lawyer was soon found. He confirmed Robert's opinion, and charged Mr. Spittleworth ten dollars for it.

Mr. Spittleworth then went with his partner, Mr. Kennedy, and had a glass of brandy and soda.

CHAPTER XXXVI

CUPID LEADS THE BLIND

"Another long wait for clients," said Robert, sitting down one morning at his desk. "Life seems like one endless wait." He was mistaken this time, however; for a messenger-boy called, and put a note into his hand, a dainty little envelope, which Robert felt over carefully. Then in a few minutes a young man walked in, and said, "Mr. Steele wants to see you, and he sent me down to bring you up to his office. We are to be near neighbors of yours very soon."

When Robert reached Mr. Steele's office, he found this gentleman in high glee.

"So that young man Schneip has been to see you? He has been to see me, too, to-day. Do you know, I think you ought to have been a preacher? It is a great mistake for you to have made a lawyer of yourself."

“I have had that advice given me before,” Robert answered.

“Why, you really have made a profound impression on young Schneip; and, by the way, I want you to help me in this matter. You know my son ran off with this German's wife, and a healthy thing it was to do too. But of course I want to do what is right about it. And, by the way, Schneip stuck old Spittleworth on his stock. You know Spittleworth?”

“I had an interview with him,” Robert replied. “He has been trying to prosecute the chemist, but it was a perfectly fair transaction.”

“That old fellow never has known how to keep a fortune. You have heard of the assignment of the N.M.C.A. & O.R.R.? I am the only man in Boston with means who has not been bitten. I have just one share of the stock left. I paid sixty-five dollars for it; it is worth seven dollars and fifty cents. I will send it to you as a present to-morrow morning, for by that time it won't be worth the paper it is printed on. Too bad! Lots of women got bit by that transaction too. I am awfully sorry for them. But I tell you a woman's place is at home, or at a whist-club, or at church — anywhere, excepting in business. Bless the dear creatures!” Mr. Steele went on to say, “Now, sir, I admire women; but of all cranks in the world, when a woman gets her head turned, she's the worst. And she's so sweet with all of it. But ‘to return to our mutton,’” he said. “I want to send you to Philadelphia. My son is getting awfully sick of his tomfoolery. He has seen enough of his young German woman, but I won't let him run away from her now that he has ruined her. Her husband, however, stands ready to forgive her; and as the existing condition of affairs is a burning reproach and disgrace, don't you think you could kindly bring about a reconciliation? Now, they say that if you interfere between man and wife you will get your head punched, but I never heard that the rule applied if you bring man and wife together; but if they both get after you, you just let me know, and I will stand right by you with both feet."

Robert laughed heartily at the joke.

"Look here!" exclaimed the other, as a sudden thought came into his head. "How are you going to travel alone? You can't go to Philadelphia alone. How in the world would you get out of this office if I didn't send somebody with you? Now, sir, I have got you in a trap. I can just get up and walk off, and say, 'Young man, when you will come to my terms, sing out.'"

"You would have to lock me in. I know my way pretty thoroughly about the principal parts of Boston by this time," said Robert.

"You do! How in the world do you avoid lamp-posts?" said Mr. Steele. "You take twenty steps, and you would fall into a cellar and break every bone in your body. Talk about your knowing your way about the principal streets of Boston! Well, now, you make arrangements for your trip to Philadelphia. Get a nice young fellow to go along with you, and I will foot the bills, and give you fifty dollars a day besides."

"Very well," agreed Robert; "I will arrange to start to-morrow. Let me see" — he said, "will you read this note for me please?"

"That I will," said Mr. Steele. "How sweet it smells! Why, it is an invitation to dinner at Dr. Sneakleaf's. The dinner is a week hence, however, so you will have plenty of time to go to Philadelphia, and get back. I have got such an invitation myself. They have designs on you there, young man; look out! Mrs. Sneakleaf is the greatest matchmaker in all Boston. She has no children of her own, and her work is genuinely disinterested. She is endeavoring to reduce the number of unmarried women in Boston. There are only about one hundred thousand more women than men here now. I want to tell you something that happened yesterday. I had an awful toothache, and it throbbed and beat like ten thousand little hammers were pounding on the nerves. I asked my friend Mr. Doolittle if he could tell me of a dentist. 'A dentist?' he said; 'I know a perfect artist in that line.' Well, I got on my hat and coat, and he gave me a card, and I just looked at it. The card said, 'Dr. M. C. Pull, Dentist.' I went to the office as bold as could be, and a little girl opened the door, and I walked in, and there stood before me a curious creature; I suppose it was a woman, but she had a mustache on her upper lip. I asked for the dentist. 'Well, sir, I am the dentist,' she said. 'What, *you* the dentist! Well, I have got a tooth to pull now, and I don't believe you can do it; but I will let you try.' Well, she took a little lancet, and she ran it around the tooth, and she put on the pincers, and she pulled. I felt myself rising out of the chair, but still she pulled. I gripped the arms to hold on, but still she pulled. I tried to yell, 'Murder!' and she pulled harder. Snap! — and I saw more stars than have ever been discovered by all the astronomers. But she got it! And she threw it down as indifferently as though she was used to pulling teeth. But I tell you, it hurt. 'That was well done,' I said. 'What did you expect I should do? Didn't you think I would do it well?' she asked, her eyes snapping, and she looking all the while as though she was going to box my ears. I thought I would be kind of meek; so I said, 'Yes, mum.' Now, I am sorry for struggling women, and I asked her what was her bill, and she said, 'Two dollars.' I handed her a five, and told her she needn't mind the change. 'Thank you, sir,' she said; 'I don't receive tips. My position is above that of a waiter.' — 'I beg your pardon,' I said; 'no offence intended.' Then, as if to kind of pacify her, I said, 'Do you suppose you could make me a set of artificial teeth?' — 'Yes, sir,' she said; and I thanked her and walked out."

"The sun is going down, but you don't know that it is going down; you have to take my word for it. Come along with me; I will leave you at your boarding-house," said Mr. Steele kindly.

While Mr. Steele and Robert were on the street waiting for a car, the former espied an acquaintance. "Here's Mr. Block; why, how-d'ye-do?" said Mr. Steele. "Here's your friend, Mr. Netherland. He is going my way. Which way are you going, Mr. Block?" Mr. Block was going his way too, as it proved. Then, as they were about to enter a car, Mr. Block said, "Why, here is De'Ette."

Robert's heart beat faster. The same liquid, musical voice spoke, and seemed even sweeter than the last time he had heard it. Mr. Steele, with a mischievous look in his eye, signed to De'Ette to take a seat beside Robert.

"I hope you were not ill after the experiment?" she said.

"Oh, no; quite the contrary," was Robert's reply. "Do you know that I really did get a glimpse of the world through your eyes?"

"Hush! please not so loud," she said. "Every one in the car is looking at us now. I wish you could get a glimpse of the people here. There are some strange-looking faces. There are a number of very fat ladies, and such lean men; they look as though they would blow away with the first breeze. Most of the ladies are elderly, and there are several young-looking old gentlemen. The gentlemen, you see, are nearly all sitting, and the ladies are holding on bravely to the straps. There is Mrs. Mullen at the other end of the car. I hope she won't see me. She's recently become converted to what she terms a 'new medical religion.' It does not, like many other such systems, claim to cure all the ills of man; it is a method of treatment which deals solely with the feet. It has a remarkable name, — 'The Chiropædic Faith Cure.' If she sees us, she will talk us both to death."

"Why not get off the car and walk?" said Robert. "I haven't had any exercise to-day."

But Mrs. Mullen had spied De'Ette, and rushing over to her, took her by both hands. "Have you seen my latest article?" No; De'Ette hadn't seen it.

"Well, mankind doesn't need to be lame any more now. Do you know how much extra work that one affliction, sore corns, has put upon the race? Why, Miss Block, there is enough extra force expended by gentlemen in cursing their corns to run all the mills in New England. Now, we propose to do away with so much swearing."

Mr. Steele nudged Mr. Block significantly, and Mr. Block passed the nudge on to his daughter.

"We must get off here," said De'Ette.

"Come to my lecture to-morrow afternoon. Here are some tickets for all your friends;" and she handed De'Ette a large bundle of cards.

"Dear, dear!" De'Ette remarked, "she must suppose my circle of acquaintances with sore feet is very large. I will give them to you, Mr. Netherland, and you can distribute the tickets among your numerous clients."

"I am afraid you have an exaggerated idea of the number of my clients. I am blessed with just three now; and they are all swallowing patent medicine, taking electricity, having their eyes fitted to glasses, and their ears to artificial ear-drums — not by my advice, however. Boston has more healthy sick people in it than any place I ever visited," continued Robert.

"You lead Mr. Netherland, Miss De'Ette," said Mr. Steele. "You are young and strong."

They walked along the busy street, De'Ette's arm drawn through Robert's. Her voice aroused the same desire to see her face which was so strong the night he first heard her speak; and then her face, as he saw it in the magnetic sleep, flashed vividly upon his mind.

"Here is our door," she said; "won't you come in?"

"Do go in," urged Mr. Steele, winking at Mr. Block; "I am tired of walking, and I want to take a car home." Mr. Block reiterated De'Ette's invitation, and Robert found himself in De'Ette's snug, cosey little home. Frieda was playing on the piano as they entered.

"What a beautiful touch that girl has!" Robert said to De'Ette.

"She is a beautiful girl. I wish you could see her."

The introduction over, Frieda and De'Ette sat down near him, while Robert mentally compared the characters of the two girls as their voices revealed them to him. He was hardly conscious of doing so. It was one of those involuntary acts to which the mind is given; and because it was involuntary, its impression was the more lasting. That Miss Graham's voice was rich and warm, and that she was possibly the stronger physically, while Miss Block's was silvery and spirituelle, with every tone of it filled with strong purpose, were some of his rapidly reached conclusions.

"You play with a great deal of expression," said Robert. "Most young ladies are content if they acquire some execution; but the idea of playing with expression does not seem to occur to them."

"Do you play, Mr. Netherland?" Frieda asked.

"I could once; but it has been years since I have touched a piano."

"I am studying music too," De'Ette said. "But I prefer the violin. I wish I could learn it without practising. It is so tedious to run the scales for hours at a time. Some of the dismal notes I produced when I began reminded me of the winds I used to hear out West on the prairies."

"Then, you are from the West?" asked Robert.

"Yes; I lived in the West until within a few years," De'Ette answered.

"You speak more like a Southern girl; and yet your voice has more purpose in it than is usually heard in the voices of most Southern girls."

"I am a Southern girl, sir; be careful!" said Frieda, laughing.

"Can you tell anything about us by our voices?" asked Mr. Block.

"Yes," said Robert; "the voice is an infallible index of the character. You can tell more about a person by the voice than in any other way."

"Well, then, what kind of a man am I?" said Mr. Block, his curiosity being aroused.

"Why, really," Robert said, "it would be very unkind of me, even rude, to sit up here and coolly dissect your character in your own house."

"Oh, do, please!" said De'Ette. "Tell father what sort of a man he is. We all want to know. I have lived with him this long time; and while I know him to be a good man, I don't believe I know all his goodness yet." Robert consented with reluctance, and said, —

"I hear in your voice tones of self-repression and suffering, which indicate to me that the best side of your nature has not been given full scope. The type of voice of which yours is an example is often heard among the over-worked American business men. It has in it a ring of fatigue."

"You are wonderfully correct," said Mr. Block.

"One thing more, please," said Robert. "You lack power to express your finest feelings and purest and best thoughts."

"You have told me as I know myself," acknowledged Mr. Block; "but I could not have expressed it so well. But what are my faults?"

"Now, please, papa, he has told you enough about yourself. I want to know about myself," said De'Ette. Robert blushed.

"I am afraid I cannot judge you without prejudice," he answered.

"Why, what have I done to prejudice you against me?"

"Pardon me, but my prejudice runs in the opposite direction," said Robert.

"Please lay aside your prejudice for the time, whichever way it may tend, and tell me candidly what you hear in my voice," De'Ette insisted.

"Your voice is musical, and so sweet that it would seem impossible that an earthly nature could possess so much beauty as it reveals!"

"Now, Mr. Netherland, please don't flatter me," she said quietly.

"Then, please don't ask me to read your voice," replied Robert.

"Yes; but I do," she said.

"I assure you that I have never heard such a speaking voice; and I have made voices a life-study. My ears are my eyes. All that is beautiful in the human soul I have learned through sound; all that is bad I have learned, but try to forget. But if you insist upon my analyzing my impressions of you, I will give them in detail; and will you do me one favor? Will you credit what I say, and at least believe me honest in my reading of your voice?"

"Certainly," said De'Ette. "I can have no reason for believing you otherwise."

"In your voice can be heard the capacity for great self-sacrifice and intense devotion. You are proud, without being arrogant. The voice indicates one of a very loyal and constant nature. You are at present a child principally of emotions; the intellect still slumbers; it has never been thoroughly aroused. Your voice shows that you are happy, but the happiness is that of girlhood. You will find your greatest pleasure in intellectual pursuits."

"Now, Mr. Netherland, you are very wrong in that," she said. "I like music, and I like to read poetry, and I like pictures, but I don't like study; and, do you know, I can't get interested in any of these questions that the ladies are all talking about. I have no fad. I feel quite singular without one. Now Frieda, my friend here, is enthusiastic over Wagner; my friend

Miss Cracylight spends all her time dreaming about the future costumes of the race; Mr. Learney talks evolution; Dr. Sneakleaf talks about odoriferopathy. One person talks theology, another talks metaphysics; woman suffrage finds warm advocates among my acquaintances; the rights of the Indians receive their share of recognition, at least from the ladies. Everybody has some hobby, the riding of which will be an imaginary benefit to mankind. And, do you know, I can't find a fad among any of them — now, you tell me that I have a strong intellect. It is too funny," she said, and laughed merrily.

Robert wished he could tell her something else to make her laugh. It was a ripple of murmuring merriment, as sweet and liquid as the song of a bird.

"I am not going to ask you to tell me about myself," said Frieda. "I know enough about myself already. I am trying to learn about other people. I think you are entirely right about De'Ette, however. The girl does not know her own capabilities."

"Mr. Netherland, have a cup of tea with us this evening, just in the family party," said De'Ette.

"I am afraid I am intruding," answered Robert, "or at least presuming on a very slight acquaintance."

"That is the way to strengthen the acquaintance," said Mr. Block. "'Take a meal with a man, and you will be his enemy or his friend for life,' we used to say out West."

CHAPTER XXXVII

"ARE THESE TWO PEOPLE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE NATURES WHICH THEY HAVE?"

ROBERT had completed the preparations for his journey to Philadelphia, on which Mr. Steele's clerk was to accompany him. Just as he was about to close his office for the evening, the postman brought him a letter, which an acquaintance in an adjoining office kindly read for him.

SMITHVILLE, N.Y.

MY DEAR MR. NETHERLAND, —

I hope by this time you are ready to be gathered into the flock. We need you here very much. You have been elected Assistant Professor of Ancient History, with a salary of fifteen hundred dollars a year, while the tutoring you ought to get will bring you some five or six hundred more.

Will you come? I cannot give you up as lost. There is a great work for you to do. Put aside those false notions of religion, which, in spite of my good care, have poisoned your mind. Come back, and perhaps the influences which you will be under here will prepare your mind so that you may see the truth.

Yours devotedly,

MATTHEW HEAD.

"Well," said Robert, "Professor Netherland, if you please. Well, Doctor, I will consider your proposition."

"Do you think you shall go?" asked the gentleman who had read the letter. "I have been interested in you, Mr. Netherland; and I am pretty sure you have made a mistake in choosing the law for your profession. I do not see how it is possible for you to earn more than your daily bread. This is a good opportunity. I am a stranger, but I advise you after twenty years' experience with the law."

"I thank you for your good wishes," said Robert, "and I shall certainly consider the offer."

"Mr. Netherland," called some one as he went into the corridor.

"Oh, how do you do, Mr. Schneip?"

"Can you give me a few minutes? I will walk home with you afterwards."

Robert opened his office door again, and they sat down.

"Mr. Steele is going to send you to Philadelphia," said Schneip. "You are going to see my wife. Tell her for me to come back. Tell her the little home awaits her, and that her child cries for her. Say to her that her husband's yearning arms long to clasp her again to his breast; that his bruised and torn spirit is longing to welcome her back, and find the sweetest joy it has ever known in freely forgiving her. Mr. Netherland, it is not a selfish motive that prompts me to do this. I want to do right; I want to follow that principle of right which will stand through all the changes which are to come in man's condition. Man's relations must alter, but I hope there is somewhere an absolute standard of right. All things are not relative. There must be an Infinite Intelligence somewhere, it seems to me. Such a wonderful system of laws, which has developed so marvellous a world, surely has back of it a perfect divinity. I do not know where it is, I do not know what it is; but I do not want to believe that men are good simply because it is better for them to be so than to be bad. I want to feel, deep down in my heart, that all things will be for the best some day."

"I hope so," answered Robert. "I will do all I can to persuade your wife to come back to you; but if I fail, do not let it wreck your newly found ideal of right."

"I cannot help it," said Schneip. "This woman must be saved. If she is lost, then there is no absolute standard of right in the world, because an absolute standard of right will not admit of the total loss of one soul. Tell her I have money, and that I can buy her a good home. We will go away to the West. Her sin will not follow her there; for we are simple people, and few know us. Tell her that, besides the money, I will give her all the best efforts of my life. Perhaps that will be the least of the inducements you can offer to her. You take my heart with you as you go."

"I will do my best," Robert answered, taking him by the hand.

"That is one of the few things that I am absolutely sure of," said Schneip. "If you fail, I know it will not be your fault. If you fail, please remember when you learn of the wreck of my life, that you are the only man in whom I will believe through the remainder of its fearfully sad years."

"I thank you for your confidence," said Robert. "I hope I may fulfil your expectations."

They were walking quietly along, when Schneip looked up. He saw a dark face, which smiled. "There is that devil again," he muttered in German. Robert answered him in the same language, saying, —

"Why, whom do you mean?"

"Oh, you speak German, then? It is the man who struck my friend."

"Bless us! Why, hello!" said a voice, as they were walking up Washington Street. "There is Mr. Netherland!"

"Why, Buey Guzzard, how in the world did you ever get here?"

"Well, I will tell you about it," he answered. "I have been looking for you these three hours," he added, when the German had left them.

"Come home with me," said Robert. "I am going to Philadelphia in the morning. Your voice has matured a great deal."

"I have changed a great deal," said Buey.

After they had had supper, and sat down for a smoke, Buey related the occurrences which had befallen him since they last met.

"You know I went to India as a missionary, and a stifling hot place I found it. Well, I taught school, and I preached and exhorted and prayed, until I fell sick of a fever. It was a mean fever too. It turned my head, and then the Devil got the best of me for the time; imps haunted me by night and by day; fire poured out of their ears, and out of their noses, and out of their mouths, and they breathed it into my face, and my skin would burn; and as their hot breath struck me, I, like the rich man, called to Lazarus in Abraham's bosom for a drop of water with which to cool my parched tongue.

"As I began to get better, I noticed a dark face bending over me a great deal, and dark hands bathed my brow with cool water. This drove the devils away; but they left in their stead a young woman, as brown as she could be. She could not speak a word to me, and I could not say much to her; but I got well, and I was ready to begin preaching again. I wanted to save the soul of the girl who had saved my body. She was a strange creature, but she was affectionate too.

