PLANTATION

EDITION

VOLUME VIII

In a little while she was holding the old man's hand.

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THE NOVELS, STORIES, SKETCHES AND POEMS OF THOMAS NELSON PAGE

THE OLD GENTLEMAN OF THE BLACK STOCK

SANTA CLAUS'S PARTNER

CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
NEW YORK, 1906

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THE OLD GENTLEMAN OF THE BLACK STOCK

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PREFACE

At the suggestion of friends who have expressed a wish to know more of the history of Elizabeth Dale than has been told, I have availed myself of the opportunity offered by the publication of this new edition of "The Old Gentleman of the Black Stock," illustrated by Mr. Christy's gifted pencil, to enlarge the story.

I hope those who have done me the honor to accept the Old Gentleman of the Black Stock and Elizabeth Dale among their friends will feel that I have tried to add to their history in more ways than one.

It has been a grateful task. For the old section of that Ancient Town through which the Old Gentleman of the Black Stock moved gravely in the years when the lover-scarred Beech shaded his tangled yard, and which Elizabeth Dale lighted with her presence, has quite passed away.

Cinderella's Coach comes along only in the Fairy-time of Youth.

T. N. P.

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THE OLD GENTLEMAN OF THE BLACK STOCK

TO MY DAUGHTERS

MINNA FIELD

AND

FLORENCE FIELD

MY TWO MOST CONSTANT

AND

INDULGENT READERS

THE OLD GENTLEMAN OF THE BLACK STOCK

I

A PRIMEVAL RELIC

HE was one of my first acquaintances when I came up to town to live; for I met him almost immediately after I gave up my country identity and melted into the sea of the city, though I did not learn his name for some time afterwards, and therefore knew him, as I found many others did, simply as, "the Old Gentleman of the Black Stock."

Why I spoke to him that summer morning on the shaded street I can readily understand; but why he spoke to me I did not know until long afterwards. I was lonely and homesick. I had not yet met any one except my cousin, who had given me a place in his law office, and

was most kind to me, but was too busy a man to talk much; the two or three gentlemen, all older than myself, who had offices on our floor; and the few people who lived at the little private boarding-house in the old part of the town, where I had taken the tiny hall room on the third floor and furnished it with dreams. All of these last, too, were older than I, and seemed so very much older. At twenty-one a few years make such a great difference! Moreover, all the young people of my own age whom I saw on the street appeared to know each other so well,—just as I had known my own friends in the country,—and to be so entirely all-sufficient to each other, that it made me feel pushed out and shut off from all the rest of the world.

So, I remember that as I walked that morning down the shaded, quiet street with the old square houses on either side set back amid trees in their big yards, I had forgotten my dreams of the future, which had hitherto gilded my lone little room and peopled my quiet office, and was back among the overgrown fence-rows and fields of my country home.

It was then that I met for the first time the Old Gentleman of the Black Stock, and he spoke to me.

Of course, then, I spoke to him. I was ready to speak to any one; would have spoken to any one in the world. I had, indeed, not yet gotten over the strange feeling I had at not speaking to every one I met, in accordance with the civil country custom which made passing any one on the road without a bow a breach of manners.

This was the way of it: I was strolling along the street that morning, looking at the old yards full of fine trees and shrubbery in a tangled and somewhat neglected state, which reminded me of the yard at home, and I had only half taken in the fact that just ahead of me out of the largest and most tangled of the yards, surrounding, perhaps, the oldest and most retired house on the street, had come some one—an old gentleman, who had paused just outside his broken gate, and turning half around, was now standing looking back at the trees behind him. I insensibly followed his eye, and glanced up at the trees myself as I walked along. There were three or four big locusts, two wide-branching elms, and one beech, all large and very old, and the beech quite gigantic. It was, perhaps, the sole relic of the primeval forest which once had clad these hills, and some tawny Tityrus might well have blown his wild

pipe beneath its spreading shade. At least, it had known of other times far back; for on its massive trunk the scars stood thick telling of gentler strifes long past of which lovers had graved the histories deep in its hoary bark.

The beech had a seat under it, and it was at this that the old gentleman's gaze seemed to be particularly directed.

The trees, too, reminded me of the country, —everything did,—and I suppose I must have had that in my face; for when I brought my gaze down to the ground again I was only a few paces from the old gentleman at the gate, and when I glanced at him I caught his eye.

I looked away; glanced at him again, for there was something about him which was unusual—quite as unusual as that square of old houses and shady yards in a growing city, and he attracted me.

He seemed just to fit in with them, and to be separated from the rest of the people I had seen: almost as separate as myself. So, when I looked at him again I tried to do it as if quite casually, and at the same time endeavored to take in as much of him as I could in my glance.

The principal features which I noted were a tall, slender figure neatly clad in the manner in which an old gentleman of his age should

be clad, with a black broadcloth frock-coat, somewhat, however, more flowing than usual, and a black stock up to the chin, with a high, white, unstarched collar falling over it, such as I remembered very old gentlemen used to wear years before, when I was a child, but such as I had not seen for some time.

This was all that I took in of his dress; for I caught his eye again as my glance reached his thin, high-bred, and somewhat careworn face, clean-shaven except for a white, carefully trimmed mustache. His eyes were gray and keen and were set back very deep under somewhat heavy brows, and I looked into them involuntarily.

He did not give me time to look away again, but spoke to me:

"Good-morning, sir:"—easily, pleasantly,—quite so much, indeed, as if he had known me, that it flashed across my mind, in the half-second which passed before I returned his salutation, that he had mistaken me for some one else.

I replied, however, "Good-morning, sir," and as a sort of apology for my stare, said, "You have some fine old trees there, sir," and was passing on with a somewhat quickened step, when he said:

"Yes, sir, they were very fine once, and

would be so now, if they could escape the universal curse of Age.—You are fond of trees?'' he added, as I paused to avoid the rudeness of leaving him while he was speaking.

''Yes, sir; I was brought up amongst them.''

I was going on to say that they carried me back to my home, but he did not give me time.

''They are worth loving: they last!—How long have you been from the country?'' His deep eyes were resting on my face.

I was a little taken aback, for, apart from the fact that his abrupt question implied that he knew at a glance I was not a city man, I was sufficiently conscious of a certain difference between myself and the smooth young city fellows I met, to think that he meant to remark on my countryfied appearance. So, with a half-formed idea that he might, if given the opportunity, explain himself differently, I simply replied:

''Sir?''

''How long have you been in the city?''

''Oh! about three weeks,'' I said, with assumed indifference, and still feeling a little uncomfortable over the meaning I assigned him; and gradually getting somewhat warm over it, I moved to go on.

"Where are you from?" he asked.

I told him the county.

"Oh, I thought so!" He scanned me so boldly, and I fancied, rudely, that I said, quite shortly:

"Good-morning, sir."

He bowed:

"Good-morning, sir."

It was only when I went over in my mind afterwards all the circumstances of the interview to see if I could find anything to soothe my wounded spirit that I recalled how gracious his manner was, and how courteous his tone as he returned my parting salute, and decided that he could not have meant to insult or wound me.

I found that he had made quite an impression on me. His appearance, his voice, his air, all remained with me, distinguished from those of the men I was now meeting.

I asked my cousin who he was, and attempted to describe him, but though I went into some detail and gave, I thought, a faithful portraiture of him, my cousin, who was a man about town as well as a lawyer in extensive practice, failed to recognize him from my description.

In time I made acquaintances, and in fur-

ther time yet, I secured practice enough to justify me in selecting more commodious quarters than those I had at first in my little hall room. And as I fell into city ways I began to visit about in society more and more, until I became quite as much of a city man, and, indeed, of a society man, as a still very modest income, coupled with some ambition to increase it, would allow. Yet I never met my Old Gentleman of the Black Stock in any of the bright houses I visited, or, indeed, anywhere else except on the street, and there only very rarely: perhaps two or three times at most in the two years which went by before I ever did more than acknowledge with a bow his passing and pleasant salutation.

II

THE HILL-AND-DALE CARRIAGE

TWO years or so after the summer morning when I met the Old Gentleman of the Black Stock coming out of the shady yard on that old street—It was, I remember, in the month of May—I was passing down a busy street one morning, when a vehicle coming along attracted my attention. It was only one of a number of carriages that were coming down the principal driving street from the fashionable residence quarter of the town, and were turning into the chief shopping street of the city. But of all the number this one attracted my attention the most. For whilst the others were shining city equipages, with showy teams, and fashionable women lolling back in the easy and pretendedly indifferent style of ladies of fashion when they honor the trading section at the change of the seasons, who, if they knew me, conde-

scended to acknowledge my bow with cold superciliousness, this vehicle, though I had never seen it before, was familiar to my mind and challenged my interest at once.

It was an old country carriage,—and as I walked along through the balmy spring-time air, which felt like feathers on my cheek, I had just been thinking before I saw it, of the country and of the little, willow-shaded stream with its deep pools, where I used to fish in spring when the leaves were tender like those above me, before I became a lawyer and a man of affairs. Just then the old carriage came swinging down the hill.

It was antiquated and high-swung and "shackling"; as muddy as a country wagon, and drawn by two ill-matched, though not ill-bred horses, spattered with mud to their ear tips, their long tails tied up in knots. It was driven by an old, gray-headed darkey wearing a low beaver hat, a high white collar, and a pair of yellow buckskin gloves.

It reminded me of the old carriage, with its old driver, Uncle Balla, at home.

But what struck me more than anything else as the vehicle passed me was that it was filled to the brim with fresh, young, country girls,

who, oblivious of the restraining requirements of fashion, were poking their pretty heads out of the windows, three at a time, to look at everything on the street that struck their fancy, and with glowing cheeks and dancing eyes were chattering to each other in the highest spirits, showing their white teeth and going off into fits of laughter over the fun they were making for themselves. Whilst on the back seat a sweet-faced lady, with gray, smooth hair and a patrician profile, smiled softly and happily upon them, well content with their gayety and joy.

They caught my eye, for I never saw more roses gathered in one carriage, and I had stopped and was staring at them open-mouthed, with a warm glow curling about my heart, and a growing tenderness coming over me as I gazed.

I suppose I must have shown this somehow. I may even have sighed, for I thought again of my fishing days and of laughing country girls I knew whom these were so much like.

One of them particularly struck me, and I was sure I had caught her gaze on me, when a hand was laid firmly on my shoulder, and a voice just beside me said:

"My son, when you want a wife, stop a carriage like that and pick one out of it. You might almost do it at random: you could hardly go amiss."

I turned, and there was my Old Gentleman of the Black Stock. He was clad in white linen, as immaculate as fresh snow. I smiled my thanks to him and passed on, whilst he walked up the street.

I had not gone over two steps when some one touched me on the arm, and a gentleman, evidently a stranger in the town, said to me, "I beg your pardon; can you tell me who that old gentleman is?"

I turned, and he indicated my old friend, for at that moment I felt him to be such.

He was walking up the street quite slowly, with his head a little bowed, and his hands, holding his ivory-headed cane, clasped behind his back,—as lonely as an obelisk in a desert.

"No, I am very sorry, but I cannot," I said.

"Oh! I thought I saw you speak to him?" he said, with some disappointment in his tone.

"I did, but I do not know his name."

"I have rarely seen a more striking-looking man. He might have walked out of the pages

of Plutarch,'' said he, meditatively, as he went on.

I do not know just how it was, but I found myself shopping all that day. As soon as I had gotten through with whatever I was doing, I went back up the street and began to search diligently among the throng of vehicles there for an old carriage with a pair of wiry country horses and an old negro driver wearing gauntlets. I went up square after square looking for it among the shining equipages with their pompous coachmen and glossy teams, and then, not finding it, went through the second shopping street.

But all was in vain.

It was plain that the driver was feeding his horses somewhere at a livery stable. So I went even so far as to enter three or four of the larger and more frequented dry-goods stores on the street in hopes of catching a glimpse once more of a pink face and a pair of laughing eyes which I had caught smiling at me out of the window of the old coach.

I had wandered fruitlessly through several long floors, between aisles of women's backs of every shape and species of curve or stiffness,

with attentive clerks or tired-eyed women standing over against them on the other side of the counters, and had just given up my search in despair and was returning somewhat downcast to my office, when I passed a milliner's window and happened to glance in. There were my rose-buds clustered together in front of a large mirror, my special one in the midst of the group, with a great broad-brimmed straw hat covered with roses on top of her little brown head, shading her fresh face,—making, as she stood before the mirror pensively turning her little person from side to side, one of the prettiest pictures in the world.

Fool that I was! I might have known that a girl would go first for a bonnet!

She must have received a compliment just then, though whether it was from one of her sisters or from the glass only. I do not know; for, at the same moment that she turned to her sisters, she suddenly smiled (thank Heaven! the sister stood on the side toward the window. I just loved her for it!)—a smile which lit up her face so that even the oversheltering hat with its lovely roses could not shadow it, but seemed only a bower for the lovelier roses beneath.—Lit up her face? It lit up the world!

I had become so engrossed with the pretty tableau that I had forgotten I might be seen from within quite plainly, and I stood staring at my young beauty through the window, open-eyed and open-mouthed, until I became suddenly aware that she was looking through the glass past her sister, and straight into my eyes. Then I gave quite a jump at my rudeness and rushed away. The look of embarrassment, almost bordering on horror, which was on her face as our eyes met, was all that I saw, and I almost fled toward my office.

I learned afterwards that had I waited a second longer I should have seen her confusion give way to uncontrollable amusement over my flight. And I learned later that her mimicry of my sudden agitation was long the entertainment of her special circle.

If I fled, however, it was only a momentary stampede, which my growing ardor soon checked, and I stopped at the next corner, and crossing over the street took my post and waited to watch from a more secure quarter the exodus from that blessed Goshen.

I had not long to wait, for soon from the door sallied all together the three young nymphs, each under a new, very wide, and—

I have no doubt—very beautiful straw hat. But only one hat now filled my eye—the wide-brimmed creation which served as setting for the charming flower-garden above the yet more charming flower-garden below, which even at that distance I could see glowing in the cheeks of the youngest, and possibly the tallest, of the three sisters.

They passed down the street arm in arm, laughing heartily, especially my little lady in the middle, at something—I learned afterwards it was at my sudden consternation and unexpected flight—and turned in at a dry-goods store,—one which I had already threaded that morning in my vain search for my unknown little lady.

If there was any common though unwritten law against a man's going into a millinery shop, there was, thank Heaven! none against his going into a dry-goods store; at least, if he could devise some want which he might possibly get supplied there. I had the want beyond doubt: that shop now held what within the last few hours I had come to want more than anything else on earth. But a sweetheart, if she were wholly unknown, as happened to be the case with me, would palpably not do; I could

not ask for her. So I cudgelled my brains for something that I might demand if I were halted within.

I finally hit on neckties. Neckties have a sort of halfway place between a woman's wear and a man's gear, and besides, give time in the examination and selection. So, having made this resolution, I ventured in, and found the same rows of feminine backs—augmented somewhat since my last exploration by new additions—bending over piles of every conceivable stuff; and the same assiduous clerks and tired women standing as before on the other side of the counters engaged in a task as hopeless as telling Belshazzar his dream—telling women what they wanted when they did not know themselves.

As I passed on I heard many criticisms and not a few complaints—some harsh, some only petulant—from the women with backs, received, for the most part in silence, by the women without backs.

Suddenly I was startled to find myself quite close to the large hat with the roses which I now knew so well. It was forming a bower for the pretty head, at that moment bending over several pieces of some lawny, white stuff.

The young lady's gloves were off, and the slender little hands were feeling the texture of the fabric with a touch as soft as if it had been a baby's cheek. Her face, which I could see in profile, was deeply serious.

"It is beautiful—beautiful. I wish I could get it," she almost sighed, "but I am afraid it is too dear for me; I have only so much to spend. Do you think you could possibly find anything a little lower and—almost as pretty, that you could show me?" She glanced up at the shop-girl before her with a little smile—I was going to say, almost pitiful; but the expression which came on her face as she looked into the tired eyes above her banished that.

"Are n't you very tired?" she asked suddenly, with the sweetest, tenderest tone in the world. "I should think you would be."

"Oh, it 's a pleasure to wait on you," said the older woman, sincerely, her face lighting up as she turned away to her shelves, pleased at the tone of sympathy.

And who would not have thought so! I, at least, did; and overcome by a sudden feeling, as my young rose-nymph, whose face had lit up at the praise, turned to take a survey of the crowd about her, I, abandoning my idea of neckties, turned and hurried out of the store.

It was a strange feeling, delicious to me. I knew that I must be in love. I did not even know her name; but I knew her eyes, her voice, her heart, and they were enough.

As I came out on the street, there was the old carriage coming slowly along down, with the old driver leaning forward, looking anxiously to one side, as if to recognize some given sign.

"If you want a wife, stop a carriage like that, and take one out of it. Even taking one at random you can hardly go amiss," had said my Old Gentleman of the Black Stock, and I believed him.

I could not resist the temptation to go up and render my first act of assistance to the family. I signed to the driver, and he stopped.

"You are looking for your young mistress?"

"Yes, suh; mistis tell me to come and stop right by two big rocks in front of a red sto'. Dyah's de sto', but I b'lieve dee done move dem rocks. I see 'em heah dis mornin' when I went by!" He leant forward and gave another look.

"They are there still," I said, recognizing the two carriage-stones by his description; "but those carriages hide them."

"Yes, suh; I never see sich folks in my life.

Dee ain' got no manners in de worl'! Dee 'll put dee kerridge right in yo' way, don' keer what you do! And dee won' git out to save yo' life. Mistis told me to be here by three, an'—"

"Why, it 's only half-past one now," I said.

"Yes, suh; but I likes to be sort o' promptual in town! See dem kerridges by dem rocks now! I jes want to git in dyah once, an' I boun' dee oon git me out agin b'fo' my mistises come. I don' like dese city ways, an' I never did like a citified nigger nohow! I got a right good ways to go, too."

"How far do you live from town?" I asked him. I was growing guileful.

"In and about eighteen miles, suh. I start b'fo' light dis mornin'. I comes from Colonel Dale's ole place. 'Hill-an'-Dale' dee calls it."

I knew at once then who my wild rose was. The Dales were among the best old families in the State, and "Hill-and-Dale" was as well known to our people as the capital city: one of the famous country places celebrated for generations as the home of hospitality and refinement.

Colonel Dale had died not very long after the war, from a wound received at Gaines's Mill, and had left a widow and a family of

young daughters, whose reputation for beauty had reached me even before I left my country home, though I had never seen any of them, as "Hill-and-Dale" was in the farthest end of the county, quite fifty miles away from us.

"Well, they are in that store now," I said, to put the old coachman's mind at rest. "At least, one of them is."

"Is dee?" he asked, much relieved. The next second he gave a bow over my head.