"Well, the upshot of it all was that I married her. Such a stir as it made! The other missionaries would not speak to me; and in time I got a letter saying that I had married a heathen, and I was not wanted to preach any longer, and there would not be any more money for me. The letter also said that another man would take my place. I did not care. I guessed I could preach and live somehow. But I could not make any money in India, and I had to eat, even in that hot climate; so I wrote home to dad for some, and said I would come home, and bring my little wife with me. Dad wrote back that he guessed not; he would not have any heathens in his house. He said that no son of his could ever marry a black woman and then bring her home. Well, she died; and dad sent me some money to come home with. And when I got home, I was tried by the church assembly. Dr. Head presided over it, and I tell you he gave me a scorcher after the assembly had voted to expel me. Nobody in the village would speak to me; and I was pretty forlorn, now, I can tell you. 'The Devil did get him,' my mother would say, and cry. 'I do not care,' little Sally would say, 'I love him;' and she would climb upon my knee, and kiss me. While I was wondering what I should do, little Sally took sick and had the doctor, who said she would not live.

"'Let's pray for her,' said father. Dr. Head came and prayed; and while he was praying by her bedside, I knelt and said, 'Father, if I have done wrong, take me, and leave this little rosebud. I am wilted, Lord; but your little rosebud will bloom. You know better than I do, Father. Thy will be done.' It was done; Sally went home to bloom in a better land.

"My heart was broken. I told dad I would go somewhere, I did not care where; and then I went to New York and worked in a store, and now I have come to Boston and I am clerking in a hotel. Now, Mr. Netherland" —

"Call me Robert, please," he interrupted, taking Buey's hand.

"Well, then, Robert, do you think I have committed the unpardonable sin? When I married the heathen woman I thought she would become a Christian. She said she would, but she kept worshipping her idols all the same. The Devil has got me down now; but I intend to rise, for I did not mean to do anybody any wrong."

"No," said Robert, "I do not think you have committed the unpardonable sin, whatever that may be; and when I come back I will see what I can do for you. I have an idea; why can't you read my law-books to me? I will pay you what I can afford."

"Well," Buey replied, "I guess if I could read the books at school I can read law-books. I must go now. Good-night."

"Be brave," said Robert. "Perhaps something better may yet come to you."

In pursuance of his promise to Mr. Steele, Robert reached Philadelphia, and after a comfortable night in the hotel, was waiting in the hotel office. He had breakfasted, and had been shaved. "How I wish I could shave myself," he thought impatiently.

"Oh! this is Mr. Netherland," said some one approaching. The sound of the voice repelled and disgusted Robert.

"I am Lorenzo Steele, don't you know; and can't we go to some place where these beastly people will not hear us?"

"Come to my room," Robert replied.

"I do not like Philadelphia," said Lorenzo, as he spread himself out in a chair. "I suppose there is a beastly amount of talk about me in Boston, and I'd like to fix it up, don't you know; but the girl sticks to me so deuced tight. It is awfully annoying. I can't even so much as look at any other woman without her scolding and berating me. And she eats sauerkraut and onions, and the house smells of them all the time; vulgar, horrid things they are. Now, Mr. Netherland, can't you persuade her to go back and live with her husband? I am dreadfully sorry I made such a nasty mess, but I will not play with fire and get burnt again. I only meant to have an innocent flirtation with the girl; but you see a man never knows where a thing is going to end when he starts in."

"I should like to see Mrs. Schneip," said Robert. "If she has any sense, she certainly will go back."

"Now, that is just the trouble," answered Lorenzo. "She hasn't a particle of sense. Her talk is horribly plain. Oh, I tell you, she does stick deuced tight to me. I go out for a little walk, and the first thing I know there she is, right behind me; and I do not know anybody here, and I do not know whom to speak to, and I don't suppose people would want to speak to me if I did."

Robert felt no sympathy for the young man. He asked him if he did not think it was as hard for those whom he had disgraced as it was for himself.

"Oh, you know, they will all forget it by and by," he said. "Why, I'll get married after a while and settle down, or go to Europe or something of the kind, don't you know."

"I think, if you marry, somewhere in Europe will be the best place for you to settle," said Robert.

"Well, now come around and see the girl. I think you had better walk around with me now, don't you know."

"I think we had better ride," said Robert. "Have a carriage called, please."

"I suppose my father will pay all expenses; I haven't any money. Mother sends me a hundred dollars a month — a mere pittance, don't you know."

They drove to a suburb of the city, and entered a small house.

"We hire the up-stairs part of it; there is a family down-stairs, and they make a beastly amount of noise," Lorenzo volunteered as they entered his apartments. Mrs. Schneip was evidently expecting them. Her manner was shy and reticent, but her voice was determined.

"I know what you have come for," she said with decision. "I will not go back home. I will not go back to that man. I don't love him."

"Did you ever love him?" asked Robert.

"I think I did," she said; "but he is homely, and he does not care for anything but his business."

"I wish I knew a business," chimed in Lorenzo. "I don't know what I really do know. Everything bores me."

"I think you had better leave me alone with Mrs. Schneip," Robert answered.

The woman threw her arms around Lorenzo's neck, kissing him in a passion of tears. "You will not run away and leave me?" she said. "You will not desert me? I love you so."

"Please do not make a scene here," he said. "Mr. Netherland won't understand it, and it is really very awkward;" and somewhat forcibly disengaging himself from her embrace, he left the room.

Robert had heard enough of the woman's voice to form a pretty good estimate of her character. Though he knew that she had a shallow nature, he had hoped that he could appeal to her through her maternal instinct; but as soon as he heard her speak, that hope was gone.

"Do you know to what you are tending?" he began.

"I do not understand your words," she said. It then occurred to Robert that he must use only the simplest language, if he was to accomplish anything.

"Mrs. Schneip," he said again, "Mr. Steele will not support you; he does not love you. He is growing tired of you. When he is gone, you will have nothing but absolute depravity to look forward to."

"What is that?" she asked. "What is 'absolute depravity'?" Robert had struck an obstacle again. He must talk very plainly.

"Madam, you will have to sell your person for daily bread," he said. "Disease and death will be all you will have to look forward to. Now, go home; go back to the husband that is ready to forgive you, before it is too late. Let me write to him to-day that you will come, or better, let me write to him to come for you."

"But I do not love him."

"Do you love Mr. Steele?"

"Yes."

"How can you love him?"

"He is such a nice-looking man. He looks just like a girl," she answered.

"Does he treat you kindly?"

"No; because I think he cares for some other woman."

"And still you cling to him. Why, woman, he will throw you off like a dog one of these days, and leave you to starve in the streets."

An atom of remaining sense told her that Mr. Netherland was right. She bit her lip, and began to cry.

"I can't go back; I can't leave Lorenzo," she said, with stolid persistence in one idea.

"Do you know that your husband has money now?"

"Well, then, why don't he give me some?"

"Are you utterly devoid of moral sense?"

"What is that?" she asked pettishly.

"Would you let a man you have wronged give you money?"

"I don't know why he should not, if he has got more than he wants."

"Do you think you have deserved it of him?"

"I was good to him. I kept house and cooked; and when I loved Mr. Steele, I ran away and left him."

"And your child; have you no love for it?"

"I'd like to see it some day," she said, though without much feeling.

"Had you not better go back to it, then? Have you no love in your heart for the little one? You know it needs a mother's care."

"I cannot help it. I will not leave Lorenzo."

"Well, then, if he leaves you, what shall you do?"

"I will hunt for him," she said.

"Well, suppose you cannot find him?"

"Well, then I will go back to Johannes."

"Is it possible that you could bring yourself to go back and live with a man you do not love, for the sake of your clothes and food, after the one who had wronged you refused to have anything more to do with you?"

"Why, I couldn't help it," she said.

"By the time you are compelled to go back it will be too late."

"What a nature!" thought Robert in despair, as he left the house and re-entered the carriage with Lorenzo.

"Well, did you make any impression on her?" Lorenzo asked.

"A rather bad one, if anything," Robert answered. "She will not leave you."

"Well, then, I suppose I must leave her," said the young man.

"What a whine is in his voice!" was Robert's comment to himself.

"It is beastly, and I cannot stand it, don't you know," continued the heir to the fortunes of the house of Steele.

"Why did you not think of that when you ran away with her?"

"For Heaven's sake, don't preach to me, Mr. Netherland. I have thought enough of it already."

Robert was in his room making preparations to return to Boston.

"Are these two people responsible for the natures which they have?" he said to himself. "Is their sin the result of their own wilful misdoing? Perhaps they are morally blind. I cannot help my physical blindness. Do they feel in such matters as I do? If they do not, whose fault is it? What is the cause of such moral depravity? It would be as well to tempt me to steal some beautiful painting as to persuade that woman back to her lost virtue. A picture has no charm for my sightless eyes, and rectitude presents to her darkened nature no beauteous images of maternal love and loyal wifehood.

"Society must find some other way of dealing with these diseased beings. They may not be responsible for their condition, but science and religion have both failed to reach this class. They must be protected from themselves, and society must be protected from their evil doings. But how? I suppose there are degrees of moral blindness. With one the sense of right is absolutely lost; with another its brightness is simply bedimmed; while in some it glows, but its light is dull and uncertain."

CHAPTER XXXVIII

"MY STAR OF HOPE HAS SET FOREVER"

The lawyer was not at all pleased with his work in Philadelphia. As soon as he reached Boston, he went to Mr. Steele's office.

"Well, I know by your face that you are disappointed," said Mr. Steele. "But I am not. I have done my duty now towards these people. You have seen the woman, and I know just as well what she said to you as though I had been there to hear it."

"I hope," said Robert, "that, even with your knowledge of human nature, you will be surprised when I tell you all that she said."

"Now, young man, I want to be surprised. I have not been surprised in ten years. Just relate the circumstances that will surprise me, and omit the rest, please."

"The one thing," said Robert, "that surprised me beyond all measure was the cool way in which she said she would go back to Schneip, rather than beg or starve, should your son desert her."

"And that surprised you?" exclaimed Mr. Steele contemptuously. "Where have you obtained your ideas of humanity? From books, I dare say, from books. Well, sir, I have seen that thing done hundreds of times."

Robert thought that Mr. Steele had not much more moral sense than those with whom he had been laboring.

He went to his own office. He was not having much law practice, but he was learning a good many facts. He found a note from Mr. Paracus, requesting an appointment for an interview.

Soon Schneip came in. "I suppose it is of no use," he said.

"No," said Robert; "she refuses to come back."

"Utterly refuses?" inquired the husband.

"Yes," Robert said; "utterly refuses, so long as the man she is with stays with her. She said that she would return to you rather than starve."

Although Robert could not see it, Schneip's face was transformed. He seized a chair by the back, and gripped it so hard that the sharp edge cut deep into his fingers. His face was set; his eyes wore an expression difficult of description. It was anger, but not passion. It was hatred mingled with determination. He spoke in an entirely changed voice too.

"Mr. Netherland, I thank you for what you have done. My star of hope has set forever. All faith is dead within me. You will hear before long of an anarchist. People say of anarchists that you have only to give them money to cure them of their anarchistic principles. I have money, but it has not cured me."

"Mr. Schneip, sit down," Robert said rather sternly, but kindly. "I feel for you in your affliction. This is a critical time in your life. You have been terribly wronged, and you are not to blame for what you could not know. But listen to me a few minutes, and let me give you an answer now to the questions you put to me some days ago. I argued with you then, and said your wife might have a side to her nature which you did not know, hence you had not fulfilled all the wishes of her life. Let me change that opinion, and give you another. Your wife lacked certain elements which constitute the ideal, true woman. Could you have known that lack before you were married, you would have been saved all this suffering. It was not your fault that you did not know it. It was due to no lack in you, but to the imperfection of all human knowledge. If you had studied the human voice as I have studied it, I believe some of this might have been saved you. There are bad voices, which reveal bad characters. There are musical, sweet voices whose tones are nevertheless hideous. Such a voice came forth, and revealed to me your wife's deformed moral nature. Now, there are good people, and there is an absolute standard of right. I told you the other day that good and bad were relative terms. So are right and wrong, in a sense; but that is right which enables one man to do right because his best moral sense teaches him to. There may be an Infinite Being who is the personification of all right. All nature changes eternally. The dewdrop which glistens beneath the morning sun may have once been a component part of a brain which was pregnant with the germs of the destinies of nations. It may again yield oxygen to a being yet to come who will show us that which we do not now know. One thing is certain, — no good can come of blindly directed brute force. As long as there are misguided men and women, as long as our methods of education are at fault, so long will misery and sorrow and disappointment go hand in hand over the land. Blind force, murder, and robbery will not remedy the existing ills. Bear your sufferings like a man; do your best, again I implore you; but do not be drawn into identifying yourself with a class of people who, though many of them be honest, are either misled by unscrupulous leaders, or, what is more dangerous still, unreasonable fanatical notions of social reform. There are doubtless good men among the anarchists. There are others among them who would have wronged you as much as Mr. Steele has done. Work and wait."

Schneip's reason had been subdued by his passion. He said very coldly, "That sounds well; but I no longer believe in a standard of absolute right. Those are the phrases with which the poor have been deluded. I will have no more of them. Good-morning."

CHAPTER XXXIX

AGAIN LOVE BRINGS LIGHT

"Am I to see De'Ette to-night?" said Robert as he was dressing to go to Dr. Sneakleaf's house to dinner. "I wonder if I look well? I do not know how I look anyway, but I do know that De'Ette is beautiful." He stood before the mirror, and put his hands on the glass, and said to himself, "I wish I could look into this. How strange that it can reflect one's image! What a wonderful thing sight must be!"

Dr. Sneakleaf's residence was an imposing structure; for the doctor had made a fortune in medicine, and had spent a goodly portion of it upon his house. Upon his arrival Robert was greeted warmly by Mrs. Sneakleaf.

"I want you to become one of my boys," she said. "I take a deep interest in young men who have no homes. I hope I may be able, in some way, to help you, but I do not know just how. You must spend a great many lonely hours. How do you occupy yourself when you are not working?"

"Thinking," Robert answered concisely.

"Have you made many acquaintances in the city?" Robert answered that he had not made many desirable ones.

"I will help you to make some; I know so many delightful young people." Robert felt instinctively that there were few young people who would understand him.

"Now, there is Miss De'Ette Block and her friend Miss Frieda Graham; they are two of the sweetest girls I know. Both are refined, so frank and pure, and as natural as a spring morning."

"I know them slightly, and I quite agree with you, Mrs. Sneakleaf."

Professor Vandière was the next guest to arrive. "Oh, here is my friend," he said as he came in, taking Robert warmly by the hand. "I am going to write up my experience with you for one of the journals of psychology."

Then De'Ette, Mr. Block, Aunt Mercy, and Frieda arrived, and Rev. Mr. Learney came soon after. Robert knew his voice, for he had heard him preach a number of times. Then Mr. Steele and his wife, and Mr. and Mrs. Gilbraith were next announced, and when Mr. Sampson and his wife came the little party was complete.

Of all the company, excepting De'Ette, Mr. Sampson's voice interested Robert most. "You are from the West, are you not, Mr. Sampson?"

The little man was pleased, and answered, "Yes; but how did you know?"

"I can tell a Western man every time I hear his voice."

"How about the Western women?"

"I recognize their accent even more easily."

"Does the voice of a Western person differ so much from those of the East and South?"

"Yes, very much. The voices of the Western women, while not always sweet, are usually natural; and they are freer from affectation, as a rule, than are the voices of the ladies in this part of the country."

"Why, they make fun of me for pronouncing my r's so strongly," he said.

"They make fun of me," said Frieda, "for calling a mouth-organ a French harp; and when I called a tin pail a bucket, they laughed at me as though I had made a terrible blunder."

"You have a typical Southern voice," said Robert.

"Now, please," said Frieda, "I don't want you to read my voice."

"Well, young man," said Dr. Sneakleaf, "tell me all you know about my voice."

Robert had quite a task before him. The doctor's voice had in it a good many qualities, the mention of some of which would be decidedly unpleasant in such a company. "I will tell you my impression of you," said Robert, "if you will allow me to reserve part of it."

"Tell it all," cried Mrs. Sneakleaf enthusiastically.

"You have a persuasive voice, capable of great modulation and inflection. The tones are ringing. It has a dreamy sound at times, yet it is lacking in warmth. I should expect to find the possessor of such a voice a star-gazer, one who looked at life through rose-colored spectacles. But I know you to be a practical man."

"You do not know anything of the kind," said Mrs. Sneakleaf merrily.

"Well, in a certain sense, I am practical," said the doctor.

"You are practical," said Mr. Steele, "if making money can be regarded as an evidence of it."

"If I may judge of the doctor's voice, he is fond of the unusual, and at the same time a great believer in the miraculous. Yours is a strange nature, Dr. Sneakleaf. While in certain ways anything which is mysterious charms you, when it comes to applying it to your own life, I doubt if you would have much confidence in it."

"Well, yes, I think I should," said the doctor; "but it would depend upon what it was."

Dinner was announced just here, and the subject was dropped for the time.

After they had returned to the drawing-room, Miss Graham played the piano; but Robert paid more attention to De'Ette's voice than he did to the music. Good fortune at last brought her beside him. The guests were looking at some pictures in a large album; and De'Ette, with unfailing thoughtfulness, realizing that Robert could not participate in this pleasure, came over, and sat down near him.

"Do you get much time for reading, Mr. Netherland?"

"I get time enough, but I have little opportunity," he answered.

"I wish you would come around to our house just as often as you can. We read nearly every evening, and should be so glad to have you one of our party.

It is mostly light reading, but none of it is trashy. Everybody is talking about Browning, so we tried something of his the other night; but we have not been in Boston long enough to become sufficiently cultured to fully appreciate him."

"I am not familiar with his writings. I rather prefer philosophical and scientific books."

"Oh, perhaps you like Emerson, then," she said.

"No; I cannot say that I do. I do not understand him, and I am frank enough to admit it."

"I am glad to hear you say so," De'Ette answered. "I suppose women are not expected to understand Emerson. I like the historical novels of Scott; but Miss Cracylight says it will not do to express that sentiment, because Scott is now considered old-fashioned."

"Now, shall we try our experiment again?" impatiently interrupted the professor (who had been waiting some time), "and see if Mr. Netherland can get a look at these beautiful surroundings through the young lady's eyes?"

"There are two things I should like to see, if we do try," said Robert; "I want to see myself in the mirror, and I want to see Miss Block."

De'Ette blushed, not so much at what he said, as at the enthusiasm which his every tone betrayed.

"It will not trouble you so much this time. Sit down," said the professor. De'Ette sat beside Robert, and again the magnet was produced. Again the strange sensation came over him. Then the beautiful drawing-room was admitted, as if by magic, to his consciousness.

"Keep very quiet now. Do not become agitated," Professor Vandière commanded.

"There is a mirror," said De'Ette. "Look!"

Robert looked at himself, and was struck by the vacancy of his eyes when comparing them with De'Ette's expressive ones. De'Ette saw the shade of pain on his face, and noticed the difference in the expression of their eyes. Tears started in her own, but she controlled herself with an effort.

"There," she said, "is a beautiful picture; look at it." Robert was lost for a moment in its beauty. Then he looked again at De'Ette. Her features seemed to stamp themselves upon his very being.

"Hold tight to my hand," he said. "I have never known perfect joy until now."

Mr. Steele watched them with an interested but somewhat pained expression on his face. "I wish he could look through my eyes again," he suggested.