"Dyah 's Miss Lizbeth now!" he said in some excitement, trying to attract her attention.

"Miss Lizbeth, Miss Lizbeth," he called. "Heah me, heah me." But it was in vain.

I turned in some confusion; but she was standing under her big straw hat just outside the door, looking alternately up and down the street, evidently expecting some one who had promised to come and had not.

My resolution was taken in a second, though to do it set my heart to thumping against my ribs.

"Wait," I said. "I will tell her for you." And I actually walked up to her, and taking off my hat, said, "I beg your pardon, but I think your driver is there, trying to attract your attention."

"Is he? Thank you. Where?" she said so

sweetly that my already bumping heart began to bound. Then, as I indicated the direction, and she caught the old man's eye, her face lit up with that charming smile, which I can liken to nothing else but sunlight breaking forth on an already sweet and lovely prospect.

"Oh, thank you," she said again, tripping away, whilst I passed on to make it appear that I had only happened accidentally to see her driver's signal.

I turned, however, a few rods farther on, as if quite casually, to get another peep at her.

She stood on the very edge of the curbstone, bending forward, talking very earnestly to her driver out in the street; but just as I turned she caught up her dress with a quick, graceful motion and tripped on tiptoe over to the carriage, showing as she did so just a glimpse of the daintiest pair of ankles in the world. Then the intervening carriages shut her out from view, and I went on.

So the name of my prize was Elizabeth Dale, and I had spoken to her!

I did not fail to pass along the street again —quite indifferently—a few minutes before three, and again at frequent intervals, until more than many minutes after that hour; but

though "them two rocks" were there, a standing monument, and "the red store," hallowed by her having entered it, was there, and many other carriages came and went, the old coach from Hill-and-Dale came not, and neither did its pretty rose-and-sunshine mistress.

The street seemed quite deserted. The town was suddenly empty.

I went home to my boarding-house with new sensations, and if I was in love, I set all rules at defiance, for I ate like a ploughman, and slept that night like a log.

III

BASHAM MILES

I DID not meet my young lady again for a long time, nor shall I pretend that all this while I cherished no other image than hers in my heart. I certainly carried hers there impressed with great clearness for quite a period —for, I should say, several weeks, at least— and I always bore a sweet and pleasant picture of her, never wholly effaced, however much softened by the steadily intervening months.

But I found after a time that there were other eyes besides hers, and that other girls wore roses in their hats and roses under them too. So that although at first I formed all sorts of plans, romantic and otherwise, to meet her, and even carried one idea so far into execution as to purchase a handsomely bound set of Tennyson to send her anonymously, and mark

one or two passages which described her aptly, and should compel her curiosity to penetrate my *almost* invulnerable anonymity, yet courage failed me in face of the questionable act of sending anything anonymously to a young lady whom I did not know, and after a few weeks I made another disposition of the poems, sending them without change of marked passages, and with a note which I considered quite fetching, to a girl whom I did know.

Still, no serious results came from any part of this, and I applied myself somewhat more faithfully to what I was now pleased to call "my practice," and never wholly forgot the old Hill-and-Dale carriage, with the pretty faces laughing together out of the windows, nor became entirely indifferent to the memory of the little Hill-and-Dale lady of the big summer hat and the large sunny eyes. If I ever saw a pretty face with a rose-garden above it, it was very apt to call up a picture of a milliner's window on a May morning. Or if I caught a glimpse of a pair of pretty ankles, I thought of a daintier pair, and a slender, girlish figure tripping with them out into the street.

And once or twice things occurred to remind me strongly of her. Once when I saw in a paper a notice headed, "A pretty Country Wedding

at Hill-and-Dale,'' my heart gave quite a jump into my throat, and when I read that it was the eldest daughter who was married and not the youngest, I was sensible of a feeling of relief.

The sister had married an Episcopal clergyman, whom I knew by reputation as a fine, earnest fellow and a good preacher.

The notice went on to speak of the "well-known beauty'' of the sisters, all of whom had acted as bridesmaids, and it mentioned particularly ''the charming appearance of the youngest, Miss Elizabeth,'' whose character, it stated, was as lovely as her personal beauty might lead one to infer.

The notice evidently was written by a friend. It went on to say that there was a rumor that ''another fair sister'' would soon follow the example of the eldest.

My heart had another flutter and sinking at this, and I could have cursed the vague writer for not giving some intimation as to which sister the report concerned.

Another occasion when I was reminded of the young lady was when I saw the published notice in a newspaper, of the sale of the Hill-and-Dale estate under a Chancery Decree. It

seemed that the old place had finally gone to satisfy long-standing mortgages and later debts accumulated through the years.

This was later on though. I had been reminded of Miss Dale occasionally in the interim.

During the two or three years which had passed since my coming to town I had formed many new acquaintances in the city, and made some friends.

I had, of course, in this time, not only learned the name of my Old Gentleman of the Black Stock, but had also come to know him personally. His speech to me on the street corner that May morning, when, with my heart in my eyes, I was looking into the old Hill-and-Dale carriage, had excited me enough to make me take the trouble to follow him up and learn his name before my interest in the incident subsided. Indeed, my office-boy, William Kemp, proved to be one of his old servants, and still waited on him.

I found that he was Mr. Basham Miles, one of the old residents of the city, and owner of the ancient house and tangled yard at the gate of which I had first encountered him, and where he still resided when he was in town.

He had once been a member of the Bar, and

had had the reputation of being very clever, very eccentric, and very proud.

He lived alone when in the city, and took his meals at the house of one of his neighbors, an old lady, who lived next door but one to him. But he was away from town a good part of his time, both winter and summer, either visiting old friends in the country, summering at some of the smaller and more unfashionable watering-places, or travelling,—no one of my informants knew just where.

He had had a brilliant opening at the Bar; for he was the son of one of the big lawyers of his day, a man who had stood at the head of his profession and had died with what was deemed even better than a national reputation —a State reputation. And he himself had been in partnership with one of the leading lawyers of his own time, a man who had died the recognized head of the local Bar.

Old lawyers still told juicy stories of the ability and skill of Miles and Thompson. But he had suddenly given up practice, abandoned the Bar, gone abroad, and—"dropped out."

No one of my informants knew anything further about him, even if they knew this; for it was only by piecing together bits of recol-

lection and of old tradition at second hand, or Heaven knows at how many hands! that I got this much from the men of my own time.

Of course, there were other stories, bordering on or even touching the scandalous: echoes of old gossip so plainly pieced out and distorted that I will not even give them the currency of a denial.

There was one unvarying suggestion that seemed to occur often enough in the reports of my informants to reach the dignity of what is known to the Law as General Reputation. This was, that it was "something about a woman." Some said about one woman; some said two; some hinted at even more. Some thought it was a scandal; others said that it was a slander; some only had an idea that he was crossed in love, and gave up, soured and disheartened.

The more numerous part credited the first story. Men are always ready to believe a vague scandal of a man, though they may deny a specific charge.

I was interested enough to investigate farther, for, somehow, the idea of associating the base life of a fribble or a debauché with my fine Old Gentleman of the Black Stock, with

his thin, high-bred face, soft and spotless linen, and kindly, firm, gentle voice, seemed too repugnant to entertain.

His countenance was grave, it was true, but it was the gravity of one who had faced sorrow, not shame; his eye was melancholy, but it was calm, and his gaze direct; and his voice, which as much as either the face or the eye tells the true history that lies deep and unchangeable within, was grave and sad, but bore the unmistakable ring of sincerity and command.

So, unwilling to leave one who was somewhat linked in my mind with the object who at that moment engrossed my meditation (for I am speaking of the days succeeding the incident of the rose-filled carriage), I applied myself to the further and more careful investigation of these compromising echoes of vague tradition. And I learned that there was not one grain of truth in any story which imputed to the old gentleman the least act of dishonor or cast the faintest shadow on his history.

The two or three old members of the Bar to whom I applied answered my opening question in almost the same words.

I would ask them, "Tell me something of old Mr. Miles?"

"Miles? Old Mr. Miles? Basham Miles? What about him? He used to be a member of the Bar, and the best lawyer at it. He argued the case of Calthorp against Brown. Have you ever read his argument? It 's the greatest exposition of—Where 's the report? Give me that book, will you?" etc.

"No. But why did he leave the Bar? Was there ever anything—ah,—out of the way about him—any story of—ah—?"

"About Miles? Old Mr. Miles? Basham Miles? Why, no! Who says there was? He was one of the highest men who was ever at the Bar. He left the Bar because—[Hunting through the book.] He gave it up because—Which?—Ah! here it is!—Listen to this.—Why, he gave it up because he did n't need it—had plenty of money without it. I 'd have done the same thing if I had been in his fix. I believe there *was* a woman had something to do with it—jilted him or something, and he never got over it.—Ah! here it is! [Reading.] 'Calthorp's Executor against Brown's Administrator and others.'—Listen to this!"

And then would follow page after page of clear, lucid argument, which only a lawyer would appreciate fully.

"Why, sir, John Marshall could not have beat that! He made the Court reverse itself by that argument, and established that for the law! And I want to tell you that 's not the easiest thing in the world to do, young man."

This was what I got from three or four of the oldest men at the Bar, and I stopped, satisfied. I had established the fact, which I had already believed, that if my old gentleman had "dropped out," it was his own choice.

IV

AN OLD MAN'S INTIMATES

NOT long afterwards I met Mr. Miles. It was at the house of one of the old residents of the city, where I had become an occasional visitor, and where he had come that evening according to a weekly custom to play whist. He remembered me as his street acquaintance, and spoke of our first meeting at his gate, and our talk about the trees.