"No," said Professor Vandière; "there is something very strange in the effect you had upon him. Let's not repeat the experiment to-night."

"It is a beautiful world I have lost," Robert murmured.

"Drink in the little you can through my eyes now," tenderly whispered De'Ette. "Look again at the moon, and perhaps you can see the ocean in the distance."

"It looks like a sky on earth, but fainter than the blue one that I see."

"Look at Frieda," De'Ette said. "She is beautiful."

The wonderful experiment produced a strange effect on the guests.

"His face has more happiness in it than any face I ever saw," said Mr. Steele.

"Do you see with your eyes, Mr. Netherland?" asked the professor.

"No; I perceive these things in my consciousness. Light and color become part of my being, but I do not perceive them with my eyes."

"Close your eyes, and yours too, Miss Block," the professor commanded. He placed the magnet upon her eyes, and then upon Robert's.

"Open your eyes." De'Ette shrieked. Those eyes, vacant a moment ago, were now filled with expression. Robert looked at her with his *eyes*.

"Oh, I see now with my eyes!" he said. "Everything is much clearer than before. Beautiful! Beautiful!" he exclaimed.

"Look at Dr. Sneakleaf's face," the professor commanded. Robert tried to turn his eyes towards the doctor, but could not.

"Look, Miss Block, he cannot see unless you do." Her eyes sought the doctor's face.

"He does not resemble the man whose voice I heard," said Robert.

"Look once more at yourself in the glass. Tell us how you look." Robert realized that his eyes were now full of expression.

"I cannot tell you," he said. "I have no language with which to express my impressions of what I see."

"Try," said De'Ette softly to him.

"It is growing dark," Robert said.

"Wake up," commanded the professor, tapping him on the head with the magnet.

"It has gone again," said Robert; "but in the memory of what I have seen to-night I have been repaid for all that I have lost."

"Explain this thing," said Mr. Steele. "It is beyond my comprehension. How is it possible for this man to see through another's eyes, and what did he mean when he saw me in a dark hall that night?"

"That I do not know," answered Professor Vandière. "You know, or you may have heard, that there is a school of philosophy which, after years of research, has reached the conclusion that there is an essence, a fluid, possibly an ether, which vibrates, and by the vibrations thought is produced. Now, these vibrations are set in motion by the chemical disintegration of some of the cells of the brain. When these vibrations are directed by a magnet, the images perceived by one brain are, by the vibrations of this subtle ether, reflected upon the brain of the other, who may be put in sympathy with the first one who has been magnetized. When these vibrations act upon the second of the two, the same kind of chemical changes takes place in the same cells of the brain which started in the first brain. Thus it is that the blind man can see through the young lady's eyes."

"Oh, that does not explain the effect I produced upon him," said Mr. Steele. "I had no such horrible thing in mind as he described."

"Possibly," the professor said; "when he had hold of your hand, Mr. Steele, he may, by some unknown magnetic agency, have received the thought vibrations of some person or persons far remote from this place."

"It sounds pretty," said Mr. Steele; "but it is certainly hard to believe."

"All things are hard to believe until we have experienced them," answered Dr. Sneakleaf. "Nature's subtlest, finest forces are ignored because they cannot be measured out, put into boxes and barrels, and sold by the pound."

"Men cannot believe that which seems unreasonable," said Mr. Steele. "I have seen the facts, but the source of them is beyond my comprehension."

"I tell you," responded Dr. Sneakleaf, "nature's forces must be in a high state of subdivision. A spoonful of water is innocent enough, but suddenly convert it into superheated steam, and it has power enough to produce a violent explosion."

"Provided it is sufficiently confined," added the professor. "The unseen forces, one might almost say the unknown forces, are the important things to study at the present time."

Robert was dreaming. He was not conscious of the fact that he had kept hold of De'Ette's hand. She was conscious of it, and, blushing, tried several times to release it.

"I should like to have one more glimpse of the world." The professor put his lips close down to Robert's ear.

"You will get it, I promise you. This evening you have been happy, but there is a happier time coming. When that day is at hand, come to me, and through the eyes of your future bride, I will let you see the world."

"Whispering in company is not polite," remarked Mr. Steele mischievously. Robert's face was scarlet.

"What has that naughty professor been saying to you?" asked Mrs. Sneakleaf. "Here," she added, "are some shells I brought with me from Europe."

Robert was glad to have something to divert the attention of the company from himself; and fell asleep that night wondering if De'Ette was to be his future bride, and when he might get another glimpse of the world through her eyes.

CHAPTER XL

"THERE IS LAW FOR THE OPPRESSOR, THERE IS NONE FOR THE OPPRESSED"

Never had there been such universal commotion in Boston as was caused by the failure of the N.M.C.A. & O.R.R. The papers contained notices of suicides because of it; everywhere were rumors of failure. Those who had money in the savings-banks rushed to get it out. Securities of all kinds were rapidly declining. Men tried to borrow money on copper mines, on iron mines, and silver mines. All were studying how to reduce their living expenses. Mr. Steele, however, was not numbered among the unfortunate.

"I have saved myself," he said. "I knew that road was running too many parallel lines. Took on too much, and I did not like the methods of its directors," he mused behind his newspaper.

Suddenly Mrs. Manson came into his office, exclaiming as soon as she saw him, "O Mr Steele, Mr. Steele, I am ruined!"

"Why, I told you to bring your securities to me, Mrs. Manson, and I would see what could be done with them."

"Yes, I know; but I was so foolish, I was so foolish! I put nearly all the money I had into the stock of the N.M.C.A. & O.R.R. It will be worth something again, won't it, Mr. Steele?"

"For your sake, I certainly hope so," he answered.

"Oh, what terrible times! How will the country get out of it?" she said, weeping copiously.

"Oh, the country is all right," said Mr. Steele. "The trouble is, you have got to learn when to quit if you are going to speculate. You ladies never know how to stop gracefully."

"Oh, if I had only sold out sooner, Mr. Steele, I should have made ten thousand dollars."

"Now, as you did not, how much have you lost?"

"I have only my house and the shares of stock left."

"How much money did you have in the stock?"

"More than thirty thousand dollars. Now, Mr. Steele, I cannot borrow a cent of money on it. I have my house, and that is all; and there is a mortgage of ten thousand dollars on it at six per cent."

"And what is your house assessed for?" Mr. Steele inquired.

"For twenty-five thousand dollars."

"Well, then you can place a second mortgage on it, you know."

"Yes; but what shall I do? I cannot pay the interest on the first one. Mr. Steele, won't you take up the mortgage?"

"Well, if you cannot pay the interest to some one else, how can you pay it to me?"

Ignoring his question, she said, "You have been a good friend to me, Mr. Steele; won't you help me out of this? My son is just about to graduate from Harvard, and he is terribly in debt. He owes nearly four thousand dollars."

"I can sympathize with you on that score, madam. My son knew how to spend money, and knew but little else."

"Oh, my boy is a good boy," Mrs. Manson said. "I do not know what I shall do, for the creditors are threatening to seize his diploma."

"That will bring a big price," Mr. Steele remarked ironically. "They could not cash it for the price of the sheepskin on which it is printed. I will tell you what I will do, madam; I will send my agent to look over your house. If I can, I will advance some money on it, and take up your mortgage."

"Oh, thank you, I knew you would help me," she said, clasping both his hands affectionately.

After she had gone, Mr. Steele mused, and said aloud, "Ladies cannot understand business. Now, she is a handsome woman, but I am afraid the railroad stock's gone up."

One of Mr. Steele's clerks now came in, and said that the agent had let some of the basement rooms in his building on Washington Street.

"Oh, he did; whom did he let them to?"

"To a very disagreeable, dark-looking man, whose name I did not get then, but will hand it to you to-night. They are going to make corn medicine down there. This dark man smiled and smiled, all the time I was looking at him. There was an Italian with him, and two other hard-looking customers; I do not know their nationality."

"Well, tell the agent to look out and get the rent. We can't always have gentlemen for tenants, you know, and some of the toughest customers pay the best."

Schneip walked down the street. He had purchased some nitric acid, glycerine, and various other chemicals, buying each at different places. They were all sent to some basement rooms on Washington Street. Large tin vats were sent there also; and when Schneip reached the building the dark man was arranging the chemicals, which had already arrived, upon a number of rough shelves which were nailed upon the walls. As he entered the doorway, Schneip held in one hand a small gas-stove, and in the other a package of rubber tubing. He fitted one end of the tube to one of the gas-burners, and the other end to the gas-stove. There were many new tin cans on the floor. The dark man was working with a small piece of machinery which looked very much like the movement of an old clock. The Italian, Saracci, was sharpening a knife. Two or three others were putting bottles on the shelves.

"This is a fine-looking medicine shop," remarked the Italian.

"Hold your tongue!" said the dark man sternly; but he still smiled.

"Handle that big bottle carefully, Manandez," said Schneip. "That is nitric acid; and if it should fly in your face, it would put out your eyes."

Manandez looked scared, and put the bottle down very carefully.

"I am pretty hungry," said Saracci.

"Go and get something to eat," Schneip said, handing him some money.

"Thank you," said Saracci obsequiously.

Some more packages arrived. "I will handle these myself," Schneip said, as he lifted them. "They would explode if they were dropped."

Manandez shivered as Schneip arranged them in place.

"They will want some of these in Chicago. When can we have them ready?" Manandez asked.

"That depends. If we are not suspected by the police, I can have some ready next week."

"I will go and have a drink," said Manandez. "Won't you have one?" Schneip declined.

As he watched them go out he said to himself, "Not one of these men has any principle in what he is doing. They are only tools. But I must use such instruments as I can get. I will do what I can to free the world. I do not believe the poor will ever be enslaved again if they can only get their liberty now, but these fools shall never learn how to make the explosive. I don't like the work; neither do I like the work that has been done to my home. So the Sugar Refining Alkaloid has failed. Of course it failed. These fellows did not care anything about the value of the chemical; it was to make money out of it; that is all they cared for."

When Manandez returned, Schneip said to him, "This place must not be left alone. You remain here, and I will go and get some dinner. I shall not be gone away more than three-quarters of an hour probably."

Schneip turned down a side street, and was just going down the steps leading to a basement restaurant, when his friend Gilbraith saw him.

"Why, Schneip, I have been looking for you ever so long," he called. "Where in the world have you been all this time?"

"Wandering about," said Schneip, "looking for the thing that no man can find."

"Is your brain getting turned?" Gilbraith asked sternly. "You have not been near the laboratory for six months."

"I am not likely to go near it for another six. I am tired of work."

"You who loved to work so hard?"

"Yes; I am tired of it. I have slaved all my life, and I am living on my money now," he said. Gilbraith did not like the expression of his face.

"Come with me," he pleaded, "and walk a little distance, for I want to talk with you. Schneip, do not go to the bad. I have always been fond of you, ever since I first met you in Chicago. I have sympathy for your sorrow. Do try and lift yourself out of this morbid state."

"When I sleep my eternal sleep," Schneip answered; "when I shall have ceased to exist; when my misery is swallowed up in the great abyss of eternal nothingness — then I shall be free from the depression which haunts me. You know when I was a boy I got blows and kicks until I ran away. Having never known pleasure, I found work agreeable. Then came love and marriage and my best effort. You know the rest, Mr. Gilbraith."

"But you are young. The fact that one woman is bad is no reason for thinking all women bad."

"The women are simply what they are made by the conditions around them," said Schneip. "They will continue to be just what they are so long as there is a premium upon vice. See here, this is a Christian land. Its Congress has just passed a law appropriating hundreds of millions of dollars to go as pensions to the old soldiers."

"You do not object to that, I hope?" said Gilbraith.

"No, I am glad to have them get it; but why does it not pass another law, and pension all the young mothers whose husbands have died and left them to rear and support their children? There is but one way they can do this, unless they work like slaves and get a mere pittance for their labor. They must sell themselves."

"Are you not taking a rather extreme view of it?" Mr. Gilbraith said.

"No, sir, I am not," said Schneip. "Suppose a man dies when he's thirty-two years old, leaving a wife and three children. He has been a mason or a carpenter, or shovelled dirt on the streets. The wages for such work will barely support them. After he is dead, all that the woman who would marry one of these men could do to earn a living would be to scrub and wash and iron, and possibly sew."

"Somebody must scrub and wash and iron," answered Gilbraith.

"Yes; but while she is scrubbing and washing and ironing, her children become criminals. They go to the Reform School, and then to the State Prison. Some, perhaps, are hanged. They are the most fortunate."

"Why, dear me," said Mr. Gilbraith; "where have you been learning this sort of stuff?"

"Where I have learned everything else. I have seen it, and I have heard it. Why does not your country pension the young widowed mothers of the respectable laboring-class, and give them a chance to rear their children, and protect them from the pernicious influences which are everywhere afloat? Your government will pay for fleets and armies to commit legal murder; but if I shoot the man who has blighted my life, I may expect the prison, and to feel the hangman's rope. I cannot see the right of it, Mr. Gilbraith. I do not want to work."

"You could see the right of it, if you would place yourself in a healthier mental atmosphere," said his friend. "Come down to the laboratory and try it in the morning. I think the old place will look inviting to you. You will feel better, old boy."

He took both Schneip's hands, and looked earnestly into his eyes, and added, "Schneip, you are slow, but there is lots of good in you. Come back and work by my side once more, and I will see if I cannot do something to make your idle hours much brighter."

"What reason have you to do anything for me?" asked Schneip. "I must suffer, and that is all."

"But what about your child? Where is it?"

"Oh, I have taken care of it."

"What have you done with the money that you got for your stock?"

"Locked it up in the Safety Security vaults. I am using a little of it," he added.

"To live upon?"

"Yes, to live upon."

"I hope you are not drinking any, Schneip. A man can gain nothing by trying to drown his sorrows in drink."

"You taught me that lesson some time ago, Mr. Gilbraith. I learned it; and I thank you for your pains."

"I say, Schneip, if anything should happen to you, I suppose you know that your money, or at least a part of it, would go to your wife?"

"It shall never go to her," said Schneip vehemently. "I will burn it first."

"Then why don't you make a will, and leave it to your child?"

"I will do that; but what if the child dies?"

"Then it will go to Mrs. Schneip."

"Can I not leave it to some one else in case the child dies?"

"You will have to see a lawyer about that," said Mr. Gilbraith; "I do not know."

"If there is a good man in the world, you are that man, and I thank you for your advice," said Schneip. "I will go and see a lawyer right away. Good-by."

"Schneip, get some fresh clothes," Mr. Gilbraith said; "you look slovenly."

"All right; perhaps I will look better when you see me again," he said as he walked off.

After he had gone a short distance, his attention was attracted by a face he saw in a store, and, stopping, he looked in.

"I thought that was my wife," he said to himself; "but it is not. Only a fancied resemblance, that is all. Still, I am not sure. No, my wife was not so stout as that. She could never have grown so fat."

The woman within, whom he was observing, was asking for work.

"She looks like a German," he said, as he studied her closely. "I guess not, though," he concluded; and walking away briskly was soon at Robert Netherland's office.

"Mr. Netherland, I have come for more advice," he said abruptly, as he entered. "I think you can help me this time."

"Ah, Mr. Schneip, I have not heard of you for some time. Please sit down. Where have you been keeping yourself?"

"Nowhere in particular," Schneip answered evasively. "I have come to ask you about making my will."

"To whom do you wish to leave your money?"

"To my child, Johannes; and if he dies before he is of age, to Mr. Henry Gilbraith."

"Very well; I will have a form drawn up for you, and you must have two witnesses."

"Cannot you get the witnesses, Mr. Netherland?"

"Oh, yes," said Robert; "I will ask two gentlemen to step into the office. Come in to-morrow noon and everything shall be ready."

"How I hate these legal forms," Schneip said as he left the room. "There is law for the oppressor, there is none for the oppressed. Forms and long phrases, that is all. Suppose he does make a will for me, somebody will break it, I presume."

CHAPTER XLI

"THEREFORE ALL THINGS WHATSOEVER YE WOULD
THAT MEN SHOULD DO TO YOU, DO YE
EVEN SO TO THEM"

As Mr. Gilbraith returned home from a hard day's work he was conscious of having a very heavy heart. He found his wife sitting in the parlor; she looked up languidly, and gave him an indifferent greeting.

"Father has been here," she said. "He is very angry. Lorenzo has deserted the woman he ran away with, and has gone to California, and from there he hopes to sail for the Sandwich Islands. He thinks he should like the climate."

"I think Honolulu would be a good place for him," said Mr. Gilbraith. "What is your father going to do about it?"

"Send him money, of course, but refuse to ever permit him to come back."

"Does not your mother wish to see him?"

"No; I think not," was the answer. "Mother says she is tired of everything. I was in that condition long ago."

"Don't you feel any better?" he said kindly, taking her hand.

"I never did feel better, and I never expect to," she said.

"Don't you think you will find life worth living when the little one comes? Don't you look forward to the time when you can find in the child the interest you failed to find in me?"

"Oh, children make such a noise," she said. "There will have to be a nurse-girl, and I suppose I shall have to be up half of my nights with the child until it is two years old. It will be a plaything for you, but I shall have all the care."

"No, my dear, you shall not. You forget that I am now able to hire all the service you may need."

"I suppose I must dress for dinner," Thankful said, ignoring his kindness.

Her long dark hair was loose, and her dark eyes were half hidden beneath their drooping lids. "Oh, I am too tired to move," she said.

Her husband extended his hand to her, saying tenderly, "There, darling, you will feel better when you get up."

She walked slowly out of the room. When she had gone, he said to himself, "Shall I be disappointed in my child too? Well, I must be patient with her, for she has never been taught to care for others," wondering the while how such a lesson could have been taught her.

"There are books which will teach chemistry and philosophy and medicine and law," he said; "but there is no book which will teach one to be thoughtful of others." He turned, and in doing so his elbow knocked a little book off the table near by. Stooping, he picked it up, and saw that it was the New Testament.

"Perhaps if I had read this more, I should have found the lesson;" and opening the book at random, he read the words: "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." "That contains it all," he said. "There is the lesson." He read and re-read the lines.

"By Jove, that is it!" he repeated, as he closed the book, and put it on the table. "Have I always done this? Have I left anything undone for Thankful?" In memory he reviewed his short married life as he leaned on the mantel before the fire. "'Do ye even so to them.' How have I done by my wife? I have studied her every wish, and I have faithfully tried even to anticipate her inclinations; for I love her. I wish I could bottle up some love, and analyze it with my chemicals. That feeling is more subtle than the most attenuated gas. Its component elements will not respond to any known test. Its reagents are not such solutions as I have in my laboratory. What is it? Why did I care for that girl, and why do I care for her? She understood me about as much as she did my profession. If she has ever appreciated my best motives, she has skilfully, very skilfully, concealed the fact. Do I love her for her intellect, or is it her moral beauty that charms me? Is there some indescribable quality about her face and form? No; it is a subtler charm, deeper than all these. I can find but little interest in anything she says. The servants trouble her; society wearies her. She does not like to go to see her mother; she does not like to be left alone. She does not like to have me about the house, it makes her feel as though she were being watched; and she scolds when I am away. Oh, how you startled me!" he finished; for his wife had come in stealthily, and was standing beside him.

"What were you saying, my love?" she said in a sarcastic tone. "I heard only part of it. To whom was that language directed, — some invisible spirit that you have been summoning by some magic chemical? And if it was a spirit, tell me if it will do your bidding, as the genii served Aladdin when summoned by the wonderful lamp?"

"The only spirits over which I have any influence," he said, "are my own morbid tendencies, and they are refractory enough sometimes."

"Perhaps you will turn from your meditations and come to your dinner."

He was conscious of thinking that he did not have much appetite. Thankful nibbled at everything until the dessert was reached; then she ate two plates of frozen pudding, two pieces of cake, and some nuts and raisins, then helped herself plentifully to confectionery.

"So much sweet food will make you fat," Mr. Gilbraith said.

"I wish I could get fat."

"I should rather see you get strong."

"I never shall be strong. What were you talking about when I surprised you before dinner?"

"I do not know what I was talking about, but I was thinking about love."

Thankful raised her eyebrows and looked amused.

"Well, what do you think about it?" she questioned.

"I was wondering whether love is a simple emotion, or whether it is a complex state comprised of several different feelings."

"And you have not had time to find out yet?" she asked.

"I have experienced love, and know it when I feel it, but I have never been able to analyze it."

"Do you ever expect to?"

"I shall try."

"Well, I should not think you would want to try to analyze it."

"Can you tell me why you loved me?" he asked her.

"How do you know I did?" she asked in turn, smiling pleasantly.

"Since I had nothing but myself, and you had everything, I suppose you did love me, or you would not have married me."

"Well, I will tell you," she said. "I had met a great many young men, and had a number of offers of marriage, but I liked you the best of any of them."

"Perhaps you will tell me why?"

"I cannot tell you why. I simply was attracted to you, and that's all I can say about it."

"Did you find it interesting to talk to me during our courtship?"

"Why, yes; as much so as I do now," she admitted. "But I do not care to think much about it; it tires me. I like to paint a little, I like to watch the people go by, and sometimes I like to read a little, and that is all."

"I am going over to your father's a little while," the husband said presently. "Will you come?"

"No, I think not; I was over to see mother to-day. I will lie down a while and read."

He found his father-in-law much agitated. He had never seen him in such a passion before. Mrs. Steele looked as though she had been crying. "I tell you I will not; I tell you I will not," Mr. Steele was saying as his son-in-law came into the room.

"What is the trouble, father?"

"Why, Lorenzo has gone to California, and he wants to go to the Sandwich Islands. I suppose he will marry a Sandwich Islander, and send a family of mulatto children home for me to take care of. I will put that boy where he will behave himself. I don't want him to ruin any more women," said Mr. Steele.

"Can't we talk it over quietly?" said Mr. Gilbraith. "One can never think clearly when one is angry. Now, Lorenzo is a living being, and not an inanimate thing. You must deal with his weaknesses as kindly as you can."

"Have I not dealt kindly with them?" said Mr. Steele. "I tried to give him a good education, but he would not take it. I tried to give him an interest in my business, but he would not even look after any of the houses. I sent him to Europe, but he acted so badly we had to bring him home. After I found that I could not make a man of him, I just let him have money to be lazy with; and then, for want of better amusement, he ran away with that German's wife, and then he gets tired of her, and leaves her, and now is writing to me, and wants money with which to go to the Sandwich Islands."

"A woman in the hall wants to see you, Mr. Steele," said a maid, interrupting the conversation.

"Oh, I wish I was not so stiff," Mr. Steele said, as he rose and limped into the hall, where he found a woman shivering with the cold.

"She is not so bad-looking," he thought, as his eyes took in her face and figure.

"What is it, my good woman?" he said.

"Are you Lorenzo's father?" Mr. Steele guessed at once the name of his visitor.

"Yes, madam," he said sternly.

"Where has he gone?"

"Where you cannot reach him. But I have a good mind to send you to him."

"Oh, I wish you would," she said eagerly.

"Well, I won't," Mr. Steele answered sharply.

"Then, where is my husband?"

"How in the devil do I know where your husband is? Prowling about the city somewhere probably, and keeping the scandal alive. Now, what do you want with me?"

"I have no money," she said.

"Well, that is none of my business. Now, see here, if you are up to any blackmailing, or if you think you can scare me into giving you money, you are terribly mistaken."

His last words were spoken in a very loud tone. Both Mr. Gilbraith and Mrs. Steele heard them. "Oh, what new trouble is coming?" said the latter.

"Henry, Henry," shouted Mr. Steele, "this woman here wants to find her husband. She says she hasn't any money." Mr. Gilbraith went out into the hall. The woman joyfully recognized him, and said, —

"You will help me, you will help me to find Johannes?"

"I saw him this afternoon. He has left his home, and I have not the slightest idea where he lives."

"I haven't a cent of money, not a cent."

"What is the right thing to do in the matter?" said Mr. Gilbraith to his irate father-in-law.

"The right thing to do is to throw her into the street," was the angry reply.

"The humane thing to do," said Mr. Gilbraith, "is to give her some money."

"Now, see here," Mr. Steele said to her, "if you come around here again, I will hand you over to the police. I gave you a chance; I paid for a man to go to Philadelphia to see you, and I tried to save you too. You were told what my son would do. Now he has gone; and the Devil can take care of you if he has any use for you, but don't come prowling around here again."

Mr. Gilbraith gave her his card and a five-dollar bill.

"Come to my laboratory to-morrow, and I will try and find your husband for you. This is on one condition, however; if he refuses to take you back, you must keep away entirely. Now, remember that."

"Yes, sir," said the woman meekly, and left the house.

"What advice should I give Schneip in this matter?" asked Mr. Gilbraith, after they had returned to the drawing-room.

"There are all kinds of fools in the world," said Mr. Steele; "but if there is a fool idiotic enough to take that woman back, I hope she will choke him."

"Ought I to try to bring about a reconciliation?"

"You ought to do whatever is best for our family," said Mr. Steele, "and that would be to get him out of Boston. If they both leave, together or singly, whole or in pieces, provided they go, and do not stir up more talk by their leaving, I do not care what becomes of them."

"There is an ethical side to the question," Mr. Gilbraith suggested.

"Now, I don't know anything about ethics," replied Mr. Steele, "any more than I do about geometry; but I do know that if that woman was my wife, I'd see her starve before I would give her a dollar."

"One would feel so," said Mr. Gilbraith; "but we must act according to the light that we have."

"Oh, yes," said Mr. Steele, "that sounds very pretty when you are reading the Bible or at church."

"Do you believe that the woman is wholly responsible for her vicious conduct?"

"Why, no, I think my son is partly responsible for it," said Mr. Steele; "but we cannot make a trade without two, and I assure you they are a sweet pair."

"Well, do you think your son is wholly responsible for *his* conduct?"

"Yes and no," said Mr. Steele. "He is a wishywashy kind of a thing; but he might have done a good deal better and then done bad enough, without getting into such a scrape as this."

"What are the motives that actuate such a man?"

"Why, don't you know," said Mr. Steele. "The fellow simply wanted to amuse himself, and did not count the cost."

"Has he no feeling for any one else, do you suppose?"

"Precious little."

"Well, is that your fault, or his mother's fault?"

"Why, his great-granddaddy was just such a man as he is, only he did not have so much chance."

"Why do you go so far back for your scapegoat?"

"Oh, he is dead; and I tell you dead people can carry big burdens and not feel them."

"Yes," said Mr. Gilbraith; "but I am talking seriously, father. Do you really think your grandfather was very much such a man as your son?"

"Yes, sir; he was a regular dandy, and got horsewhipped because he kissed the grocer's wife. He used to dress finer than anybody in his neighborhood. He talked like a woman, and was a regular nippy, Miss Nancycat sort of a man, like Lorenzo, confound him."

"Certain persons revert to the type of former generations," said Mr. Gilbraith.

"Well, then, I should think that Lorenzo reverted," said Mr. Steele; "but I wish he had reverted far enough back to be a chattering ape, and then I could have put him in a cage."

"Oh, don't!" said Mrs. Steele. Her sense of motherhood was outraged by her husband's coarse words. "For mercy's sake, don't. Our son is bad enough, I know; but, thank God, he is not a monstrosity."

Mr. Steele looked at his wife in expostulation.

"He is a moral monstrosity," he said; "and they are the worst kind. They do not have any label on them. If society could only know who these people are" —

"Oh, but he is your son," broke in Mrs. Steele. "Have you no parental feeling? Does not your pride tell you that you should hold your tongue?"

"My tongue is my own; but you asked me a question, and I will answer it. Yes; I have parental feeling. I am going to provide enough money for him to live upon, and that is all. As long as I have a dollar he shall never starve."

CHAPTER XLII

"I DEMAND A RESTITUTION FOR MY WRONGS BEFORE I WILL BELIEVE YOU ARE RIGHT"

Mr. Gilbraith had been reading and writing, but was now sitting idly by the fire in his study: His mind reverted to Schneip. "I cannot find Schneip," he said to himself, "though I have searched everywhere for him. If I should find him, ought I to advise him to take back his wife? I should curse the man who gave me such advice; but I do wish that I could find him."

He heard drops of rain beat against the window-pane. The wind sighed, then it moaned, and then it blew a gale.

Getting up, he stood by the fire, muttering, "I do not sleep well, and I feel depressed most of the time, as well as tired and blue when I get up in the morning. Quarter-past nine; I suppose Thankful has gone to bed. I will go up and see."

He met a servant in the hall, who told him, in response to his inquiry, that Mrs. Gilbraith was asleep on the lounge.

"Then I will not disturb her," he thought, and sat down by the fire again.

He looked at himself in the mirror, and found dark lines under his eyes.

"Well, old chap, you are looking careworn," he said to himself. "I do not like to think about it; but I am changed, I am sure I am changed. I do my best to please Thankful, yet she is not pleased. I cannot have ten minutes' conversation with her, without her saying something which makes me angry. I wonder if I am too easily piqued. Does my very presence irritate her? It seems to; and to please her seems impossible."

A servant here interrupted his meditations, and announced a caller.

"Schneip, old boy, I have been looking for you. I am glad to see you," said Mr. Gilbraith.

"I am glad to see you," said Schneip, with but little gladness expressed in his voice.

"Why, how you have changed in your looks!" said Mr. Gilbraith. "You must not be so slovenly in your dress, old fellow. I have been trying to find you. Where are you stopping now?"

"Nowhere in particular. I have come to tell you something, and shall not stay long. I have been to a lawyer to-day and had my will made, and have left my money to my child. In case the child dies, I want to leave what I have to you. I know you have money enough, and will have more than enough when your father-in-law dies. Would you take my money? If you do not want it, what shall I do with it?" And without waiting for a reply, Schneip went on to say, "I want to ask a favor of you too. When I am gone, will you keep an oversight of the little one, and see that he is properly cared for?"

"Why, Schneip," said Gilbraith, "you talk as though you were sick of a mortal illness. You are young and strong."

"Yes, I wish I were not so strong; but no matter about that now. Will you look after my child?"

"I will do what I can, certainly."

"One thing more," said Schneip. "The world will some day speak ill of me. Those whom I should like to help will curse me. Now, Mr. Gilbraith, I have served you faithfully, and would do so still if I could. Remember, that as a man loves his brother, I love you. I have lost my belief in right and wrong. The God I have worshipped was a myth. The standard of right I sought was a will-o'-the-wisp. I am a slave of my own passions and prejudices."

"You talk like a madman," said his friend sternly. "What are you going to try to do now? Schneip, do not turn your knowledge to harm. With whom are you associating?"

"With wretches like myself, whose lives have been wrecked by the cruelty and oppression of the rich."

"You mean fanatics who are too lazy to work," said Gilbraith; and continuing, "you had better find more suitable company."

"I sought it in your presence to-night."

"Tell me what you want to do?" inquired Gilbraith.

"I will tell you what I want to do. I want to destroy these accursed laws, and the men that make them. I would like to rid men of the notions which fetter their intellects. All had better be savages, and roam the face of the globe free, than to be bound by the cruel, inflexible bonds of senseless custom, a false, artificial civilization, and an accursed superstition called religion. If man could make another start, remembering his past experience, a different order of things could be developed."

"Or, rather, you mean," said Gilbraith, "there would be no order at all. The lame and the blind and the halt, who are now fathered by the state, would be left to starve."

"No," said Schneip; "I would rather trust men's good impulses than the state's grudging charity. I would have perfect freedom for men and women alike."

"And you would convert the world into a howling scene of murder," Gilbraith interposed.

"It could not be much worse than it is now."

"I tell you, Schneip, you are insane. It is true you do not know much history; but you must know that in all of the ages which have gone, the common people have never been so well off as they are at this present time. Can you think? or, has all power of reasoning left you? Now, I am tired of this nonsense; it is not a product of your own brain; it is the stuff you are hearing from a lot of lazy vagabonds. If you did not have a dollar, you know perfectly well that you could support yourself, and live comfortably. Every man can do this who will work."

"You are mistaken."

"I am not mistaken," replied Gilbraith angrily. "I have been patient with your nonsense long enough.

Patience would cease to be a virtue if I listened any longer to this stuff."

"I demand a restitution for my wrongs before I will believe you are right," Schneip replied.

"Your own madness prevents your obtaining that restitution," said Mr. Gilbraith. "Do you know that your wife is in the city, Schneip?"

"No."

"Do you know that the man with whom she ran away has deserted her?"

"I neither know nor wish to know anything about it."

"Then, you have no desire to take her back?"

"Never. She is free; I shall not trouble her. She can do as she pleases. I am free, and she shall not trouble me. I will do as I please."

"Then, that is your conclusion?"

"Yes."

"Whether it be wise or not is not for me to decide; you must settle that question for yourself. One thing is certain, however; you cannot do worse for yourself, Schneip, than to associate with those mentally diseased creatures from whom you are catching the contagion of fanaticism. Once more, have done with your folly."

"I cannot if it is in me. I must do what I believe to be the best, Mr. Gilbraith. I shall say 'good-by' forever. I am going away in a week or ten days. I shall go back to Chicago; and when I have done my work there, I expect to cross the Atlantic, and visit all the great capitals of Europe."

"I do not think you will see them all," said Mr. Gilbraith. "You will probably find an abiding-place in some one of their great prisons. Schneip, I am sorry to say this to you, but you seem bent upon your own ruin. I am almost tempted to have you arrested, and ask a medical examiner to test your sanity."

"I should probably prove that the examiners were insane," said Schneip. "Good-night. Farewell forever."

He held out his hand; and Mr. Gilbraith took it, and looked at it closely.

"Come here to the light, Schneip. What are these stains on your hand? You have not been at work in my laboratory. Schneip, that stain was made by nitric acid. If I did my duty by you to-night, I should have you locked up. That stain on your coat-sleeve is glycerine. I shall notify the police, and have you watched."

"You had better not," said the German, giving him an angry look.

"Why not? I certainly am not afraid of you," said Gilbraith, as Schneip hurriedly left the house.

CHAPTER XLIII

PROFESSOR VANDIÈRE'S MYSTERIOUS GIFT

Mr. Paracus proved a tedious but remunerative client, and recommended Robert to several gentlemen with very unusual ideas of the world and the universe generally. Thus it happened that, in a few months after his graduation, he found himself with seven or eight clients, and fortunately had been able to maintain himself without going into debt. He had just finished one of those tiresome interviews with Mr. Paracus, when an unexpected visitor came in.

"You are Mr. Netherland, I believe," said the newcomer. "I want to sell you a typewriter. I can fix the key-board so that you can learn it, and I'll teach you to use it myself. You can buy it on the instalment plan if you like, or you can rent it for two or three dollars a month."

Robert preferred to rent it.

"Very well," said the other; "I will send you one, and will come in later, and teach you how to use it."

Many evenings which would have been cheerless to the blind lawyer had been made bright by De'Ette's cordial hospitality. Some of these were spent in reading and discussion. A bond of sympathy had grown up between the young man and Mr. Block, and the lively interest De'Ette awakened had now quite developed into a strong passion of love, so it was with an anxious heart that Robert went along the street one clear cold winter's afternoon, on his way to keep an appointment with De'Ette.

Sleigh-bells jingled everywhere. "All Boston seems to be out-of-doors," said Robert as he walked along. "Everybody seems gay and happy; I wonder if I shall be happy when I leave De'Ette."

Soon he reached Mr. Block's house, and De'Ette sat beside him on the sofa. Frieda had conveniently gone out with Mr. Block for a walk, but was not conscious of being so accommodating.

"How shall I begin?" he thought. "How shall I tell the 'old, old story' which is so new to me?"

"You look pale," De'Ette said to him kindly.

"I am not surprised at my looks," said Robert, "for my future happiness depends upon the result of this interview. Miss Block, you once expressed a generous wish; you said you wished you could give me half of your sight. Now, that wish aroused all the selfishness within me; and I have come to-day to ask you, not only for half of your sight, but for the rest of your life, and to offer my poor life to you in return. I have considered well what I am doing. I love you."

"Then, you believe in love?"

"It is not a belief with me," he said. "The love I bear you is the largest and best part of my nature."

"Then, it will not die as the years go by?" she asked.

"No; it will grow with each experience of life. Let me tell you how I love you. I love your voice; I love the image of your face, which still remains in my memory as I saw it in the magnetic sleep the first night; but, above all, your spiritual nature, your soul, appeals to me;" and so saying, Robert took her in his arms, and her fresh, warm cheek lay against his.

"You shall have my life," she said presently. "That which is yours shall be mine, and we shall be one." Then she pressed her lips to his closed lids, and said slowly, "You shall see through my eyes forever."

"I have loved you, my darling," he said, "since I first heard your voice. I have found in the beauty of your nature the purpose which has made me endure. Utterly discouraged before I knew you, my faith in humanity was made whole by your goodness. Tired with life's struggle, I was glad to have lived simply to hear your voice."

"And I am glad to have lived," said De'Ette, "if my life can brighten the darkness of yours. I will gladly merge my experience in yours, and give to your consciousness as a reality the things which I have seen. You have said you loved me for my spiritual beauty, and I have loved your intellect. I, too, have detected the possibilities of kindness and goodness which your eyes could not reveal to me."

Then she nestled closer to him, while Robert said, "Ours is not a love of sense. Its strongest pleasure will be in perfect companionship. Your intuition will go beyond the limits of my intellect. When I am weak, you will be strong."

Their new happiness was soon rudely interrupted, for at this moment Professor Vandière was announced. Robert was embarrassed, and De'Ette blushed; for both felt that Professor Vandière knew their secret.

"I am going away," he said, "and have come to bring you a present. Take this, Miss Block; it is made of twelve rare metals. I have discovered that this combination of them develops, by their action upon each other, a new kind of galvanic force. Hold it in your hand a few moments, and the heat from it will warm the instrument, and thus start the chemical action. Then place it upon your lover's forehead, and he will see through your eyes. The sight will come only by glimpses. You must not use it too often, or it will prove injurious; but whenever you wish to show him something of great beauty, start, by the heat of your hand, the mysterious force within it, and for him a new world will be created; and when using it, think kindly of and bless the man who discovered it. When the edict went forth, 'Let there be light,' it was never meant that some should be deprived of it. When the sun first kissed a virgin world, free from sin and sorrow, those rays were never destined to be lost. All knowledge emanates from the divine perfect Intelligence. There are planes and planes of existence, as there are solar systems after solar systems. Each plane of existence has its own laws. They all have in common one universal law, and that law is love."

De'Ette's hand began to tingle as she held the magnet. She placed it upon Robert's forehead.

"Oh, is this daylight?" he cried.

"Look out of the window and see the glorious sun as it is setting," said Professor Vandière.

"I would that I never had to turn away from this vision of beauty," said Robert.