He made no reference, however, to the incident from which my chief interest in him then sprang. He evidently did not know I was the one to whom he had given the advice about stopping a country carriage for a wife.

The absence of some member of the family with whom he usually played whist seemed to cause him keen disappointment, and he appeared to regard it as so much of a misfortune that, partly through vanity and partly through complaisance, I was induced to take a hand.

I quickly found that I was "outclassed," and that the haphazard, "according-to-myself" game which I then played was worse than nothing. I misled him; forced his hand; lost him tricks, and finally lost him the rubber. This was more than he could stand. He would not play any more.

With a reference to "the rigor of the game," he rose from the table.

The rest of the time he stayed he talked about his health.

I was feeling a little aggrieved over his strictures on my game; but when he had left, my host spoke of him with so much affection, and my hostess with so much pity, that I was quite mollified, and meeting him on the street next day I stopped and spoke to him, asking him about his health, and taking occasion to apologize to him for my wretched performance the evening before, and the annoyance I had caused him.

He appeared not only pleased at my attention, but gratified at my inquiry as to his health, and not only expressed regret for giving an exhibition of what he termed his "constitutional irascibility," but invited me to call and see him, excusing himself for "proposing so

dull a duty'' to a young man as a visit to an old one, by suggesting that he had a few old books and some other things, all old like himself, he said, which I might find of interest for a half-hour.

I went as I had promised, more from a sense of duty, I must admit, than from any other motive, even that of curiosity to see his old books.

But I found, as he had said, that he had a rare collection both of books and of other things, —the rarest I had ever seen,—and he himself seemed just a part of it.

His house itself was a rare one: an example of the fine old double houses, built on a simple and dignified plan, almost square, with that adherence to the simple, classic models, adapted for room, sunshine, and air, which we now call ''Colonial,'' perhaps because it is so long since we departed from them in the vain endeavor to be showy and fine. It was as different from the new houses near it as its master himself was from the other men on the street.

A handsome portico with Doric columns, once white, but now a soft gray, dignified its front. The fine door, with a large fan-shaped, leaded transom above and a brass lock strong

enough to have secured the Bastille, was itself a feature, and admitted you to the ample hall, which ran entirely through the house to where the rear door and a long back double portico beyond it looked out on a tangled garden.

A stairway sufficiently wide to suggest ampleness in the rooms above led winding up on one side of the hall to the upper floor.

The front door was not only equipped with a bell, which, when I pulled the handle, jangled for more than a minute somewhere to the rear outside the house, but it was garnished with a handsome, highly polished, old brass knocker of a classical design. Everything was solid, and had once been handsome, but struck me now as sadly out of repair. Indeed, an air of neglect and loneliness seemed to pervade the whole place.

It was not until I had both rung and knocked several times that an elderly negro woman came around the side of the house and, after looking at me with an air of inspection, asked whom I wanted to see.

I found things much the same way within that they were without. The walls were hung with paintings, some of which seemed to me fine, but they were dim and blistered, and the frames were all dingy and old.

The room I was shown into was furnished with old mahogany furniture rich with age and was filled with handsome things; but everything appeared to me to be placed without regard either to fitness or comfort. The chairs were all ranged back stiffly against the wall, and vases and other bric-a-brac were scattered around in a pell-mell, hopeless fashion that was distressing.

The library, into which I was at length shown, was the only exception to this condition. It was large and airy and was evidently a living-room, and the fine old books, many of them in rich binding, redeemed everything.

Yet here likewise were the signs of neglect which spoke from every spot: books piled on tables and chairs, and even on the floor, in a confusion which nobody but one long familiar to it could have understood.

My host, however, who met me most graciously when I was at length shown into the library, seemed to divine where things were in that room, at least, and made my visit so agreeable that instead of passing one half-hour with him I spent the evening. He lived almost entirely in the past.

"An old man like myself," he said, "has to live in the past. My friends are all there."

He possessed a knowledge of books which appeared to me rare, and what was more, he had that delightful art of endowing books of which he talked with a certain personality which made them seem like living beings. He did not quote books so much as he made them speak for themselves. In his mouth they were not books, but the men who wrote them. He had evidently lived with them much. He brought their authors in and made them talk with you.

He appeared particularly fond of the Poets and the Essayists, though he declared there were very few of either nowadays who were sincere.

"They are the true philosophers," he declared. "When you find a sincere man in a book, sir, cherish him. He is like a sincere man in life: you know him at once, and he is *rara avis*. The old ones were sincere. There was something in the time that made men sincere. Shakespeare, of course" (I remember he said), "because he knew the Human Soul, and could not help it. It was as if he had stood face to face with God, and dared not tell anything but Truth.

"Milton was sincere, because he was a fanatic; Bacon, because he was too wise not to be."

Of the moderns, he said, old Johnson was almost the only Essayist who was always sincere, and that was his value. You could always count on him. He was, moreover, "a man of heart; a clear, vigorous man who saw straight, and told it as he saw it."

The others were: "Nearly all posing, writing either for popularity or for some other miserable end."

"Why, sir," he said, "I have piles of them there I will not even put on my shelves; I will not admit them to the companionship of gentlemen. The poets, at least, try to do something; some of them do. Goldsmith, for all his fopperies, was sincere, because he was a poet. His pen inspired him. It was the key that turned on the divine fluid. Johnson said of him, you know, that no man was more foolish till he took up his pen, or more wise when he took it up. Wordsworth was always sincere for the same reason. They had a high idea of their profession, as poets and preachers must have."

I asked him about Carlyle and Emerson, for I was just then discovering them. He admitted the sincerity of both; but Carlyle he did not like.

"He is always ill-tempered and sour, and

is forever sneering at others. He is Jeremiah, without his inspiration or his occasion," he said of him. "He is not a gentleman, sir, and has never forgiven either the world or himself for it."

"Do you not think he writes well?" I demanded.

"Yes, sir, he writes vigorously,—I suppose you mean that,—but it is not English. I do not know just what to term it. It was a trick with him, a part of his pedantry. But when I want acerbity I prefer Swift."

Emerson he put on a much higher plane than Carlyle; but though he admitted his sincerity, and ranked him as the first American literary man, he did not read him much.

"He is a kindly man," he said, "and has 'wrought in a sad sincerity.' But he preaches too much for me, and he is all texts. When I want preaching I go to church."

"At least, I do when I can find it," he said after a pause. "That is not so often these days."

His eyes kindled.

"The Pulpit has lost its power, sir: thrown away its best prerogative—the gift of preaching. The Clergy no more preach with power,

because they no more believe with strength. They find many of the old dogmas undermined and worthless, and think the whole structure is tottering. So they set to work to build up the entire fabric anew. They waste their puny strength laying a few sticks about the foundation. They do not apprehend that deep down lies the solid rock unshaken, and that on this alone Man's spiritual nature craves to rest. The Roman Church knows this. It is wise, for it is the garner house of experience.

"Why should I go to hear a young man, of far less knowledge than myself, holding forth to worldly people worldly considerations to induce them to embrace a religion of which the founder preached the blessedness of Sorrow! The poorest preacher, sir, is impressive so long as he believes himself the Minister of God. I may not accept his message, but if he believes in his mission I shall respect him. If, however, he questions his own credentials I will not listen to him.

"But I am getting to preaching myself," he said, with a smile. "We were speaking of the Essayists?

"After all," he said, "the best of these Essayists to me is the first, Plutarch; and next

to him the second, Montaigne. Plutarch is as modern as if he had just written, because he knew Human Nature. Human Nature is always the same. Montaigne drew from Plutarch, and the others from Montaigne. They have all been pillaging him ever since he wrote. He was a man who knew himself as he was, and had the wit and the courage to be truthful. Montaigne was not so great as Plutarch, because he was less spiritual. His time was not so great. But he knew the Human Mind, as Shakespeare knew both the Mind and the Heart. Why, sir," he added, with unwonted enthusiasm, "I am enough like Montaigne to be his embodied spirit. When I read Montaigne I feel as if I were reading myself. It is a pleasure to me to know that they are the two which we have some grounds to believe Shakespeare read.

"You cannot get a man nowadays to tell you what he really feels or thinks. Feeling has gone out of fashion. Every one is trying to repress his feeling, and he does not think at all. Convention has taken the place of Originality. Why, sir, we are all trying to say what we think our neighbor thinks."

It does not seem to me now, recalling it, that what he said was altogether sound, but there

was something about his manner in saying it which impressed me. He appeared to be in strong opposition to the rest of the world, and to hold a correct position, but to have a tendency to push his views to extremes. He did not see things precisely as they were, but through a medium or atmosphere of some kind which threw them a little out of line, as if a man might look at objects through a pane of old, uneven glass.

I observed the same tendency when he spoke of old times and things. His talk of old days was delightful, but even this was critical, his reminiscences being, I thought, all a little tinged by something—I would not call it sourness, but just a bit off from the sweet savor of perfect mellowness,—as if at some period he had been shut off a little too much from the sun, and had ripened under the shadow of Disappointment.

When I came away he accompanied me to the door, and his last words surprised me:

"Young man, Domestic happiness is worth all the Fame in the world!"

It was a cry out of the dark.

I left him with something of sadness, passing out of the wide, cheerless hall and through the old weather-blistered door, and I was not

aware until I got into the sunshine without, how chilly I had been within. I had an indescribable feeling of half sorrow, half pity for the old gentleman, which did not change until I met him again out-of-doors, calm, dignified, and serene, with his courtly manner.