"Those clouds are orange color," said De'Ette.

"The ones above them are purple," said the professor.

"Now they shade into pink," said De'Ette.

"The sky above it is blue," said the professor.

"Look at the street," said De'Ette. "Watch the current of life as it flows along."

"I perceive objects in motion for the first time without touching or hearing them move," said Robert.

"This instrument," said the professor, "shall be yours until one of you passes on. Then the other must destroy it. It can never be used for any one else. That will do; sit down," he said to Robert.

Robert's head sank upon his hands. "Oh, how beautiful was the setting sun, with its flood of purple and gold and pink. Would that you and I, De'Ette, might dwell forever among those beautiful colors."

"You have seen only an infinitesimal part of the glory of the universe," said the professor. "The conception of the universe existed in the Eternal Mind before it became a reality. Now, your mind sprang from the Eternal Mind, and the Eternal Mind conceived all things as ideas before they found material expression in the visible world. Each spiritual being and each atom of matter has its counterpart in God's infinity, and existed as a separate thought always, before taking material shape. When the laws which bind you to the infinite are understood, your mind will comprehend, in a measure, the divine ideal of a perfect existence. Distance will be annihilated. The moon, now so far away, will be near to you, and even the most distant star will not be beyond your reach. Think of the sunlight, and its brightness will illumine your soul. Thus the finite will be dissolved in the infinite."

"That is a beautiful conception of the universe," said Robert.

"Hence, as the ultimate conception of all things seen, felt, and heard, originated at first in the spirit, by understanding and utilizing the subtle forces of the spirit, sight and hearing, touch and feeling, may be all realized without the intervention of a physical body with its avenues of sense," said the professor.

"There is a universal infinite Intelligence," he continued, "and the love, the pure, intellectual, spiritual love, which you two bear for each other, emanated from it, and will link you together for ever and ever. Farewell. I have sought all over the world for two such beings. I have never before found them. Cherish this instrument; to make it has been the effort of my life. Sightless one, you can now see, and seeing have knowledge, and with that knowledge work, and working, love. Adieu."

CHAPTER XLIV

"THEY WERE DOING HELL'S WORK DOWN THERE"

"WHAT a long walk you have had," said De'Ette, as her father and Frieda entered the door. Both blushed violently, and then Frieda's eyes met those of her friend. De'Ette blushed likewise.

Mr. Block looked serene. He was not so quick as the girls. It had never occurred to him that the blind lawyer might be in love with his daughter. In fact, so much absorbed was he in his own affairs, that it had never occurred to him that any one except himself could be in love with any one else.

The love of youth is passionate and intense. The love of middle age, when it is first awakened, is like a dreamy summer's morn, — grand, calm, and full of deep beauty.

"I should like to see you alone for a few moments," said Robert to Mr. Block.

"No, you cannot 'see him alone for a few moments,'" said De'Ette. "Father, Robert is going to ask you for my hand. Now, I intend to get ahead of him." It was Mr. Block's turn to change color this time.

Frieda said, "De'Ette, I am going to ask you for your papa's hand. He was going to do it for me; but I, too, thought I would get ahead of him."

Mr. Block, who had risen from his chair when Robert spoke, sat down. The girls kissed each other, while the gentlemen shook hands.

"By Jove! What was that?" Mr. Block said, jumping to his feet a moment after. The building trembled perceptibly. One of the window-panes cracked.

"Well, that must have been the shock of an earthquake," he said.

Mr. Gilbraith and Thankful had been out to take a sleigh-ride. Thankful complained of the cold, and was afraid of an accident on the Brighton Road. Mr. and Mrs. Steele had also gone to ride, and all had agreed to meet at the Adams House and have supper.

"It is a clear, bright afternoon," said Mr. Gilbraith to his wife. "It is very strange to me that nature can be exquisitely beautiful, and so wonderfully perfect, and yet man, the most wonderful of all her creations, falls short of ideal perfection."

"Quite pretty sentiments," said his wife. "I quite agree with you. Now, there are my teeth. I had to sit in the dentist's chair four days last week. (I do not see why my teeth cannot last as long as I do.)

Mr. Gilbraith liked to drive; and as the sleigh sped along merrily over the snow, they met a number of persons whom they recognized. Among them was Dr. Sneakleaf.

"I am glad to see you out, Mrs. Gilbraith," he said. "The air will do you good."

"I feel the cold terribly," complained Thankful.

"Yes, but that will make you tough. After all, the best medicine is fresh air. It seems to me I never saw the sky so blue," he added, as he drove on.

"It is getting late," said Mr. Gilbraith. "We must turn towards home. That is a glorious sunset!" he added, as they drove over the bridge. "Do you feel cold now?"

"No, indeed," she said. "I am beginning to enjoy it just as it is over."

"We beat you here," said Mr. Steele, when they reached the hotel. "I have been in and ordered a good supper, and I hope we may all enjoy it."

"How white you look to-night, mother," said Thankful, noticing Mrs. Steele's sad expression.

"Please do not comment on my looks. I have heard enough of it; it is always, 'How badly you look, mother.' No one says, 'How well you look;' and I have never heard any one say, 'How happy you look.'"

"There, you are tired, mother," Mr. Gilbraith said very kindly.

Johannes Schneip had been working hard all day. He had large tin vessels filled with a yellow, oily liquid. He seemed to handle this carelessly, but his companions kept at a respectful distance.

"It is hot down in this basement," said Manandez. "I wonder where Saracci is?"

"Oh, wandering about somewhere," said Schneip. He took down a vessel containing a substance which looked like earth, then mixed the oily-looking liquid with it, and put it into a can.

"There," he said, "we have enough of this for eight."

"I wish it were eighty, or eight hundred," said Manandez.

Schneip lit his pipe and sat down. "A man cannot see the sun set in here," he said.

"No; but we shall see the rich sink," answered Manandez.

Schneip had finished his pipe, and lit another.

"Do you suppose that Italian devil would betray us?" said Manandez.

"I can suppose anything or nothing," Schneip replied indifferently.

A woman inquired of the passers-by if they knew Johannes Schneip. She was on Washington Street, and carried a baby in her arms.

"I am starving," she said to a policeman. "I want to find my husband. I ran away and left him," she added. "To-day I discovered the child by accident; he had given it to a woman to bring up, and she let me take it a little while. I wanted to go and see him."

"Schneip?" said the officer. "I do not know any such person."

"Oh, how cold it is!" she said, shivering.

The dinner was over. Mr. Gilbraith and Thankful went out of the hotel first, and Mr. and Mrs. Steele took a carriage home.

"Would you like to go to a Sunday evening concert, darling?" said Mr. Gilbraith to his wife.

"No; I feel too restless."

By this time they had crossed Eliot Street. Suddenly Mr. Gilbraith felt himself hurled upward. The horses and cars, too, seemed to be in the air. He heard a low rumbling, then a crash, as of breaking glass. He fell heavily. "Where is my wife?" was his first thought, and looking up, saw her lying a few feet from him, by a pile of brick and mortar. People were shrieking and running, panic-stricken, in every direction.

"What has happened?" he said. "What can have happened?" and running to his wife, he lifted her in his arms. He noticed that she was insensible. People ran against and jostled him. Women screamed and men swore.

"The building is ruined," said a man. "Why, what in the world did it?"

"It is blown up," said another. In the neighboring buildings the window-glass was still crashing.

"Every one is mad," thought Mr. Gilbraith, as he staggered from the loss of blood, and tried to collect himself. The din was now heightened by the gongs of the fire-engines which were arriving. Mr. Gilbraith stepped on something soft, and heard a scream. He was carrying his unconscious wife with great difficulty. There before him lay a little old woman, writhing and shrieking and moaning, whose hand he had stepped on.

"I cannot find my way; I cannot collect myself," he said.

"Faith, sir, and I'll help you to collect yoursilf," said Officer McGonigal. "It's mesilf that's got blowed up wid yez." The officer, seeing that Mr. Gilbraith was hurt, offered to assist him to carry his wife back to the hotel.

Schneip, after finishing his pipe, began filling another can with the pasty-looking substance. Manandez was sealing one, when it suddenly slipped from his hand. He endeavored to catch it, but his foot slipped, and then —

Mrs. Schneip had found her way to the back entrance to the building. Through a chink between the curtain and the window she saw her husband at work down in the basement. She was descending the narrow flight of stairs, when —

All was commotion in the Adams House. Mrs. Gilbraith was still insensible. The wounded were being carried into stores, and everywhere where there was available shelter.

"Telephone for Dr. Sneakleaf," said Mr. Gilbraith, "and send word to my father, Mr. Steele."

Mad excitement seemed to possess everybody. As if by magic, thousands assembled on the streets. A large force of policemen were beating back the crowd with their clubs. The deep roar of the fire-engines added to the din. Finally sufficient space around the building was cleared and roped off to permit of the firemen working. Great streams of water were pouring upon the ruins; and the chief engineer, walking all around the wrecked building, said, "By Jove! that thing was blown up from the foundation; it has utterly collapsed."

"Help!" shrieked a voice from the ruins, "Help! Help!" and two sturdy firemen seized a woman by the arms, and dragged her from the *débris*.

"Why, how in the world did this happen?" said the chief engineer.

"I do not know. I was sitting in my room on the third floor," she said, "when there was a terrible shock, and I felt myself going down, and that's all I know about it."

"We must get a force of men at work on these ruins as soon as possible," said the chief engineer.

There were plenty of strong arms and stout hearts ready to help that night.

Dr. Sneakleaf was just taking off his overcoat when his telephone rang.

"Good heavens, yes!" he exclaimed, after putting the transmitter to his ear, and hastily hanging it up, jumped into his sleigh, and drove rapidly to the Adams House. There lay Thankful ghastly white.

"I had great difficulty in getting through the crowd," he said to Mr. Gilbraith. "What has happened?"

"I cannot make out," said Mr. Gilbraith. "All I know about it is the fact that we were walking along the street, when suddenly the cars, the houses, the teams, and ourselves were in the air. There was not a loud report; it was a low, rumbling noise."

"I am afraid it will prove a fearful shock to Mrs.

Gilbraith in her critical condition. I think I had better have a surgeon."

Mr. and Mrs. Steele found their daughter still unconscious. Mr. Steele appeared dazed.

"What has happened? How in the world did it occur?" No one knew.

"My poor girl," said Mrs. Steele, as she knelt by her bedside, weeping; "my poor girl," she murmured.

A surgeon soon arrived, and ordered stimulants for Mrs. Gilbraith, and examined Mr. Gilbraith's wounds, which were soon dressed; he was not seriously hurt. After the stimulants had had time to take effect, the surgeon began examining Mrs. Gilbraith carefully.

"Not a bone broken that I can discover; only a few trifling bruises on the body." As he spoke he held her wrist, feeling of her pulse. "One hundred and fifty to the minute," he said. "The heart is giving out. I am afraid there is an internal hemorrhage." Her respirations grew shallower each moment.

"She cannot live," said the surgeon. "It is not possible to save her. Some brandy," he added.

The respirations stopped; the pulse feebly fluttered, and was still.

A large force of men were at work upon the ruined building. A body was found presently, a woman's, with her lifeless arms still clasping her dead baby to her breast. Soon another body was found, mangled beyond identification; but a letter in the breast pocket of its coat bore the name, "Johannes Schneip." Then another body was dragged out. "What a horrible face!" said a fireman, as he gazed earnestly upon its distorted features. Such a smile—even in death he still smiled.

"They were doing hell's work down here," said an officer. "Here are fragments of tin cans and machinery." Another body was found.

"Faith, and bejabers, that's the druggist up-stairs," said McGonigal.

The excitement had spread all over Boston. Throngs were on the streets talking about the catastrophe.

Mr. Block and Robert terminated their pleasant evening by a walk down as close as possible to the scene of the disaster.

"Make way there!" said an officer. They were carrying a body on a stretcher.

"So it's Schneip," said Officer McGonigal.

"What name did you say, officer?" asked Mr. Block.

"Johannes Schneip."

"Why, a boy by that name once worked for me. His mother used to thrash him terribly, and he ran away one night."

"There has been a fearful accident here," said a bystander.

"Who is the owner of this building?" asked another.

"Mr. Steele," answered a policeman.

"You had better get out," said the officer to Mr. Block. "There is a big crowd here."

Mr. Block and Robert were returning home. "Oh, my! Oh, my! What is it, what is it?" said Miss Cracylight, running up to them wild with excitement. "What did it? What did it?" she repeated.

"There has been an explosion of some kind," said Mr. Block; "but we cannot learn much about it."

"Is it not *terrible?*" she said, wringing her hands; "poor Mrs. Gilbraith has been badly injured. They say she is dying at the hotel. Oh, it is too bad; it is too bad!"

"Why, how did Mrs. Gilbraith come to be near the building?" asked Robert.

"She had dined with her husband and father and mother at the Adams House. Mr. and Mrs. Steele went home, and Mr. and Mrs. Gilbraith were walking down the street when the explosion took place. They were blown a considerable distance. Mr. Gilbraith was hurt, but not much. Poor Mrs. Gilbraith is dying."

"Oh, I trust not so bad as that," said Mr. Block.

"Oh, yes, I am afraid she is," answered Miss Cracylight. "I met Dr. Sneakleaf. I had been down to a lecture at a hall on Bromfield Street. The meeting was broken up by the explosion, and I found Dr. Sneakleaf and a surgeon on the street. It is terrible; it is terrible," cried the little woman excitedly.

"It is certainly very sad," said Robert. "Johannes

Schneip, Johannes Schneip; I made a will for a man by that name a few days ago," he said to Mr. Block. Mr. Block was not a man to remember gossip.

"Good heavens! that is the man whose wife ran away with Lorenzo Steele. I think I should like to go home," said Robert.

"I will take you home," said Mr. Block.

Robert found Buey Guzzard waiting for him. "Did you notice the earthquake?" said Buey impressively. "The time is drawing near."

"The earthquake was caused by an explosion down town," Robert exclaimed impatiently.

Robert then related all he knew about the occurrence, and it made a profound impression on Buey Guzzard's simple nature. He declared that "Satan's artillery was bombarding the Lord's battlements."

CHAPTER XLV

THE "NEW WOMAN" AND THE REFORMED MISSIONARY

Miss Cracylight was walking down Washington Street the day following the explosion, with great difficulty, owing to the severity of a storm. The wind would mass its forces out at sea, and then charge upon the land with wild disorder; then, as if repulsed by some invisible enemy, it would retreat, only to come with renewed fury, shaking and rattling the windows as though it would tear them out. The streets were nearly empty. Only those who must be were out, and umbrellas were of little use. Buey Guzzard was approaching unperceived by Miss Cracylight; for she was looking sorrowfully at her umbrella, which had been turned wrong side out by the wind, when its point came rudely in contact with Buey's face.

"Beg your pardon," said Buey.

"I beg your pardon," said Miss Cracylight.

"Let me see your umbrella," said he; and taking it from her soon straightened it, which had hardly been done when the wind rushed madly around the corner and struck her again. She would have lost her footing had not the strong man's arms caught her.

"Oh, dear, what shall I do? I cannot walk up the the street."

"Take my arm," he said, "and I'll help you."

The wind came around the corner again, and both had to turn their heads in order to breathe.

"Why, it takes my breath!" she exclaimed in a muffled voice.

"It is a dreadfully hard storm; I should not have thought you would be out in such weather," said the gentleman.

"I am going to hear a lecture," she remarked.

"It must be an attractive one to call you out on such a morning."

"Oh, it is. Such a wonderful lecturer," she said. "I feel so sad, I want to divert my mind. One of my dearest friends was killed in the explosion last night."

"Indeed," said her companion; "how sad. But you know the time will soon come when the dead shall be raised."

"Oh, dear me, what a crude conception," said Miss Cracylight. "Why, sir, they are being raised all the time. Come with me this morning and hear the lecture. It is upon a very interesting subject."

"Pray, what is it?"

"It is upon the History of the Stars. The lecturer will tell us what has happened in the heavens during the last hundred and fifty thousand years."

"Indeed? I will go," said Buey.

Robert was dreaming of De'Ette and of the years of happiness which the future would bring them, and had forgotten the moaning wind outside, but instead was listening in fancy to her voice. His meditations were now interrupted by the entrance of Mr. Paracus.

"Good-morning, Mr. Netherland," he said. "The wind blew off my hat; and while running to catch it, I dropped my music-box in the mud, when I fell over a barrel of ashes. When I first started out I intended to buy my wedding-clothes. Have you got a spare hat anywhere you can lend me? And I knocked the cover off my music-box. Have you got a screwdriver about the office anywhere? I want to change a five-dollar bill" —

Robert, fearing other unreasonable demands. interrupted him, and told him he could change the bill, but that he did not have any spare hat or screwdriver, and added, "Did I understand that you were going to buy your wedding-clothes?"

"Yes, sir," said Mr. Paracus. "I'm going to be married again. You settled up my affairs so nicely for me that I thought I'd try it again. I am going to marry my first wife's uncle's second cousin, who invented the steam cut-off which wouldn't cut off, but would cut on so well that it brought him a lot of money. Now, sir, he died. and left a lot of money to the lady I am going to marry. She's got a niece who can't see very well, and has the toothache and the nooraligy in her head, which I rubbed away the other night, and wouldn't stay, and she says to me, 'John Paracus, you got more magnetism in your hands than anybody I ever saw, and I have sawn a good many,' says she. When I get married again, she's coming to live with us, she is, and I am goin' to" —

Robert's self-control quite forsook him, and he began to laugh.

"That's it; I knew you would be glad to hear it," said Mr. Paracus, mistaking the cause of Robert's merriment.

Robert, regaining his composure, said, "What can I do for you, Mr. Paracus?"

"I've come to do for you," said Mr. Paracus. "Now, as you got me off so easy on those other matters, I want you to just get me on as easily again. You see, I want my affairs all straightened out this time before I marry. Now, as about everybody I ever knew went and died some time or other, I thought my next wife may die too, so I want you to make her a will, and look over the deeds to some houses which she owns; then taste of these canned batter-cakes — I brought you one of the cans; it ain't been opened, so it's full."

"Who is to be the future Mrs. Paracus's heir?" Robert asked.

"Who? I, of course," said the future husband of the future Mrs. Paracus, with much emphasis. "An' if you make this will strong enough, I'll let you make one for the sick relative too."

"Leaving the money to the same individual, I suppose," Robert said.

"Now you just better guess," said Mr. Paracus. "I want you to come to the weddin', though."

They were interrupted by Buey Guzzard.

"Good-morning," said Mr. Paracus, "good-morning. I'll see you again soon," and departed.

"O Robert," Buey said, "I have heard such a lecture this morning. I have received another shock from the Spirit. My mind has been broadened, and I have just met such a beautiful woman!"

"Don't you think your shock might have been from seeing the lady, then, instead of from the Spirit?"

"Well, indirectly, I think so," said Buey. "She is such a splendid woman," he added. "She has the intellect of — well, I cannot find a proper comparison, but I should say that Daniel Webster might be fit to be compared with her."

"Who is this wonderful creature?" Robert laughingly asked.

"I have her card here."

"Well," said Robert, "I should at least like to know her name."

"Isabel Mabel Saunders Howard Cracylight."

"Let me feel the card," said Robert; "it must be quite a large one."

Buey slipped the piece of pasteboard into his hand. "It is about as large as a postal card," commented Robert.

"The card is none too large for such a soul, I assure you."

"I cannot understand why a large soul should need a large visiting-card," replied the lawyer.

"Well, I do," said Buey, "and that is enough. I tell you she has the most magnificent personality I ever knew. She is a walking encyclopædia."

"I have met the lady," said Robert, somewhat amused. "She certainly has an excellent command of language withal."

"Language!" said Buey. "Her words flow from her mouth in a perfect stream of wisdom. I never heard any one talk so in all my life. She has invited me to call upon her, and go to hear her lecture, and accompany her to hear a perfect host of celebrated men and women lecture."

"Why are you not at work?" asked Robert.

"Oh, I have had a disagreement with my employers. They were in the wrong, and I was in the right."

"Naturally, if they were wrong, you were right, if you disagreed."

"I was selling a lady some lace, and she was talking to another lady, and was advancing such horrible ideas that I had to correct her. She said" —

"Oh, never mind what she said," said Robert petulantly.

"Well, she went and reported me, and I was fired out."

"Fired out! Why don't you use better language? Now, you know that is not a good expression."

"I do not care what it is," said Buey. "That is just what happened. A big man came down to my counter, and he said, 'We do not want you here a minute longer; now go!' and I went."

"What is going to become of you?" asked Robert. "You are an honest fellow; but I want to teach you a lesson, and it is the last one I shall try to teach you. Now listen to a brief, homely illustration: I heard of a man out West who became rich, and he made his money by minding his own business. Do thou likewise."

"I do not care to be rich," said Buey. "I'd rather be good than rich."

"Good for what?" said Robert. "If you want to be regarded as a first-class crank, you are certainly succeeding in your ambition. You are a good boy, old fellow, but you are too impulsive."

"I suppose so," said Buey.

"How much money have you?"

"Oh, between thirteen and fourteen dollars. I must pay my room rent and board to-night, and that will take most of it."

"How do you expect to get work? These are hard times, and there are thousands of people out of employment."

"Oh, the Lord will provide for his own," said Buey.

"God helps those who help themselves," answered Robert.

"Yes; and I will help myself," said Buey. "I will go out and take a walk, then come round and take you home when it is time to close your office."

CHAPTER XLVI

"TWO BIRDS ONCE MORE FOUND A NEST"

Robert told Buey Guzzard one evening, after they had been reading, that he was to be married on the first day of March.

"Now, really," said Buey in great surprise, "I should say that you had had a very short courtation."

"Courtship, you mean."

"Why, yes; but I like courtation better."

"I do not think you can find such a word in the dictionary," said Robert.

"I don't care whether it is in the dictionary or not. People speak about flirtation, and I can't see why they should not talk of courtation."

Robert could not see the analogy, but he was too happy to dispute the matter with Buey. His law practice had grown beyond his expectations. True, he did not have very many large cases, but he was earning a very comfortable income.

Aunt Mercy was disgusted when she learned of the engagement. She declared that De'Ette was crazy; for she said any girl who would marry a blind man must be out of her mind, and she insisted that Mr.

Block ought to put his foot down on it. At first she would not speak to Robert; but when she had subdued her feelings sufficiently so that she could observe the ordinary courtesies, her tones, when she addressed the young man, were sarcastic beyond measure. De'Ette was fearless, and, while naturally not at all combative, was quick to resent any wrong inflicted upon her or hers.

It happened one afternoon, when Aunt Mercy had been delivering herself volubly upon De'Ette's folly, that her niece for the moment lost her temper, and told her aunt that her father would be obliged to take his choice between keeping house without Aunt Mercy, or keeping house without his daughter.

Mr. Block soon came home, and had no difficulty in deciding the case referred to him. He was fond of Robert Netherland, and admired the brave effort the young man had made throughout his life; and Aunt Mercy's nagging was becoming unbearable. He controlled himself, and listened patiently to what his sister and daughter had to say, then told his sister that if she could not treat Mr. Netherland as his future son-in-law deserved, he should request her to seek another abiding-place. Aunt Mercy wept, and said that she was always misunderstood, and that she never meant what people said she said; and so the matter was smoothed over.

De'Ette was becoming daily more practical, and feeling that her future husband was sadly needing her assistance, it was agreed that they should have a quiet little wedding. Now things are little relatively. Mr. Block thought that a little wedding would be a better wedding if it were double, and Frieda quite agreed with him. Thus it was arranged that on the first day of March the minister should make Robert Netherland and De'Ette Block one, and that John Block and Frieda Graham should on that day meet with a similar fate. The wedding was to be quiet. Robert wanted to invite his friend Buey Guzzard, and two or three others. De'Ette wanted Dr. and Mrs. Sneakleaf, Miss Cracylight, and a few student friends. The plans were soon made, and in due time the wedding-cards were sent out.

It was a cold, windy day, and in the afternoon of March first there was a double wedding in Mr. Block's cosey little parlor. De'Ette and Robert were to have a home for themselves, for Robert had saved a little money; and so two birds once more found a nest in the early springtime.

CHAPTER XLVII

RECOGNITIONS

"I SHALL arrange the house very simply," said De'Ette to her husband. "I wish to give you my best energies, and can do better with my strength than to waste it upon the details of housekeeping."

They had a neat, plain little home. Life's monotony was now changed. Life's routine had to go on the same, but there were loving eyes to do the work for Robert which had been done by uninterested ones.

It was planned that Robert should ride down to the office every day, and that his little wife should direct the servant, and finish up the work of the morning, and then follow him. The cases were growing harder, and the fees consequently were growing larger. The excitement of the explosion having somewhat subsided, the lawyer began to take the necessary legal steps to settle Johannes Schneip's will. As Mr. Gilbraith flatly refused to receive a dollar of the money, an advertisement was inserted to ascertain if there were any legal heirs to the property.

"I never heard the name," said Robert one day. "until I met Schneip."

"It seems there are many of them in the world," said De'Ette, "judging by the pile of letters we have received."

"How many are there?" asked Robert.

"Fifty-nine," replied his wife. "There are Schnoops and Schnopes and Schneps and Schnaps and Schneeps. All of these people bearing similiar euphonious names seem to hope that the name in the advertisement has been misspelled. There are letters from Colorado, and from California, and from Maine."

One of these letters caused them much surprise. It was signed, "John D. Lucketwell."

"Why, that is our old family physician," said De'Ette.

It read: —

CHICAGO, ILL., *April* 15, 18—.

ROBERT NETHERLAND,
Attorney-at-Law.

Dear Sir, — There is an old German woman, now a patient in a ward of an insane hospital in this city. Her intellect is not altogether gone. She says that she had a son named Johannes Schneip. They worked together on a farm at Winterdale. The owner of the farm was named Block.

"Can that be old Mrs. Schneip?" said De'Ette. "Why, it seems to me she must be at least a hundred and twenty years old. I never thought of her until this moment, but I should know her if I could see her."

"Well, as she is worth between forty and fifty thousand dollars, there would be little difficulty in your getting a glimpse of her."

Robert wrote to Dr. Lucketwell, or rather De'Ette wrote for him, and in the letter she told the doctor of her marriage.

"I have kind memories of you," she wrote, "but I did not know that you had gone to Chicago. My husband thinks that some one had better bring Mrs. Schneip to Boston, as I could identify her easily."

Robert could now afford to have two office rooms. De'Ette sat in one of these, and used her eyes for her blind husband. When clients called she took the notes, and when they had gone she read the references to him.

"I like to help you with your work," she said to her husband one day; "there is hope in it."

"A great deal of it is drudgery," Robert replied.

"No, my darling; nothing is drudgery which promises advancement."

De'Ette was concealing something from her husband. She realized that they needed a stenographer, and clearly saw that the modest income would not afford it. She began excusing herself in the afternoons earlier than had been her custom, and secretly took lessons in stenography; and when the clients were reciting the facts of their cases she at first took the notes slowly, speed came with practice, and one day she told Robert of her new accomplishment.

"I will take your notes now in shorthand," she said. "We shall not need a stenographer for some time."

"Why, do you mean that you have learned stenography, darling?" he said. "How could you find time, with all your other cares, to master its difficulties?"

"Love transforms difficulties into pleasures, and makes hardships veritable joys," replied De'Ette.

They would come home in the evening after the day's work was done, and sometimes read, sometimes find their amusement at the theatre, or occasionally a few friends would call. Thus Robert's evenings, formerly lonely, were now periods of rest and happiness to him. It was on one of these pleasant evenings that they had an unexpected visitor.

"Why, it's Dr. Lucketwell," said De'Ette, as he was admitted. "You look as natural and as young as you did years ago."

"I hope I am natural, but I feel a good many years older than I did when I last saw you. I have come to Boston to attend to two matters of business, one of which will interest you. My daughter came with me to see the city."

"What! Are you married and have a daughter?" asked De'Ette.

"Bless your heart, I've been married these twelve years," he answered.

"Well, let me congratulate you, although the congratulations are late; but tell us about Mrs. Schneip."

"We brought Mrs. Schneip with us, and there will be no trouble about identifying her."

"What will she do with the money?" asked De'Ette.

"Do with it?" said the doctor. "Why, nothing, of course. It is very strange to me that large fortunes so often fall to imbeciles, while thousands who could use them must remain poor."

"Yes; and there are hundreds of men who would add to the world's knowledge by developing their own usefulness, if they could have the money which is lying idle for the benefit only of fools," commented the young lawyer.

"But, Doctor, you have not told us about your marriage," interrupted De'Ette.

"I left Winterdale soon after you did, having received an appointment in Chicago as superintendent of a hospital; and there I fell in love with and married a sweet young lady."

"Well, I am glad you are married," said De'Ette; "you look a great deal happier. You used to look very stern as I remember you when I was a little girl, but now your face looks much milder."

"I have some other business besides seeing to Mrs. Schneip's money-affairs," broke in the doctor. "One of my nurses is in Boston. We called her Miss Eda. She, too, has fallen heir to considerable money, and I must find her. She has been a nurse, but came to Boston for the purpose of studying medicine; but her money gave out, and she had to go back to work, and now she is nursing somewhere. I have been able to prove beyond a doubt that her last name is Steele."

"Is it possible?" said Robert. "The girl is nursing at the present time in the house of Elisha Steele on Beacon Street. I had some business with Mr. Steele, and I met the young lady by accident."

"Well, she is worth over a hundred thousand dollars, and is ignorant of the fact. Her mother died in the hospital while Eda was nursing there; and on her death-bed she gave Eda a locket which contained a picture, but I do not remember that there was any name on it. Now, sometime ago an inquiry was made from the Brown Orphan Asylum, where it seems Miss Eda spent her early girlhood. Somebody in some way traced the fact that Eda had been left in the asylum, and was the daughter of John Benedict Steele. There is upon the public records in Chicago an account of the death by apoplexy of one John Benedict Steele, and there is a card which has been preserved which shows that this man was at one time at the Tremont House in Boston. Now, we wish to establish beyond a doubt that Eda, who has always borne the name of Brown, so named because she was in the Brown Orphan Asylum, is in reality Eda Steele."

CHAPTER XLVIII

"EDA BENEDICT STEELE"

Mrs. Steele was very ill. She was actively and passively delirious by turns for weeks and weeks following the catastrophe, during all of which Eda attended her closely, but did not see Mr. Gilbraith during the first ten days of her stay at the house.

One afternoon she met him in the hall, and their recognition was instantaneous.

"How in the world did you come to Boston?" asked Mr. Gilbraith.

"Why, I came to study medicine. I was working in the hospital, and Dr. Lucketwell thought I was fitted for something besides nursing."

"How fresh and young she looks in her white cap and apron, and what a beautiful face," he thought.

The invalid gradually improved, and reason resumed its sway.

"I am a broken woman," she kept murmuring, as she began to realize her serious condition.

"There is something the matter with Mrs. Steele's right hand," Eda said one night to Dr. Sneakleaf. "She does not use her thumb well."

The doctor took her hand between his. Then holding out both his hands, "Take hold," he said, "with your right and left hands, and squeeze with both at once just as hard as you can."

Mrs. Steele obeyed.

"The right hand is the weaker," said Doctor Sneakleaf.

"I think she has never been left-handed," said Eda.

The doctor then told Eda to roll up the sleeve of the patient's nightdress.

"Watch those muscles. See how they quiver. Oh, dear! that is too bad, too bad, poor woman," he said in a low tone.

He examined the ball of the thumb, and then felt of the hand, and compared it with the other one.

"What is the matter?" asked Eda.

"I will tell you later," said the doctor.

Mrs. Steele's eyes were closed. She opened them and said, "My grandmother had trouble with her hand before she died. First the right hand all withered, then the right arm, then the left hand, and the arm with it; then the rest of her muscles wasted away so she was helpless."

"That confirms it," said Dr. Sneakleaf. "Come here, Miss Eda."

They left the room together.

"It is progressive muscular atrophy," the doctor said. "It is incurable," he added.

"I do not know the meaning of the word you use," she answered.

"Atrophy means to shrink," said the doctor simply.

Eda returned to her charge, and the doctor went down-stairs to Mr. Steele.

He was reading his paper as usual. As the doctor entered the room he looked up, and said, "Well, how is she to-night?"

"I am sorry to tell you" — began the doctor.

"I don't doubt it, but tell me," said Mr. Steele, showing a little irritability.

"Your wife has progressive muscular atrophy."

"Please tell me the name of the disease in English, if it has one," said Mr. Steele.

"The disease consists in a shrinking of the muscles. It begins usually in the hands, and then the arms shrink. It may stop there, or it may go on until it leaves the sufferer a living, helpless skeleton."

"Her grandmother was just that way," said Mr. Steele. "I remember it very well."

"Then, your wife should never have married, as the disease is frequently hereditary."

"What is the cause of it?" asked Mr. Steele.

"I do not know," answered the doctor; "it is hereditary. Certain families present different types of the disease in different generations."

"You do not know the cause of it, then?" said Mr. Steele.

"No," said the doctor, "I do not."

"Then, how can you cure it?"

"I cannot cure it," the doctor replied sadly.

"And with all of your boasted knowledge you cannot arrest its progress. Is there not some odor among your many attenuated, vitalized medicines which will at least arrest this disease?"

Dr. Sneakleaf answered, "No."

"What would the regular school do for it?"

"Give electricity and one or two drugs."

"Well, then, why don't you try those?"

"I shall," answered the doctor; "but they will do no good."

"Dr. Sneakleaf," said Mr. Steele, "don't you think there is a good deal of moonshine about your medicines that you have your patients inhale?"

"Your meaning is not clear to me," said the doctor. "Certain diseases seem benefited by the inhalation of certain volatile substances."

"Do you believe you make any more cures than do those who practise regular medicine?"

"Perhaps so," said the doctor; "I cannot tell."

The door-bell rang, and a card was sent in. It bore the name, "Dr. Lucketwell."

"Another M.D. I wonder what he wants," said Mr. Steele.

"I am not familiar with the name," said Dr. Sneakneaf, after he had looked at the card.

"Good-evening. Pray excuse me for not rising," said Mr. Steele to Dr. Lucketwell as he came in; "my knees are stiff. Allow me to introduce you to Dr. Sneakleaf, my family physician."

Dr. Lucketwell frowned when he heard the name.

"I think I have seen a pamphlet of yours, sir," he said, "upon the unquestionable superiority of the odoriferopathic methods of treating disease."

"I wrote such a pamphlet," admitted Dr. Sneakleaf.

Dr. Lucketwell looked daggers at him.

"Take a seat, sir," said Mr. Steele, rather enjoying the situation.

Dr. Lucketwell studied Mr. Steele's face carefully, and said, "There is at the present time in your employ a nurse who gives her name as Eda Brown."

"Well?" Mr. Steele answered.

"Now, I wish to ascertain certain facts about her."

"Very well," said Mr. Steele, "that is easily done. Please push that button over there by your elbow, Dr. Sneakleaf."

A servant soon answered the bell.

"Send the nurse down," said Mr. Steele.

"Shure, and which one is it?"

"The day nurse; hurry."

A light footstep was heard, and then a glad scream.

"Dr. Lucketwell, what brought you here?"

"Your interest, plus my friendship for you," he said.

Eda blushed.

"Sit down here," he said, indicating a position near to Mr. Steele.

Mr. Steele looked interested.

"There," said the doctor, after he had compared their faces, "her face has all of your good points."

"And none of my bad ones?" was Mr. Steele's amused inquiry.

"That is exactly it. Eda, where is the locket the woman gave you who claimed to be your mother?"

"Tied with a cord around my neck," Eda answered.

"Take it off," said the doctor.

A little glistening object was produced. Dr. Lucketwell opened it, and handed it to Mr. Steele.

"That is he as sure as the world," said Mr. Steele.

"Well, who is 'he'?" sarcastically asked Dr. Lucketwell.

"Why, my brother, John Benedict Steele."

"That is your niece opposite you, then," said Dr. Lucketwell.

Mr. Steele changed color, and stammered, "This girl my niece?"

"Yes, sir," said the doctor; "she is your niece, and she is heir to considerably more than one hundred thousand dollars."

Eda turned pale.

"I? Dr. Lucketwell;" and her head sank upon her hands. "One hundred thousand dollars for a poor lone orphan girl! Why, it cannot be possible."

The tears were streaming down her cheeks. Dr. Sneakleaf was amazed.

"Are you my uncle?" she said to Mr. Steele.

"Well, really, not being quite sure," said Mr. Steele, "I hesitate to hazard an opinion upon the subject. It certainly looks just a little that way. I think I would rather have you for a niece than any girl I know."

"Thank you," said Eda quietly.

Mr. Gilbraith came into the room at this moment, and greeted his old physician with surprised pleasure.

Mr. Steele was musing.

"I have heard that my brother had a little girl," he said.

Dr. Lucketwell had the locket, and was playing with it. He accidentally touched a spring, and the picture fell out. There was a little miniature under it. It was a dainty picture of an infant's face. It was painted upon a thin piece of ivory. On the back of the picture was written, "Eda Benedict Steele."

"We will look this matter up," said Mr. Steele after he had looked at the second picture, as he felt his old heart warm towards his niece.

"I am practically childless," he thought; and as Lorenzo's face came before his mind, "I am worse than childless."

Robert and De'Ette had some new clients next day. De'Ette had been reading the morning paper to her husband when they were surprised by the entrance of Mr. Steele, Dr. Lucketwell, and Eda.

"Well, Mr. Netherland," Mr. Steele said, "I want a learned opinion, sir. Prepare to have your ingenuity taxed. You are to spend many a sleepless night over this. How can you prove that a girl you never saw, and never heard of, and never expected to hear of, is a man's niece?"

"Well, I should need more evidence than you are at present furnishing me to prove such a fact," Robert laughingly replied.

"Well, here is the girl; perhaps she will do for evidence; and here is your wife's friend, Dr. Lucketwell. He swears that the girl has my few good features, but none of all my bad ones."

Robert was amused.

"I think it will be a comparatively small matter to establish the young lady's identity. I will write to the Orphan Asylum, and take such other steps as I may deem necessary."

"Hurry up about it. If I have a niece, and as pretty a one as this young lady is, I want to know it. There ain't many more pleasures ahead for me, Mr. Netherland. You know I have got to die some day. Must do it. Am awful sorry, but can't help it, don't you see. Now, you see, in spite of all our troubles this is a good world to live in. A good dinner gives a man much joy, and a pretty girl's face is pretty even to a half-blind old man like me. I like to hear the birds, too, and go over to the club and spend the evening, and I can drive a smart bargain yet, I tell you. Look the matter up, Mr. Netherland; look the matter up."