I also had a feeling of sadness for myself. I came out of his presence half in love with a picture of a young girl in a flower-trimmed hat —half in love with a memory.

I met the old gentleman occasionally after that, and always with a feeling of mingled regard and sympathy. I could hardly tell why I had this feeling; for I set him down as one of the most self-contained and fortunate of men —a man who, with enough means to gratify his tastes and follow his own bent, chose to live just as he pleased.

In fact, I think I began rather to envy him, for my little affair in which the missent Tennyson figured had not ended very satisfactorily to me: the vicarious recipient of the volumes had smiled more kindly than I liked on a smooth-cheeked young man who had an undeniable advantage over me in the silkiness of his mustache, the freshness of his complexion, and the nimbleness of his heels, not to mention the matter of

income, in which he probably quadrupled mine. But I not only believed these were the only advantages he had over me, but was conceited enough to have even a mild contempt for him, which, nevertheless, did not prevent my young lady from at first openly favoring him, and afterwards bestowing on him not only herself, but my Tennyson as well, side-marked passages and all.

I had not even the poor consolation of thinking that he would see the passages and be jealous, for I do not believe he ever opened the book, or, for that matter, any book in his life. Yet when I saw them together they were happier than two turtle-doves.

Anyhow, the affair left me with a certain feeling of discontent, not only with the world at large, but—a much harder thing to bear!—with myself also, and I rather envied my Old Gentleman of the Black Stock his quiet, untroubled life.

About this time the vision of the little country girl with the big rose-covered hat began to come back to me again, and took its place once more in my recollection.

V

OF THE FRAGRANCE OF ROSEMARY

DURING these years I had come to know many elderly people in the town besides the old lawyers and Mr. Miles,—among them several old ladies. I have always had a fancy for old ladies. I was brought up in the house with a number of them, and as I am fonder of little girls than I am of boys, so old ladies appeal to me more than old men. They fill a place in life that would be quite bare without them. There is a certain something about them quite indescribable. They make much of the mellowness of life, and not a little of its fragrance. Some of them have a beauty with which the beauty of the most radiant belle can hardly compare.

But it is not of this beautiful class only that I speak. Even when they are faded and worn, when all tints have vanished and all lines

have subsided, with Age which is content to acknowledge itself graciously as Age, and does not pretend to a belated Adolescence, there is a charm all its own. There is a fragrance of rue and of rosemary, as well as of roses and violets, and thyme and lavender have their sweetness no less than heart's-ease and lilies.

There were more of these old ladies in my city than anywhere else I ever knew, and I had come quite naturally to know a number of them. They seemed to be found fittingly in the older and cheaper part of the town, where the ancient, once comfortable houses still lingered, though it was no longer fashionable, or most convenient, and as my practice had not yet enabled me to emigrate to the desirable new quarter, I had quite naturally met a number of them.

There are certain characteristics which are common to them all. They all dress in black; they all live in the past, and talk of your grandmother as if she were your aunt, completely forgetting your mother; and they all smile on the little children they pass in the street.

I am rather fond of children myself, and have always followed a habit of making friends with those on the street, a practice from which I have at times found certain conveniences to

follow. There are some inconveniences, of course,—for instance, in seasons of snow, and also at other times,—but they are inconsiderable.

Occasionally at those recurring seasons when tops come like winged ants on warm days in swarms out of the ground, or from somewhere else, I had to submit to the ignominy of being stopped on the corners, and compelled to display my inability to make a top do anything except flop around on its side like a headless chicken, before a party of young ruffians, every one of whom could "plug" a top with diabolical accuracy, or could "whip" it high in air and bring it down whirling like a buzz-saw.

Or I would be held up on the sidewalk by a gang of curly-haired footpads and compelled, against my strongest protests, to jump a rope held by two of a group of pestilent little creatures, who would shout with laughter as they knocked my hat off in the dirt, threw sand into my eyes, and on my retreat pursued me down the street with jeers of derision.

Or I would have to play a game of marbles, while I lost, or stood the chance of losing, a client as well as the game.

But, on the whole, I think this had its com-

pensations, and my acquaintance with the old ladies and the children in my quarter played an accidental part in my knowledge of the history of the Old Gentleman of the Black Stock.

Oftener than once, indeed, as I was playing with the children, he came along and stopped to look at us.

"Lucky dog!" he said to me once as he passed. "I would rather be able to play marbles than to play monarch." And he went on his way rather slowly.

VI

BASHAM MILES'S HISTORY

BUT this was the way I came to hear of his history.

I was calling one evening on an old lady, whom I knew as a friend of my mother's, and who had been good enough to call on me when I was sick once, and another old lady happened to come to see her whilst I was there. Her visit, as I recollect, was to tell her friend of some old schoolmate of theirs from whom she had lately had a letter, and who had sent Mrs. Gray a message in it. She had brought the letter with her, and the two friends read it, and talked about the writer,—who they both agreed must be older than either of them by several years, —and about her family and history. And then they drifted back to their girlhood, when they all three had been together at the Springs one summer. It was forty odd years before; yet they went over it all, recalled incidents, got

them straight between them, discussed and enjoyed them again, down to the partners they had, the flowers they had been given by them, and the dresses they wore at the ball: all as if it had been yesterday.

They had grown young again.

In the course of their discussion the name of Basham Miles occurred more than once.

One of them declared that some incident occurred "the summer Basham Miles was so attentive to Betsey Green." The other thought not, but that it was the summer after; and she tried to refresh her friend's memory by reminding her of two immense bouquets their friend Betsey Green had had, one of which they thought Basham Miles had given her, whilst they could not make out who had given the other. And then it had turned out that Basham Miles had given her neither, but had given his to Anita Robinson, whom he had just met, and whom he danced with that night; and one of Betsey's had been given her by an old gentleman from South Carolina, for whom she had sung, and Burton Dale had "come back" and given her the other. "And that was the beginning of his success," she said.

The circumstance was remembered, but it

failed to fix the year in my friend's memory.

Then the other said:

"Why, don't you remember, that night I had on a lilac mull, and you had on a white embroidered muslin?"

"Oh, yes, to be sure!"

This fixed it. The girl's white muslin recalled it, with all its long attendant train of circumstances, after nearly fifty years of activity and change.

"My! my! How long ago that was!—And yet it seems only yesterday!" said my friend quietly, softly passing her thin hands over her black dress.

Her eyes were no longer looking before her, but back at the Past.

I wondered as I observed her, what she was thinking of in that forty odd years where lay embalmed and folded away so many things,—love-making, marriage, wifehood, motherhood, widowhood, age;—perhaps (for the thin hands still smoothed softly the old black dress) of the girl's embroidered muslin, and the young girl it held in its fresh folds that night. Her thoughts were not painful, whatever they were, for a pleasant and placid air rested on her face, and when she at length emerged from her reverie it was with a gentle smile.

"Yes, it was a long time ago!"

Her friend, too, had been looking back into the Past.

"What a handsome man Basham Miles was then!" she said, reflectively.

"I never thought so; there was always a self-consciousness about him which marred his looks to me," said my friend.

"Oh, I think he was a perfect Adonis! I wonder if he has ever regretted not marrying? I think he was really in love with Betsey."

"No, not he!" said my friend. "He was too well satisfied with himself. I am very sure Betsey never thought he was in love with her. I would n't give Burton Dale, with his kind old heart, for a hundred of him, with all his cleverness."

The conversation had interested me, and I had sat still, putting off my departure, and feeling a certain interest in their talk and the train of reflections it had called up in me. Still, I did not put the parts together; I simply felt vaguely rather than saw anything which concerned me personally. I had certainly never thought of old Mr. Basham Miles as an Adonis, or as a careless and arrogant heart-breaker, and I followed the novel idea off into reverie and vacancy.

I was recalled by the mention of the name "Hill-and-Dale."

The old lady who had worn the "lilac mull," and who was much the haler of the two, was speaking softly, and I had lost a part of the conversation.

"Yes," she said, "her health has been very poor ever since the birth of her last infant, and then her mother's death, just after Hill-and-Dale was sold, told greatly on her; so she does not get to see me as often as she did when she first came to live here, last spring."

"I must go and see her," said my friend, softly. "I will try and get there to-morrow." She looked away out of the window.

"I would have been before, but I walk so badly now, I find myself putting things off. She brought her youngest sister to see me not very long ago—very like Betsey! I could almost have thought it was Betsey herself as she sat by me and talked to me. You remember that way Betsey had of stroking your hand when she was sitting by you talking earnestly?"

"Elizabeth? Yes, she is like Betsey. But not so pretty," said the other old lady, putting up her spectacles with elaborate care and rising to leave.

"I thought she was rather prettier; but then I see so badly these days. Good-bye; you must come again. Don't wait for me to come; I can't walk much, and—"

"Oh, pshaw! Malviny Gray, you have been trading on those three months of superior age to me ever since we went to school to old Mr. Persico when you were twelve years old, and I am not going to put up with it any longer. You are as arrogant about it as Basham Miles used to be about his intellect! Good-bye." And they kissed, laughing at their pleasantry and going over many new things and some old ones, and starting to take leave of each other, and beginning again over and over, as is the way with their sex of every age.

I myself was leaving; so I handed the visitor down the steps, and asked to see her home; but she positively declined this attention, declaring smilingly that I would think her "as old and helpless as Malviny Gray."

I, however, insisted, declaring guilefully that my way lay in the same direction with hers, though I had not the least notion where she lived. And she finally yielded, and I learned afterwards was much pleased at my attention. In fact, I have found that it is the small

incidents not the great ones that make up life.

As I went home I saw Basham Miles turn in at his gate a little before me. His great-coat collar was turned up, and he had a comforter around his neck, although the air seemed to me quite bracing, and as he slowly climbed his broad steps and let himself in at his old stained door, I thought he appeared more than usually feeble.

VII

IN WHICH BASHAM MILES LOSES HIS HAT

I DID not meet the old gentleman or see him again on the street for some little time. But one day as I turned into a new street, which had been cut through and built up recently, I saw a figure some distance ahead of me all muffled up and walking with the slow and painful steps of an old man.

When I was still about half a block from him his hat blew off and was caught in a sudden gust of wind and whirled out into the street.

He stepped slowly down after it, but before he could reach it a young girl, who had evidently seen him through a window, opened the door and ran down from one of the little new tidy houses on the opposite side, tripped out into the street and caught the truant hat and restored it to its owner. And then, as he attempted to wrap his comforter, which had become disarranged, more closely around his neck,

she reached up and wrapped it deftly about him herself, tucking it in with great care, and, as he thanked her warmly,—which I could see even at a distance,—she turned, laughing, and tripped back across the street, her brown hair blown about her little head, and ran up the steps into her house, giving me just a glimpse of dainty ankles, which reminded me of Elizabeth Dale that sunny day so long ago.

I had recognized old Mr. Basham Miles at a distance as his hat blew off, but I did not recognize the young lady who had rendered him the kindly service. Indeed, I did not see her face. I was sure, however, that she was a stranger, for I knew every girl on the street, by sight at least.

I was so busy speculating as to who the graceful stranger was, and looking at her windows as I passed, that I forgot my intention to overtake old Mr. Miles, who might have told me, and he turned the corner before I could catch up to him, and went down a cross street, so that I did not get a chance to speak to him. He was walking more rapidly than I had thought.

As I was late, I thought it was just as well, for I had observed that when I met him on the street now he talked more and more about

his health; and my chief regret at not having caught him was that I did not learn who the dainty-looking girl was.

As it turned out, I discovered later that he did not know her.

The next time I met him he referred to the episode himself and asked me to find out who she was, and let him know.

"She reminded me strongly of some one I knew once—of an old friend of mine," he said, half reflectively. "These resemblances are very curious." He was speaking now more to himself than to me.

I suggested that I might find some difficulty in discovering her.

"Difficulty?" he said. "Why, sir, when I was your age I knew every pretty girl in town!" He looked at me keenly.

"Was she pretty?" I asked. "I did not see her face."

"Pretty! She was a beauty, sir! She looked like an angel. And she is a lady. I don't know that a man is a judge of the beauty of a person who runs after and catches his hat for him," he added, his deep eyes lighting faintly with a little half-gleam of amusement. "What between rage and gratitude he is not in a very

judicial temper. But she seemed to me a beauty; and she resembled one who was a beauty. Yes, sir, she was a beauty.'' And he sighed and turned away.

VIII

OF A MAKER OF MUD PIES

ONLY a day or two after this conversation —I am not sure that it was not the next day—I happened to be passing along a little street out in the same direction with, but several blocks beyond, the quarter where my old friend and I had our residences on the border of respectability. The ground was so broken there that the street was not half built up, and such houses as there were were of the poorest class.

As I passed along my attention was attracted by a little crowd gathered around some object in the middle of the street. They were shouting with laughter, and my curiosity prompted me to go up and look to see what amused them.

I found it to be a very small and dirty little boy, who certainly presented an amusing enough spectacle.

He was so little that it was wonderful how so much dirt could have found lodgment on so

small a person. His clothes were good,—better than those of the children around him,—but were covered with mud from top to bottom, as if he had been making mud pies—which, indeed, he had been doing—and had proposed to bake them on himself. His hands were caked with mud, and his round face also was plentifully streaked with it. Where it showed through, the skin looked fair and the face delicate and refined. He might have been a muddy Cupid.

He did not seem at all disturbed or even disconcerted by the crowd about him, or the amusement he was causing, or the questions put to him. All of them he answered promptly and with perfect coolness. The only difficulty was in understanding him; he was so small that he could not talk plainly. And, besides, he was very busy with a most attractive pile of wet sand.

There is something in wet sand which no man-child can resist. I wonder if it is not a shred of our heredity, from the time when we burrowed in the ground.

"What is your name?" they were asking him.

"Urt'n Ale Avith,"—indifferently; for he was much engaged.

"What?"

"Urt'n Ale Avith,"—in a different key, while he gave a swipe across his face which left new streaks.

"What?—Urt'n Ale Avith?"

"Nor! Urt'n—Ale—Avith!"—with some impatience.

They changed the question.

"Where do you live?"

"At 'ome." He returned to his task, the boring of a small tunnel with one little black finger.

"Where is that?"

"At 'ome!"—evidently struck with their denseness.

"What street?" asked some one.

"Witchen Cheet."

"Witchin Street?"

"Nor! *Witchen* Cheet!"

"Where is that?" the crowd inquired of each other. No one knew.

"What did you leave home for, honey?" asked a woman, stooping over him and putting her hand on him.

"Wunned away!" he answered promptly, with a reawakening of interest, and a sparkle in his blue eyes at the recollection.

"Runned away?"

"Mh—hmh," with a nod of satisfaction, and a dimple at the corner of his little muddy mouth.

"What did you run away for?"

"I d'n' know."

He stood up.

At this a child who had worked its way into the inner circle about him gave a shrill explosion of laughter. Little Mudpie's face flushed suddenly, and he walked up, and doubling his dirty fist, struck the child as hard a blow as he could, which caused a universal shout, and set the children to whirling in the street, screaming with laughter.

For the first time the boy showed signs of distress; his little dirty mouth began to pucker and his little round chin to tremble, and he dug one chubby black fist in his eye.

"Warn do 'ome," he said, in a low voice.

"Yes, you shall go. Don't cry, honey." And several women, pressing around him, began to pet him. One of them asked: "Don't you want somethin' to eat? Ain't you hungry?"

"Mh—hmh—Yes, ma'am," he said, with a little whimper and correction of his manners.

"All right: I 'll give you something. Come along, and then we 'll take you home."

On this several women with motherly kind-

ness began to talk as to which could give him something quickest.

"Which way is your home, little man?" I asked, taking advantage of the break in the crowd.

He turned and waved his little arm, taking in half the horizon.

"Dat way."

At least, it was the half of the horizon toward which I was going, so I said to the women that if they would give him something to eat, I would undertake to get him home safely. This division of labor was acceptable, and the woman who had first suggested feeding him having given him two large slices of bread covered thick with jam, and others having contributed double as much more, I took the little stray's wrist in default of a hand,—both of those members being engaged trying to hold his store of bread,—and having taken leave of his friends, we started out westward to find his home.

We had not gone more than fifty steps when he said, "I tired," or something as near that as a mouth filled with bread and jam would allow.

This was a new phase of the case. I had not counted on this. But as there was no help for

it, when he had repeated the statement again, and added the request, "Pee tote me," I picked him up, dirt and all, and marched on.

It was a little funny anyhow to find myself carrying such a bundle of boy and mud, to which was added the fact that every now and then lumps of blackberry jam were being smeared over my clothes and face and stuck in my hair, a process to which the warmth of the day did not fail to contribute its part; but it was only when I got into my own section of the town that I fully appreciated the humorousness of the figure I must cut.

I would gladly have put my little burden down, but he would not be so disposed of.

Prosperity is the nurse of Arrogance, and under prosperity my little man had grown a tyrant, and whenever I proposed putting him down, he said so firmly, "No, no; I tired! pee tote me," that I was forced to go on.

The first person I met that I knew was old Mr. Miles. He was muffled up, but yet was walking somewhat more vigorously than when I last saw him on the street. He stopped, in apparent doubt as to my identity, and looked rather pleased as well as amused over my appearance, but expressed no surprise when I made a half-explanation.

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"Why, Burton ! Where on earth have you been ?"

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The child, possibly touched by his pale, thin face, but more probably sensible of his sympathy, suddenly held out his chubby, black hand with a piece of jam-smeared bread in it, and said, "Warn tome?"

It manifestly pleased the old fellow, for he actually bent over and made a pretence of biting off a piece.

When I left him I took a side street.

I was going to a police station to learn if any notice had been left there of a lost child, but as I passed through a rather retired street, to avoid observation from people I might know, I heard a musical voice behind me exclaim:

"Why, Burton! Where on earth have you been?"

Something about the voice struck me like a memory from the past. Turning, I stood face to face with Elizabeth Dale. Had she been an angel I could not have been more overcome.

The three or four years since I had seen her in the milliner's shop had added to her beauty; had filled out her slim, girlish figure, and had given thoughtfulness to her rosy face and made it gracious as well as sweet.

She was too much engrossed with the child, whom I quickly discovered to be her nephew, to notice me at first, and I found myself

abandoned by my charge, who immediately deserted me, leaving, however, abundant traces of himself on my person, and climbed into the outstretched arms of his pretty aunt without a word, and began to hug and kiss her with all his might. Nor did I blame him. In fact, I should have liked to be as small as he, to have enjoyed the same blessed privilege.

As she turned half away from me, with the boy in her arms, I recognized her on the instant as the handsome girl who had picked up old Mr. Miles's hat for him that day in the street.