The facts were all laid before Robert in order, while his little wife took them down. The necessary letters were written, and in due time it was proved that Eda Brown was in reality Eda Steele.

The merry spring proved another thing too. Mr. Gilbraith found himself at first admiring Eda's beauty, then a warm feeling sprang up in his heart. The days went by. The weeks followed the days, and the months followed the weeks. Robert and De'Ette were doing well.

"Why, you are almost as smart a lawyer as your husband," said a client one day, after De'Ette had given him some information.

"How you have changed!" said Aunt Mercy.

What was the change? The pure, innocent girl was budding into sweeter, nobler womanhood. She was learning many things. She found her joy in the growth of her husband's business. She revelled in his love and happiness. His society and his conversation, and her society and her sweet thoughts, constituted a perfect union.

One afternoon they were walking on the Common, when the green of the summer had taken the place of the winter's snow.

"There is Miss Cracylight," said De'Ette, "and Buey Guzzard is with her. I wouldn't be surprised if they were engaged," she said as they approached.

Miss Cracylight ran forward, and threw her arms around De'Ette's neck, and kissed her.

"Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes!" she exclaimed. "We are; indeed we are. I assure you we are; indeed we are, darling."

Buey looked as though he wished the ground would open and swallow him.

"Why, I am so bashful," he said; "I should like to drop through to China."

"Let me congratulate you," said Robert.

"Oh, we are, we are, we are; indeed we are," said Miss Cracylight.

Robert had not a doubt of it.

"He has been elected secretary of the Humanitarian Reform Society," continued Buey's *fiancée*. "You know everybody in that society differs in opinion with everybody else; but I assure you, Mr. Netherland, we are going to make the world over. Why, in the year ten thousand there will be no misery in the world, and everybody will be so sweet that butter will not melt in their mouths."

Robert thought that might not be a very desirable condition of affairs, since melted butter will pass the palate easier than when it is lumpy.

"Oh, but we are, De'Ette, we are; we are going to be just as you are, and that soon. Dear Guzzard will have an opportunity to disport himself on the beach of knowledge, and bathe in the waters of the ocean of eternal truth."

"How glorious!" said Buey.

"Why, do you know," said Miss Cracylight, "he has changed his religion nineteen times in the last six months; but I have got him now, and will make his moorings fast. He shall be bound to me like a ship to the wharf. I will guide him, but we will work together and reform the world; and when the year thirty-one thousand shall have arrived, it will find us still carrying on the battle nobly."

"Dear me, are you not a little extravagant?" said De'Ette. "You really cannot expect to live to be thirty-one thousand years old."

"Well, I did not think of that; perhaps so, I do not know. Well, Buey and I are going to have some ice-cream. Won't you come along?"

But Robert and De'Ette excused themselves.

"I tell you it is just glorious," said Miss Cracylight. "He is secretary of the Humanitarian Reform Society. He will make a man of himself, and I know it too," she said affectionately, drawing her arm through Buey's.

De'Ette and Robert sat down under a tree, and turned their backs to the retreating forms. De'Ette's laugh first came as a light ripple, then the ripple increased, and became a silvery ring, and then the ring became a ripple, and the ripple melted into a smile.

"They will make a funny couple, indeed they will," said Robert.

"Oh, think of them," said De'Ette. "I do wish she would do away with that horrid costume."

"Oh, perhaps she will in time."

"Yes, when she is thirty-one thousand years old," De'Ette answered.

"Poor idle dreamer," said Robert. "Her fancies are harmless. She finds perfect contentment in her ignorance. The sciences are to her but playthings. The misery of the world is a toy. The far distant, unattainable future is her reality. Preaching is all that she knows. Work is unknown to her."

"She is incapable of it," said De'Ette.

"If she is, I hope she will never have it to do," said Robert as they crossed the Common.

CHAPTER XLIX

"I HAVE COME TO DEMAND MY RIGHTS"

Elisha Steele felt uneasy, although the great financial panic which swept over the country had left his fortune practically intact. He had his money securely invested, and was taking advantage of the distress of others to lend it at a very high rate of interest. The money continued to accumulate in his hands, so he invested his surplus income in mortgages. As he was sitting one day in his office, he said to himself, "There is something that ain't right; I do not feel like my old self. I was once strong and healthy. I am pretty healthy still. I feel as well as I ever did; in fact, when I come to think of it, I am, excepting my foot; but I am not quite satisfied."

He opened his ledger, and looked it over. Then he unlocked a drawer in his desk, and took out his bankbook. "A balance of three hundred and twenty thousand dollars in the bank in my favor," he said. "I do not know where to invest it; it is not bringing a cent of interest. It won't do; it won't do."

Just then his agent came in. "Have you collected the month's rents?" said Mr. Steele.

"Yes, sir, nearly all of them," the agent answered.

"How much money have you there?"

"About nine thousand dollars in currency, and between two and three thousand dollars in checks."

"Does that all represent one month's income?"

"No, sir; part of it is back pay. Some of the tenants have been slow, and I was a little easy with them. There is still more due."

"Here, take the book and have the deposit put on it, and then bring it back." A street musician sang in the court below, —

"I'm an old man and bent,
In my pockets not a cent."

"H'm, that doesn't fit my case," said Mr. Steele to himself. "About three hundred and thirty-two thousand dollars," he figured. "I never saw times so hard in my life. I do not dare to put money into anything. Stocks are dead, securities are down, real estate never was so cheap, and there was never so much money in the banks and so little in circulation as there is now."

At this juncture Mr. Spittleworth interrupted his soliloquy.

"Good-morning, Mr. Spittleworth," said the pessimistic capitalist. "I hope you bring some good news."

"Good news?" inquired Mr. Spittleworth, "I wish I had some good news. I have lost nearly every dollar I have in the world."

"Oh, you have?" said Mr. Steele. "You mean all that is not in your wife's name."

"Well, yes, about that," drawled Mr. Spittleworth.

"What is the occasion for your coming to see me to-day? You have not been about for a long time."

"Well, there has been a man after me, and I want you to help me a little."

"Perhaps you want me to go bail for you?" said Mr. Steele rather irritably.

"Oh, no, oh, no; I hope not," said Mr. Spittleworth. "You know Robert Netherland the blind lawyer?

Now, he has been poking over my affairs; and you know the Muckity-Naughity bonds? There was something wrong about the transfer of them, someway, to somebody; and I am in a terrible pickle about it."

"Oh, I remember, my good friend Mr. Paracus," said Mr. Steele, "the man who is afflicted with a looseness of language."

"I wish the lawyer was afflicted with something that would keep him away from my affairs."

"Has my friend Mr. Netherland been troubling you?"

"Oh, horribly," Mr. Spittleworth said. "He has picked a half-dozen of my transactions all to pieces."

"Don't you think he could easily make it six hundred if he could get at them all?"

"Oh, please don't," said Mr. Spittleworth; "and don't tell him about those Muckity-Naughity bonds. I do not want the matter raked up, and much prefer to straighten the affair out with you rather than with the lawyer."

"Oh, thank you," said Mr. Steele ironically, taking care, however, not to commit himself.

"Time seems to hang very heavy on my hands lately," said Mr Steele to himself after Mr. Spittleworth had gone. "I wish business would brace up. I have money, but I haven't anything else. I have a handsome house, but my house is as dull as the tomb now."

Saracci now interrupted these dismal reflections, only to find Mr. Steele in a very bad temper. "What do you want?" he said.

"I have come to demand my rights," said Saracci. "It is the last time I shall speak to you about it. If you will give me a thousand dollars, I will leave the United States, and never come back or ask you for more."

"I won't give you a damned cent!" said Mr. Steele angrily. "Why should I?"

"Why should you?" answered Saracci.

"Come, get out! You have dogged me long enough." Mr. Steele got up, and took hold of the telephone.

"You need not call the police," said Saracci. "I will go."

CHAPTER L

"CAN IT BE THAT ELISHA STEELE HAS BEEN MURDERED?"

De'Ette and Robert were spending a quiet day at the office. The heat was intense, and there had only been two callers. About three o'clock Robert said, "Hadn't you better go home, dear? It is very warm here. I feel that I ought to stay until it is time to close the office; but you would be more comfortable at home, and I shall not need you. After office hours we will go out to drive, or down the harbor. If no one comes in, I will occupy myself practising upon the typewriter."

"I dislike to leave you alone, darling," she said. "You have been alone so much in your life, it seems that I ought to be by your side all the time."

"No, you must go now, as there is no reason for your enduring this intolerable heat."

After De'Ette had gone, Robert began practising upon the typewriter. He had not yet acquired much speed, although he could write slowly. The keyboard had been arranged for him in sections, one key being elevated at the beginning of each section; and, guided in this way, the blind young man had no trouble in finding the letters in the different sections of the keyboard.

"A, b, c," he practised. The instrument tapped monotonously.

"It makes me sleepy," he said, yawning. Tap — tap — tap went the typewriter.

"It is awfully lonesome," said Robert. "I wish I could go home now." Tap — tap — tap — he had not heard a step in the hallway.

"Hello! You are the most industrious man I ever saw," said Mr. Steele. "Do you think you can learn to use that thing? You do, eh? Well, I don't."

"I will write you a letter with it in a week," Robert answered.

"Now, that would be a curiosity," said Mr. Steele; "a letter written on a typewriter by a blind man. See that you keep your word, Mr. Netherland. I have come to talk business with you. You are Mr. Paracus's lawyer, I believe."

"Yes, sir."

"And you have been looking up the Muckity-Naughity bonds?"

"Yes," answered Robert.

"Well, now I will tell you what. Let me put a flea in your ear."

As Robert made no visible objection to the insertion of such an insect into his auditory apparatus, Mr. Steele proceeded: —

"Now, those bonds are good. Old Spittleworth don't know it, for he has been so upset by the panic that he don't know a good bond from a bad one. John Paracus is, in certain ways, a bad man," he went on; "but he ain't half so bad as Spittleworth; and if Paracus wants to sell his bonds, why just tell him to come and see me about it. S-e-e?"

Although not seeing, Robert "saw," metaphorically.

"Well, I hope you are doing pretty well," said Mr. Steele.

"Yes, thank you; very well," said Robert. "Will you pardon me for making a personal remark?"

"Certainly," said Mr. Steele.

"Your voice sounds very weary and tired."

"Young man, you have hit the nail on the head. I do not feel as though I cared for anything much. I guess I will go to the White Mountains, and see if I can get a rest. But I'll go to dinner first; it's getting very late. Do you know what time it is? It's nearly seven o'clock."

"Well, I'll only practise a few minutes more," Robert said, as Mr. Steele left the room.

"Tap — tap — tap — tap, tap — tap," resumed the typewriter. Robert began running over the alphabet from beginning to end; and while so doing he became absorbed, and was not aware of the lapse of time.

"Tap, tap, tap," continued the typewriter. "I really am getting up some speed," he said. "I really am. I wonder what time it is. Why, gracious! De'Ette will be anxious about me; it is quarter-past seven."

He closed his door, and walked to the elevator, but there was no response to the bell.

"I can find my way down-stairs with a little care," he said. The halls were dark; but this was no hindrance to the blind man, who descended one flight without difficulty, and walked over the landing to the next.

"What's that?" His foot slipped. He struck a heavy object, and fell headlong. In falling he grasped the first thing nearest his hand; it was a cold face covered with slimy foam. Then he heard a shriek.

"Saracci!" he cried.

"My God! What is this?" he exclaimed, as he was gathering himself up. Some one struck him a heavy blow on the head; but it glanced, and he did not receive the full force of it. He reeled, and his hand fell again in the blood and foam on the stairs; and as he fell he received another blow upon his shoulder. He seized the baluster with his left hand, and clutched in the dark with his right. "Be quiet," said a voice, "or I'll kill you."

That instant he felt a hand that was not cold and dead; it was grasping some one by the neck, and its long, wicked fingers were tightly clasped.

"Help!" shrieked Robert. "Help! help! help!" Footsteps quickly passed him on the stairs, and he heard below the sound of crashing glass.

He ran wildly about, up and down the hall. "Help! Where is the door? Help! help! help!" The big empty building reverberated with the sound of his terrified voice. He pitched forward again, and fell on some stairs. They were a little wet. Again he tried to collect himself to find his way out of the building. "Help! help!" he shrieked, wildly running up and down the long corridors of the building. Each turn he made added to his perplexity. Again he pitched headlong down the stairs, falling on the cold dead body, then rolled to the bottom. The dead body rolled after him, and fell upon him.

"Oh, that terrible face!" he said. "It is so cold."

Almost overcome by fright, he extricated himself, and ran down the corridor, and finally found the window from which the murderer had jumped. He put his head out of it, and again screamed, "Murder! help! help! help!"

Passers-by heard his frightened shrieks, and soon there were footsteps in the building, and lights which the blind man could not see revealed the dead man's form doubled up in a heap at the bottom of the stairs.

"Faith," said Officer McGonigal, "and who did this?"

"I found an Italian named Saracci, whose voice I knew, grasping this man by the throat with his hand," said Robert.

"Who is it that is killed?" asked another policeman.

"Shure, an' yez'll find out whin the midical examiner cooms and clanes off his face; I dare not tech him now," said Officer McGonigal.

"There are the man's tracks in the hallway," said a policeman. "Send for more help." The news of the murder was spreading rapidly.

"That is an ugly welt you have, sir, on the side of your head," said an officer to Robert.

"Shure, an' there's blood a-runnin' out of your slave," said Officer McGonigal, taking Robert by the hand; "an' there's a cut in yez coat." The officer quickly drew Robert's arm out of the sleeve, and found a long gash on the top of his shoulder.

"Yez came near bein' kilt intoirely," remarked McGonigal.

"Can it be possible they will suspect me?" thought Robert, now beginning to feel faint from the loss of blood.

"It is an awkward place for you, young man," said a policeman bluntly.

"These tracks tell the story," said another, "and this broken window."

The medical examiner appeared on the scene at this moment. He inspected the body quickly. "Here are the finger-prints on the neck;" and wiping the blood from the dead man's face, "Elisha Steele! Elisha Steele!" he exclaimed. "Can it be that Elisha Steele has been murdered?"

He saw Robert standing against the wall. "Can you tell anything about this?" the examiner sternly demanded of him.

"I fell over the body as I was coming down from my office," Robert answered; "some one was grasping the dead man by the throat. I tried to escape and give the alarm, but in my confusion I crept back to where the man was lying. It was then that I felt the warm hand on the cold, dead neck. A man struck me, and commanded me to be quiet; and I recognized the voice of Saracci, an Italian."

"Faith, an' I know him," interrupted McGonigal.

"Then, you had better try to catch him," said the examiner to him.

"Och, now be aisy," said McGonigal. "I'm goin' to try it whin I finds which way he run."

"Let me see your hand," said the medical examiner to Robert.

Robert held out his hand, and the examiner compared his fingers with the prints upon the neck of the corpse. "Yours do not fit," he said.

"The young man is hurt," said a policeman. Then the medical examiner looked at the gash upon Robert's shoulder.

"That was done with a sharp instrument," he said; "but the cut is not deep. Had the dagger struck you a little lower, we would have had two dead men instead of one here now."

Officer McGonigal had notified Mr. Steele's family; and Mr. Gilbraith, accompanied by Dr. Sneakleaf, drove hastily to the scene of the tragedy.

"Father murdered!" said Mr. Gilbraith when he saw him.

"It seems so," answered the medical examiner.

"How long before he can be taken home?" asked Mr. Gilbraith.

The medical examiner was dressing Robert's arm, and answered, "As soon as I can get the facts of the case."

A crowd had gathered around the building. Policemen were scouring the city everywhere.

"Faith, an' it's betther to arrist ivry one of thim Italians yez can foind," said McGonigal.

"You would want a half-dozen extra police-stations to hold even the half of them," said another policeman.

When De'Ette saw Robert, she realized from his dishevelled appearance that something terrible had happened. For once in his life he was completely unnerved, and his suffering made De'Ette correspondingly strong. She sat down by his side, and laid his head on her breast.

"Do not try to tell me now, darling," she said; "do not try now."

"It was horrible," said Robert.

"Just tell me what you wish, darling," she said, as she kissed his forehead gently.

"Mr. Steele has been murdered on the stairs just below my office."

"No more now, darling," she said. "Lie down."

The memory of his experience in the magnetic sleep, when he took Mr. Steele's hand, at this moment came vividly before him.

"I saw it all," he said, "that night."

"Lie down, dear; be still," said De'Ette.

As she sat by his bedside, he fell asleep. There he was in the hall again, dazed, with Saracci's words ringing in his ears, "I will kill you if you are not quiet." — "I should know that voice anywhere," he cried, starting up in bed again.

"Sleep," said De'Ette; "sleep;" and he fell asleep again.

"Oh, what is this on my hands?" he shrieked. "I cannot get it off. It is slimy and cold."

"I cleansed your hands; so never mind what it is now. Sleep."

"He jumped out of the window. Murder! Murder!" shrieked Robert.

"Poor, tired boy," she said; "it haunts you in your dreams. Sleep, darling, sleep."

"O God! That face is so cold!" cried Robert, as again he awoke from a nightmare. "De'Ette, I tell you I shall go mad if I cannot get rid of these dreams. It is horrible. I cannot stand it. When I sleep, I feel the slimy foam on my hands, and then that dead face, and then Saracci's wicked fingers; after these dreams I feel his hand upon my throat."

"Sleep, darling; try again." In her perplexity, it occurred to her that Professor Vandière's magnet might have a quieting effect upon him; so she held it in her hand until her fingers began to tingle, then touching Robert's eyes lightly with it, she said, "There, darling, what do you see?"

"Your own sweet face," he answered.

"Now what do you see?"

"Our cosey little bedroom."

"Now, dear," she said, "try again. No, no; it is not the Italian's face you see; it is not his face. That is only your disordered fancy. Look again;" then Robert sank into a deep sleep. There were indistinct murmurings; and he seemed to float along, borne by some intangible agency.

"Sleep, sleep, sleep," rang in his ear.

Saracci ran quickly into an alley-way after jumping from the window. As he was suffering severe pain, he stooped and felt of his bones, and found that none were broken. The hubbub near him, due to the rapidly gathering crowd, made it necessary for him to remain in his place of concealment, for he saw that the police were swarming around the building.

"We will have to scour the North End," said one officer.

"We had better try the South End," suggested another.

"I'll bet a cigar he is at the West End," broke in a third.

All bet Saracci was where he was not. The building was searched carefully, and every place where he could not possibly be was investigated.

At last Saracci, from his hiding-place, saw them carrying Mr. Steele's body away, and the great crowd gradually dispersed.

"They are all gone now," he said. "My night's work is not yet done. That blind man would know my voice anywhere. I wish I could find some place to wash my hands." He at first peered out; and, finding no one near, he emerged cautiously from his hiding-place. He went towards the South End, first taking a circuitous route through the back streets of the city.

"I think I know where that man lives; he or I must die," he muttered to himself, looking at his blood-stained hands, as he walked down Albany Street.

He turned down a dark alley from a side street, and drew a long dagger from beneath his coat. Looking at its keen edge by the light of a lamp, he said, "If he lives, I shall die. Why should I not live as well as he? That blind man would be sure to know my hand, or he would know my voice." Conscience's smothered, half-strangled voice said, "No;" but the rest of Saracci's nature said, "Yes."

"Why not?" said Saracci. "He was born without having anything to say about it, and so was I. It is a question of life and death; it is a question of a struggle." He stopped again.