The joyousness of her nature was testified to in her peals of laughter over her little nephew's extraordinary appearance, and her loveliness of character was proven both by the affection with which the child choked and kissed her, and the sweetness with which she received his embraces, muddy and jam-besmeared as he was. All she said was: "Oh, Burton! is n't that enough? You 'll ruin aunty's nice dress."

But Burton only choked and kissed her the harder.

I offered to take him and relieve her, but she declined this, and Mudpie would not have

come even if she would have let him. He knew when he was well off. He just clung the closer to her, patting her with his chubby hand, and rubbing his dirty cheek against her pretty one with delighted enjoyment, saying, "I 'ove my aunty,—I 'ove my aunty."

And as she smiled and thanked me with her gracious air for my part in his rescue, I began to think that, faith! I more than half did so, too.

The next day I met Elizabeth Dale on the street, entirely by accident—on her part. I may almost say, it was accidental on my part also, for I had been walking up and down and around blocks for two hours before she added her light to the sunshine without.

She was gracious enough to stop and give me a message of thanks from her sister, Mrs. Davis, for my kindness to her young prodigal, and she added that if he had not eaten of the husks of the swine, he had, at least, looked as if he had played with them.

It was a memorable interview for me; for it was the first time I ever had what might be called a real conversation with Elizabeth Dale. I was guileful and stretched it out, claiming, I remember, a much closer acquaintance with

the Reverend Peterkin Davis than I had ever thought before of doing. She even said her sister had written and posted me her thanks, but had commissioned her if she saw me again, to say she would be very glad to have me call and give her "the privilege of thanking me in person"; so she was pleased to express it.

After that, of course, I felt I could do no less than call, and I was so gracious about giving her sister "the privilege" she requested, that I called that very evening; and as her sister happened to have a headache, and I saw only the younger sister, I called again only a few evenings afterward. For by this time Miss Elizabeth Dale and I were friends, and I now think I was almost beginning to be more.

I became suddenly a somewhat regular attendant on the Reverend Dr. Davis's church.

IX

THE CARVED HEART

I DID not see old Mr. Miles, to tell him that I had discovered his young benefactress, for Youth is forgetful in the sunshine of prosperity, and I did not call on him immediately.

One afternoon as I passed along his street he was sitting out on the street under the old beech tree, all muffled up in his overcoat; but I was going to pay a call on "Witchen Cheet," and was in somewhat of a hurry, so did not stop, and when I was thinking of getting ready to call on him some time afterward, William Kemp told me he had left town for the summer.

I did not think of him again for a long time. My thoughts were so occupied; for I was not the only person that stayed in town that summer. Miss Elizabeth Dale was there also, and though she went off once, to my great discontent, to visit some relatives in the country for

a few weeks, she was in the city most of the summer.

It was astonishing how completely her absence depopulated the town and how equally her presence filled it. I heard other men speak of the city being deserted, but after she returned I did not find it so.

I do not think that I ever thought of being in love with her as a practical matter. I never dreamed of the possibility of her being in love with me. She was far too beautiful and too popular ever to think of a poor young lawyer like myself. In fact, marriage was something on which I might dream, but I had never seriously contemplated it. I thought I should marry some day, as I thought I should die some day, but I certainly had never thought as yet of marrying Elizabeth Dale. My dream then was rather of an heiress and a large mansion, as it had formerly been a princess and a palace; and meantime I lived in the third floor of a small boarding-house, and never dreamed that Elizabeth Dale would think of me for a minute. As far as I went was timorously to send her flowers, or worship her beauty and hate furiously every man who had the impertinence to look at her.

But summer is a dangerous time in a Southern City. The true life of the South comes out only in Summer. Then it flowers. Then the verandas become drawing-rooms, and receptions are held on the front steps. It is one of the reasons why life in a Southern city is easier than in a Northern one. It is no groundless superstition that gives the Moon a power to affect the Mind. The Providence that tempers the wind to the shorn lamb, made the Summer for the portionless girl. Given soft white raiment and the moonlight of a Summer night, the Summer girl need ask no favors of her satin-clad winter sister.

How I blessed that summer for the ease with which I met Elizabeth Dale! If I used to see her almost every evening, stroll with her on the shady streets, row on the placid river, read to her, think of her and plan for her a great deal more than I did of my practice,—which of late had really grown, as was quite fortunate for the little florist at the corner above me, though it was still far below the large and lucrative business which was to be my stepping-stone to the chief-justiceship,—it was only as of a beautiful being whose mere smile was more than all other rewards, and all that I

dared aspire to. It was enough for me to live in the same town with her.

As will be seen then, I was not at this time in love with Miss Elizabeth Dale; I only admired her, and hated those who were.

Almost the only time I thought of old Mr. Miles that summer was one evening when Elizabeth Dale and I were strolling through the old street on which his house stood. She was arrayed in a simple white dress, as angels and young girls should be, and she carried a large pink rose, which I had selected with some care for her at my little florist's. I had hoped that she would wear the rose, but she did not; she only carried it in her hand.

As we passed slowly along, exchanging the pleasant trivialities which two young people deal in in such cases, the old yard stretching back looked cool and inviting under its big trees. The seat under the old beech looked convenient and sequestered, and an air of quietude and calm seemed to rest on everything. I suggested going in, which surprised her, but I told her the owner was a friend of mine, and was absent from the city, and then informed her that he was the old gentleman whose hat she had picked up in the street.

The gate was tied up, and I was about to cut

the fastening, when she said she would climb over it, which she did, with my aid, with the agility of a fawn.

She must have seen the look of surprised admiration on my tell-tale face, for she said, with mounting color in her cheeks:

"Country training. I fear I never shall get used to city ways."

"Heaven forbid!" I said.

We wandered about for a while, and then came to a stop under the old beech, which showed on its gray, scarred trunk the rough traces of many a schoolboy's pride or lover's devotion. As we looked at it, she gently stuck my rose in her dress.

Most of the carving on the trunk was old, for few entered that secluded yard of late, and much was indecipherable.

One pair of broad initials, high up, enclosed in a large heart, I made out as "B. M." and "E. G."; but my companion did not entirely agree with me. The "B. M." she thought I was probably correct about, but as to the "E. G." I was only possibly so.

"Those letters should stand for my mother," she said softly. "Only she was always Betsey."

"Or they might stand, 'For Example,'" said

I, with the light wit of a young man. "Now, if I just cut 'D.' after that, and change the 'B. M.,' it would be all right. I should have followed the example."

"Why, it would be like sacrilege!" she said, her large eyes resting on the tracing above us. "Whoever they were, they were, no doubt, two lovers, and that old scar may be the only trace left of them on earth."

I wished, as I glanced at her, I could have caused the look in her eyes as they rested on those relics of that far-off romance.

I do not know whether it was that our conversation began to grow a little too grave after that, but she suddenly decided that we had better be going home, and notwithstanding my protests, she rose and started.

This was the only time she went with me into the old yard, though I often pressed her to go again, and it was the only time I remember that we ever spoke of old Mr. Miles.

I mentioned to William Kemp that I had visited the grounds, as he was in some sort their custodian.

"Yes, suh, I see you," he said. "Jes' mek yo'self at home."

This was all he said, but it suddenly made me feel as if William were my confidant.

X

SHOWING THAT LOVE IS STILL A NATIVE OF THE ROCKS

AS the summer passed and the autumn came, I began to grow restless and unhappy. The trees had lost their greenness, and the town was taking on its autumn look. And my happy summer evenings, with strolls along the moonlit summer streets, or drifting out on the river, were gone with the greenness of the leaves, and something had come like a frost over me and my happiness.

I could not tell just what it was, unless it were the frequent visits to town of a young man, named Goodrich, who lived in another State and a larger city.

I had met Mr. Goodrich once or twice in the early summer, and had thought nothing of him: not as much as I thought of several others who used to sit on Mrs. Davis's front porch on "Witchen Cheet" and interfere with

my enjoyment there; but now he was back in the city, staying at one of the biggest hotels, and spending most of his time—all of it, I declared—at Mrs. Davis's.

I never knew before what Diogenes felt when Alexander came between him and the sun.

I met this Alexander every time I went there, and though I do not think I would ever have been base enough to murder him, I would cheerfully have seized and dropped him into some far-off dungeon to pass the rest of his natural life in painful and unremitted solitude.

My hostility to him was not at all tempered by the fact that he was very good-looking, had good manners, and was reported to be exceedingly rich; nor even by the further fact that Miss Dale was going off somewhere to teach that year, her scholastic term beginning a month or two later than usual, on account of the absence in Europe of the lady who had engaged her.

I gave myself so many airs about Mr. Goodrich's "continued business" (for such was the cause assigned for his protracted stay among us), and made myself so generally disagreeable,—a faculty which I possess in a high degree of development on occasion,—that finally

Miss Dale, on some exceptional outbreak, gave me clearly to understand that she would put up with no more of my arrogance, and sent me about my business.

The exact cause of our rupture was as follows:

I had for some time, whenever I called on Miss Dale, either found Mr. Goodrich settled comfortably in the little veranda—"Planted like a tree!" I termed it,—or soon after I had taken my post, he appeared with the regularity of a sidereal body.

I would not have admitted that I was jealous of him to save his life, and in my present frame of mind, hardly to save my own. But jealous! I was jealous of the wind for toying with her hair and of the sun for bathing her in its light.

Naturally, as I know now,—perversely, as I thought then, certain members of Miss Dale's family threw no obstacles in Mr. Goodrich's way. I asserted that they brazenly pursued him, and I always sat lance-in-rest for them, a course which came near being my undoing.

Heaven, however, after some chastening, was good to me.