"There is a hydrant," he said; "I will wash my hands." He had a phenomenally strong grip in his hand, but the hydrant did not turn easily. When it did, Saracci got more of a bath than he expected: for the stream of water came with such force that it struck him in the face, and knocked him over. It blinded him, too, for a moment. He shivered, and then turned the hydrant off. Walking along a little farther, he was startled by the sound of a big bell tolling twelve.

"I would rather not kill him," he said. "Poor fellow, he cannot see; but it must be done."

"Why do you cling to life?" said a voice within. "The jail has been your principal abiding-place."

"Yes, I am an outcast on the face of the globe," he said; "but I would not be if I had my rights."

He turned down Harrison Avenue, and stopped before the Church of the Immaculate Conception, its great stone mass seeming ghastly white to Saracci. Finding the doors open, he felt an impulse to go in, and, passing up the long, broad aisle, knelt before the altar. One single candle shed its light upon him as he told his beads mechanically, and left the church.

"Why did I do that?" he said. "If there is a God he must despise me; the Virgin Mary would not intercede in my behalf, and the saints would treat my prayers with disgust."

Columbus Avenue he noticed next; and then crossing Huntington Avenue he continued along a side street. "There, that is the house," he said to himself. "He is there." He walked around the block, and looked at the big windows of the house, noticing a light in one of the upper rooms.

"I wish I could see in there." As he spoke, he climbed over the fence, shivering all the while with the cold. He tried the basement door. Finding it locked, he mounted the window-sill, but he could not reach the one above. He stretched himself all in vain.

"I cannot make it," he said. "I have got to break open the door; but that won't do, the noise would call the neighbors to the rescue."

The big bell tolled one, and made Saracci jump. "I wish those bells would be quiet," he said as he stumbled against something.

"There, that is just what I want." A ladder had carelessly been left in the yard by a man who had been doing some work about the house. He placed it against the wall, and rapidly ascended. He could barely look in at the window.

There upon the bed lay Robert, sleeping heavily. By him sat his little wife, holding his hand. Saracci turned his eyes away for a moment, then seized the window-sill.

"There is that face!" cried Robert, springing out of bed, and running towards the window. Saracci slipped, and his arm went through the window with a crash.

"Come down, you rascal," shouted McGonigal; "I have got yez this toime."

Saracci, knowing he was cornered, drew his dagger, and jumped from the ladder. McGonigal saw the sharp blade in the light from the window, and struck him a terrible blow upon his head as he reached the ground.

Saracci shrieked.

"That is the voice," said Robert. "I could never mistake it. De'Ette, I saw that man's face bending over me in my sleep."

The Italian struck out wildly with his dagger; but Officer McGonigal, keeping his self-possession, in an instant had the Italian down. Another shriek, and McGonigal had wrenched the dagger from his hand.

"Faith, an' it's mesilf that has got yez, ye drowned rat! I was jist a-lookin' for yez around here. An' so yez would be afther committing another murther, would yez?"

Saracci struggled; but McGonigal held him tightly, and soon had the handcuffs on his wrists. "Faith, sirrah, and jist go and git another officer," said McGonigal to one of the neighbors, who had just entered the yard, attracted by the noise.

"I cannot rest while that man is around," said Robert. "His very presence congeals the blood in my veins."

There was a sharp ring at the door-bell, then some one asked, "Does Mr. Netherland live here?"

Robert put his clothes on, and descended the stairs, leaning heavily on De'Ette's arm, for he was dizzy.

"Shure, an' we've got a soight here that is good fur sore eyes!" said McGonigal.

There, on the street, crouched Saracci. His dark face looked hideous, and his heavy hair hung down over his forehead.

"Stand up!" commanded McGonigal. "Spake, ye baste!" Saracci was dumb.

"Spake, I tell yez!"

"I should know the hand," said Robert; "it is not necessary for him to speak." As Robert approached, the criminal drew himself together as though he would crawl into a shell like a turtle.

"Out wid yur hands!" commanded McGonigal.

Saracci had drawn his hands up so that his long fingers were half hidden in the lapel of his ragged coat. The officer forced his hands out. Robert, taking them, said, "There is no mistaking that hand; those are the long, cruel fingers. I tell you, McGonigal, that is the hand I felt on Mr. Steele's throat."

"Mizzure his forefinger," said the officer.

"It measures four and three-quarters inches," answered another policeman.

"Those are the longest hands I ever saw," said McGonigal.

"We will take him around to the dead body," said McGonigal's companion. Saracci gave a piteous wail.

"Faith, an' yez make me shiver!" said the officer. "Kape still! Yur loike a poll parrot, yez howls whin yez wanted to be still, and whin I wanted yez to spake it was yursilf that wouldn't do it. Coom along wid ye!" McGonigal commanded, as they dragged Saracci away.

Only one member of Mr. Steele's household slept that night, and that one was sleeping his eternal sleep. Mr. Gilbraith was so stunned by the disaster that he could not comprehend the full force of the facts.

Eda was by Mrs. Steele's side. "Gone! He is gone too," the poor woman moaned.

The medical examiner came at a late hour, and investigated the condition of the dead body with great care. "The larynx is crushed," he said to Dr. Sneakleaf, as they sat in a room adjoining the one in which lay the corpse.

"There is a man outside," said a servant. "There are two policemen with him in the patrol wagon, and they wish to see if the finger-prints upon Mr. Steele's neck fit the fingers of the man they have got there."

"Bring him in," said the medical examiner; and the officers literally carried Saracci into the house.

"Can this be a human being?" said Dr. Sneakleaf, as the Italian was brought in.

"Hold up your head," said the medical examiner to Saracci. "There, that's the criminal type of skull, if there ever was one," he added.

Saracci's face was a hideous sight. The lips quivered, the eyes were tightly closed, and the cheeks were hollow and sunken. As the officers forced him into the room where the dead body lay, the murderer gave a low, terrified, agonized cry.

"What an unearthly sound," said Dr. Sneakleaf.

The officer removed the handcuffs, and extended the prisoner's hand. When it touched Mr. Steele's lifeless body, Saracci again gave a shriek of horror, then, writhing all over, said, "No, no, no, I did not do it; I did not kill the man, I did not kill him."

The medical examiner extended Saracci's fingers to Mr. Steele's neck. "What a hand! he could grasp this man's neck, and his fingers would reach the palm on the other side of it."

"They did not, however," said Dr. Sneakleaf. "Officer, move the head, please."

"McGonigal gently turned it so that the front of the neck was plainly visible. Saracci's long nails accurately fitted the perpendicular line of depressions on the neck.

"I did not kill the man. Take me away, take me away," implored the Italian.

"If yez did not kill him, who did?" inquired McGonigal.

The handcuffs were fitted again, and Saracci was carried off.

CHAPTER LI

"WHEN IT IS TIME WILL YOU BE MINE?"

After the great calamity, Eda assumed the entire charge of her aunt's house.

"How much can I endure?" said Mrs. Steele. "My girlhood was a disappointment. Surrounded with wealth during my married life, it brought me naught but wretchedness. Those whom I should have loved I could not. All is wasted; all is wasted. I have known nothing but misery."

"You will know something better now," said Eda. "Uncle Elisha has left a large fortune probably."

"Oh, yes," answered Mrs. Steele; "but money is of no use when it is the only thing to live for in all the world. When one's young life is gone, when all the ties, all the beloved bonds, which bind those we hold dearest to us are severed, then money is but a hollow, empty thing."

Eda lifted Mrs. Steele's head, and put her arms around her neck.

"Auntie, try and take courage," she said. "I have learned to love you. Let me be your daughter; let me give my life to you. Perhaps I can make you happy. In any case, I will be so good to you that you will forget that I am only your niece by marriage. I never had a mother's care, and stored up in my heart is all the love that I would have given her. Now it shall be yours."

Mrs. Steele began to cry. Eda wiped away her tears, and kissed her white lips.

"Can you love me as you would have loved a mother?" asked Mrs. Steele.

"Indeed I can," said Eda.

"Then kiss me again."

"Let me rub your arm, aunty; it looks blue."

"Not yet," she said; "do not take your arms from about my neck."

Mr. Gilbraith stopped before the open door. "I'd give anything for that picture," he said. Mrs. Steele's head lay upon Eda's shoulder. The bloom on the healthy girl's cheeks contrasted strongly with Mrs. Steele's white face.

"Come in," said Eda. "Aunty feels so badly; perhaps you can help me to comfort her."

Mr. Gilbraith, who had a very tender side to his nature, came in, and sat down on the other side of the bed.

"Poor helpless hand," he thought, as he took Mrs. Steele's withered one between his own strong hands.

"I was telling aunty," said Eda, "that I would be a daughter to her instead of a niece."

"Then let me, indeed, hold the place in your heart, mother, which a son should fill. We will comfort and help you all we can."

"My poor Lorenzo," murmured Mrs. Steele, weeping bitterly. "My poor Lorenzo."

"Telegram," said a servant. Mr. Gilbraith opened it quickly and read:—

"SAN FRANCISCO, CAL.

"Lorenzo Steele died on board of a steamer three days out of Honolulu. Buried at sea."

"I will keep this to myself," he thought. "The shock would be too much for mother now."

"I wish I could see Lorenzo," said Mrs. Steele. "How my face quivers!"

Then Eda kindly stroked the quivering muscles.

"They are shrinking too," she thought. Big tears came in her eyes. "Why must she gradually wither away? She, at least, has never wronged herself or harmed anybody else," drawing Mrs. Steele closer to her breast.

"'Sleep, sweet rose, on your mossy bed,'"

she hummed in a low voice.

"Oh, how sweet those tones are!" said Mrs. Steele, kissing her.

When she slept, Eda gently laid her down. Mr. Gilbraith came to the door, and signed to her to come out, and handed her the telegram.

Eda read and re-read it. "It is hard," she said. "We must not tell her of Lorenzo's death."

"That is just what I wanted to decide," said Mr. Gilbraith.

"See, there is something beautiful in her face as she lies there," said Eda.

Mr. Gilbraith looked at Eda's fresh rosy cheeks, and again at Mrs. Steele's white face.

"You will doubtless be surprised," he said, "when I tell you that the will leaves everything to you and to me when mother is gone."

They were in the drawing-room, and Mr. Gilbraith sat down close beside Eda on the sofa. Looking tenderly into her eyes, he said, "Eda, do you remember when you took care of me in the hospital?"

"Well?" said Eda.

"Do you know that I thought you the purest creature I had ever known?"

Eda blushed.

"When it is time, will you be mine?" he asked. "Then we can take care of mother together; and when she is gone our lives will still be blended."

"When it is time," said Eda.

CHAPTER LII

THAT FATAL "YELLOW DAY"

The Grand Jury had returned a true bill against Saracci. The day of his trial began like many other clear autumn days. The court-room was crowded; and the people looked curiously at Saracci's ashen, haggard face as the officer led him in, and placed him in the prisoners' dock. The court had assigned Saracci a counsel some time before, at his request. But his reputation as an anarchist, while it made prospective jurors tremble, did not dispose them to refuse to award capital punishment in his case. At last the twelve jurors were found. The government's attorney rose, and began his address to the jury: —

"Your Honor and Gentlemen of the Jury: The matter before us is one of the most serious which can, under any circumstances, come before a jury. It involves the life of a human being, and the right of society to take that life. The duty imposed upon me, as a servant of the public, makes it necessary that I should bring before you all the circumstances attending the crime, and present to you reasonably and clearly those facts and circumstances which seem to attach guilt to the prisoner at the bar. The government will show that Mr. Steele, a wealthy man, a number of years ago purchased from the prisoner a machine for clipping hair, for a very small price. Although this purchase was made in good faith, and with the full consent, at the time, of the prisoner, when he found how successful the patent was in the hands of Mr. Steele, he began to feel that he ought to have received more money than he did receive, and made himself a burden to Mr. Steele by his repeated endeavors to obtain additional payment. This was constantly refused; and at one time he was removed from Mr. Steele's office by a policeman, whom we shall produce.

"On the night of the murder, we shall show that Mr. Robert Netherland, an attorney of this city, was at work in his office until a later hour than usual. He represented certain parties with whom Mr. Steele was connected; and Mr. Steele had been at his office on business, and had gone away. Mr. Netherland, although blind, was perfecting himself in the use of a typewriter, and became so absorbed in his work that he did not notice the flight of time. Finally he left his office, and on going down the stairs of the building came suddenly upon two persons. He felt the body of a man, which we shall show to have been that of Mr. Steele, and in removing himself from it, placed his hands upon the hand of a second person, who was choking Mr. Steele about the neck. He was familiar with this hand, for in times past he had met the owner of the hand; and, as he pressed against him, the assailant spoke, and threatened to take his life. He struck him also. Mr. Netherland recognized this voice; indeed, he can pick out that voice from among any number of voices, and can identify its owner with perfect assurance. That person is the prisoner at the bar. He heard him run along the corridor, and spring from a window. Later, in the same night, this person was captured as he was descending a ladder at the house of Mr. Netherland.

"After repeated calls for help, persons came into the building, and a search was made for the one who had fled. He was not found, but later was captured by Officer McGonigal, as I have already said, near the house of Mr. Netherland. We are unable to trace his course in the meantime, in the testimony; but we shall show by the officer who arrested him, Officer McGonigal, who, strangely enough, was the man who had earlier removed him from Mr. Steele's office, and who, as we shall show, had arrested him at other times, that upon his endeavoring to take him into custody, the prisoner assaulted him with a knife, but was overpowered, and taken to the station. You shall be shown the hands of the prisoner; and there will be evidence of marks upon the throat of Mr. Steele made by the fingers of his assailant, which the government will show correspond with the fingers and hand of the accused.

"This is the evidence which we shall bring before you. A motive for the deed can be found in the enmity felt by the accused toward the murdered man; the evidence that he was present and assaulted Mr. Steele; the evidence of his attack or threat to take the life of the only man who definitely knew of his connection with this murder; the correspondence between his hands and the marks upon the body of the murdered man; and we shall ask you to find that he is guilty of murder, and guilty of murder under such circumstances that his Honor will explain to you it constitutes murder in the first degree, the penalty of which is death."

The witnesses for the government were asked to stand up and be sworn; and, after the oath was administered, each in his turn testified, and the facts of the murder were elicited by dint of much questioning and cross-questioning.

Officer McGonigal, Dr. Sneakleaf, and the medical examiner gave their testimony at length. At last it was the blind lawyer's turn to testify; and he related graphically the finding of Mr. Steele's dead body on the stairs, with the hand of the Italian grasping the throat.

Saracci's counsel was a young man, and his ardor decidedly exceeded his good sense. He was, moreover, sceptical, and did not believe that the blind lawyer could recognize a voice which he had only heard a few times in his life.

In the court-room were twenty or thirty Italians. The lawyer said, "Your Honor, I wish to test the wonderful powers of this young man. I trust I may be forgiven for doubting the ability of any man to recognize another by his voice on so slight an acquaintance. He might be able to recognize familiar voices, but it is hardly just to ask the gentlemen of the jury to believe these wonderful things without witnessing them. Therefore, I pray that the court will allow persons of the prisoner's own nationality to pronounce simply *a*, with the broad sound of the vowel, and see whether or not this wonderful man can pick out the prisoner at the bar."

As the Italians were lined up by the sheriff, the excitement and interest ran high in the court-room. All eyes were fixed upon the blind lawyer, as one after another he rejected the voices of the different Italians who spoke. Finally Saracci uttered the fatal vowel, and the blind man unerringly recognized his voice. More Italians were produced; and as Robert again recognized Saracci's voice, it evidently made a profound impression on the jury.

"Granted that he can recognize the voice, let's try the hand," said the lawyer for the defence, not yet realizing his blunder.

Saracci did, however, and shrieked, wringing his long, wicked hands, "No, no, no, I don't want to touch his hands."

The testimony being in, and the arguments of the lawyers finished, the judge next charged the jury. The blue sky was becoming a strange, greenish-yellow; and as the yellow light came in through the windows, it intensified the slaty pallor of Saracci's frightened face. It did not take the jury long to reach a verdict. They were out only twelve minutes. "Murder in the first degree," was the result of their deliberations. The greenish-yellow light of this strange day was deepening, causing the surrounding objects to look like the effects produced by a painter of the impressionist school. A hush fell upon the great audience, as the judge arose, and said, —

"Vincenzo Saracci, can you give any good reason why sentence of death should not be passed upon you?"

"Yes, yes," answered the Italian; "but I want an interpreter."

"You shall have one," assented the judge.

The greenish-yellow light of that fatal day still deepened. Saracci began speaking in a low tone to the interpreter; and the interpreter translating, said, "I was born in a filthy basement of an old rickety building in Naples. Even in sunny Italy the light that my eyes first saw was a dim twilight. A child of sin, born of a harlot, the first draught of milk I drank from my mother's breast was diseased, polluted, resulting from her iniquity. My first memory of childhood was of pain. There were great gaping ulcers on my legs, and before I was four years old I importuned for my bread in the streets of my native city. The first lesson my mother taught me was to lie, and the second was to steal. One day, after I had been begging and stealing, I came home and found my mother lying in a pool of blood, her throat cut from ear to ear. In my childish anguish I sought the help of the priest, and was kicked from his doors by his servant. I drifted about the streets, half-starved and ill, I know not how long, until I was locked up, I know not by whom or for what. I wanted for food, and I wanted for clothes and drink, yes, and for the fresh air and for the sunlight, which are the only things the rich have not stolen from my native land. The whole of my childhood was spent in the prison, or, when out of it, begging, lying, and stealing. I found myself a man. At last, I learned that in America was freedom; and somehow I got together the money to bring me to this country, and I was given work, and that night was beaten by a man whose place I took. Then I took to grinding an organ; but I had no license, and was arrested by the police. I learned to be a barber; and then I married, and the woman was false to me," he shrieked, wringing his hands, "and I beat her for it, dog that she was. A man sold me a machine; and I sold it to the dead man, but I did not kill him," he said again, wringing his hands.

The interpreter saw the Italian's mistake in the use of words, and began retranslating, when the judge said, "I know what you mean; go on."

"Then I followed my wife, who ran away to Italy, and there I learned that the rich were grinding down the poor, and I would have helped, and done my share toward killing off the villains; but I was driven out of my native land like a dog. I have wandered all over the face of the globe. No one has showed me any mercy; and as I was being beaten and driven like a dog everywhere I went, I found that the man who bought the machine from me had made a fortune — but I did not kill him; indeed, I did not kill him. Have mercy, judge; I did *not* kill Mr. Steele."

The green-yellow light grew greener and hazier as Saracci looked wildly about him.

"Judge, no one has had pity on me. I have only been taught to lie and steal. I've wanted for food from the day of my birth. Homeless, friendless, I have been kicked about. Whenever I found a place where I could earn a dollar, I was driven from it like a dog. Poor and starving, I have watched those live upon my toil who scorn me."

Then again wildly gesticulating, he cried, "I did not murder Mr. Steele."

"Has he finished?" asked the judge of the interpreter.

Saracci was crouching on the floor, writhing and groaning and crying.

"Stand!" commanded the judge. An officer assisted the prisoner to his feet; and the judge said, "Vincenzo Saracci, I sentence you to be hanged by the neck until you are dead, dead, dead. May God have mercy on" —

With a terrible cry, Saracci fell back, limp, in the arms of the officer.

"He is dead," said the medical examiner, after one long, searching look into the prisoner's face.

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