My rival, like most young men, was full of

himself. He had travelled, and he loved to talk of his experiences and was not unappreciative of his possessions. He would spend lavishly on some personal gratification and then skimp over some little thing which instinct should have made him do generously. I saw the joints in his harness and aimed my shafts dexterously.

I viewed with inward rage his deliberate investment of what I now deemed my especial prize; but I treated him outwardly with malignant courtesy.

I avow this deceitfulness now, because I found him afterwards a good fellow.

It was only occasionally that I treated myself to the luxury of a direct thrust.

One evening, one of the members of Miss Dale's household, who I thought espoused my rival's side too warmly, and was too much given to talking of him in Miss Dale's presence, was telling of his experience with London tailors. Mr. Goodrich had, according to this faithful historian, had some clothes made in London, during "his last visit there," which had fitted him perfectly there; but on his arrival here, strange to relate, he had unaccountably found them too small for him. The lady could not account for it. I, whose excursions

had hardly been ever more than "from the blue bed to the brown," using another's wit, hazarded the conjecture that possibly Mr. Goodrich was not as big a man in London as he appeared to be here.

This, after a moment, served to change the subject.

I was not, however, always as happy as this.

In Love, as in Diplomacy, a blunder is sometimes worse than a crime. I had committed the grave blunder of falling too deeply in love to act with judgment. Like "the shepherd in Virgil," I had "become acquainted with Love and found him a Native of the Rocks."

I was, in fact, much more deeply sunk in that tenacious soil than I was aware of; and all the while that I fancied I was angling for my young lady, she had me securely hooked on her silken line, and having wit enough to know it, amused herself with me to her heart's content.

A woman's heart is a strange anatomy.

"He little kens, I ween, a woman's breast,
Who thinks that wanton thing is won by sighs."

So wrote one who knew something of the subject.

We learn, however, only from experience, and though I knew Byron, I did not know my young lady's heart until I had had experience of it. So seeing how tender it was towards all animate things, I vainly fancied it would be tender towards one who would have put his heart under her feet. But I found it adamant. And until the magic spell was called that could open it, it remained fast shut with all its hid treasures. She walked serenely through all my worship, and I devoured my heart in secret, and cursed the one I deemed the cause of my misery.

For any sign she gave, she might never have had an idea that I cared for her, more than for the Statue of Liberty which adorned the arms of the State.

Having no means to outshine my rival in any material way, I determined to eclipse him by display of my intellect.

I had at times written to my young lady what I was pleased to call "poems." I now polished up one of these and sent it to her. But as I wished to derive the full benefit that surprise would bring when she should discover the identity of her poet, and also, perhaps, a little because I was a trifle shy, as all true

lovers are, I wrote the copy of verses in a disguised hand and sent them to her anonymously. They were as follows:

LINES TO CLAUDIA.

It is not, Claudia, that thine eyes
  Are sweeter unto me,
Than is the light of Summer skies
  To captives just set free.

It is not that the setting sun
  Is tangled in thy hair,
And recks not of the course to run,
  In such a silken snare.

Nor for the music of thy words,
  Fair Claudia, love I thee,
Though sweeter than the songs of birds
  That melody to me.

It is not that rich roses rare
  Within thy garden grow,
Nor that the fairest lilies are
  Less snowy than thy brow.

Nay, Claudia, 't is that every grace
  In thy dear self I find;
That Heaven itself is in thy face,
  And also in thy mind.

When I called on her next evening I fully expected her to make some allusion to my poem which would lead me after a little to avow my authorship. She did nothing of the kind. At length I deftly introduced the subject of poetry; but not even then did she betray the least idea that I had sent her a poem. I was in some doubt whether she had received it; until she asked me suddenly, why I supposed men sent things anonymously.

I said I supposed they did it because they wanted the person to whom they sent them to have them and it was pleasure enough to know that they had received them.

On this she asked me if I knew Mr. Goodrich's handwriting.

I said I did not; but I thought she ought to know it.

She reflected a moment, and then with her eyes far away on the horizon, said she would have thought so too; but what she referred to was in a disguised hand and so she could not be sure.

"What is it?" I asked.

"Oh! just a copy of verses; and very pretty verses they are."

I said, "I did not know he was a poet. But perhaps he was inspired?"

"Oh! no"; she laughed, "I would not go so far as that, though they remind me a little of a poem of Sir Charles Sedley's:

'Not Celia that I juster am,
Or better than the rest—'

You remember that poem?"

I said I remembered it.

And this was all the thanks I received for a poem into which I had poured my melted heart.

Yet she possessed one gift which I can tell little less than a sixth sense. She divined with fatal instinct the exact moment at which to vouchsafe me a kindly word, a sympathetic glance, a sunny flash. And Minerva never dealt her grains of balm with more divine precision.

A thousand times I swore to myself that summer that I 'd put up with no more of her caprice, and on each occasion, just when I prepared to put my resolution in force, she shattered it with a single shaft.

I told her once that had she lived in past times, she must have been burnt as a witch, unless haply I had been there to rescue her. Whereat she laughed in that musical way she had, which a sidelong flash of her eye always sent home. And after pretending that I had paid her a very left-handed compliment, till I was almost pushed to make it broader, she said:

"Even had I been a witch, sir, you would never have rescued me. You would have begun to bluster at the door and offer to fight all comers, and so would have been overwhelmed at once and never even have known my true friends who might have planned my rescue."

I knew she meant Goodrich, and I was all in a heat at once, and, no doubt, glowered. I know I sniffed, though I did not know it until I saw the twinkle of delight in her eye.

Wild tribes give victims to their squaws to torture. Civilization, after all, has not made such vast strides! It is the method rather than the motive that has changed. Human Nature does not change much. My witch practised upon one of her victims with exquisite ingenu-

ity, though Truth compels me to say he was a fair mark.

I fancied about this time that my favored rival was engaged successfully in planning the witch's rescue, and I was in what might be termed "a state of mind." He was always on hand.

I began to give myself airs, which no doubt were mighty amusing to my young lady till they touched her nearly.

At length, I became quite intolerable.

Having failed all through the Harvest Moon —that amber moon which makes more harvests than those gleaned in the fields of corn—to secure even a moment of her undivided company, I grew at first morose, then actually savage, and on the first opportunity I had, took my lady to task: brought her to book.

It was a moonlit night—just such a night as that must have been in which young Lorenzo and pretty Jessica, in the Belmont glades, tried to "outnight" each other with all the classic tales of lovers' histories they could recall, from Trolius down, making the final poem on moonlight for all time.

The moon as on that night shone bright.

". . The sweet wind did gently kiss the trees
And they did make no noise."

And as I walked beneath the moon-bathed, wind-kissed trees toward the spot where my Jessica waited, my soul was filled with love for her, and I vowed, if Heaven vouchsafed me the chance, that very night to swear I loved her well and steal her soul with many vows of faith, and every one a true one.

When I arrived, the coast was clear, and possibly there was hope that it might remain so. The other members of the family were not at home, and my hated rival for that night, at least, was out of the way, for he had been riding with Miss Jessica Dale that evening and had gone off.

Jessica, in a white muslin, looked divine. As she took her seat at the darkened end of the balcony she mentioned casually, in reply to some observation of mine at my unwonted good fortune, that Mr. Goodrich had left immediately after tea: "He has some very important business."

Her air was that of possession.

It was this air that inflamed me.

"His business is doubtless very important?"

"Yes?"

She was so quiet that I took her silence for confusion and grew more bold. Even then, had Prudence but tipped Reason a wink, I might have been saved; but finding the way so easy, my Boldness became Insolence, and I forgot myself and overstepped all bounds.

I suddenly found that I had committed the fatal blunder of attacking my rival. I had driven her to defend him.

This was bad enough! But I made it worse. 'T is said that against Stupidity the gods themselves are powerless. I demanded to know why Mr. Goodrich was always there.

"Mr. Goodrich has business here," she said again, with a little lift of her head which I might well have heeded.

"Important business! and he seems very successful in it."

"Yes—I hope so."

"Doubtless!"

A pause followed this, during which I gathered steam. She sat in silence in the dusk. I took it for conviction.

I determined to fire one more shot to make sure of victory and then I would be magnanimous.

"It is not only the Poor, but the Rich we seem to have always with us."

She rose without a word and walked slowly into the house.

Had she moved rapidly I might have hoped. I knew, however, as she passed in at the window that my hopes were dead, slain by my own folly.

I was ready to follow and seize her and offer amends, my life, my contritions—everything. But she gave me no time. She did not pause. She passed through the room and out of the door, and the next moment I saw her climbing the stair slowly, but with the graduated motion of a piece of machinery.

I sat for a moment and pondered, and then, with a revulsion at the empty chair and empty room behind me, rose and walked out of the gate and down the street.

The sounds of jollity and of happy family life came to me from moon-bathed yards and shadowed verandas. Children flitted about, chasing each other with subdued laughter and with little cries of ecstasy; young couples strolled by under the maples, their voices lowered to soft murmurings.

"How silver-sweet sound lovers' tongues by night."

I alone was in darkness; I only was alone.

The world was happy, but for folly I was banished—banished by my own folly! For me there was "no world without Verona-walls."

As I passed by old Mr. Miles's house, the yard with its great trees lay bathed in the moonlight; but it was empty and silent. A dim light in one of the up-stairs windows alone showed that the house was the habitation of life. But it appeared only to emphasize the loneliness.

I wandered about the streets until the life all withdrew and vanished within doors, and only I was left. I even went back and traversed the street on which stood the little house where I had been so happy a few hours before. As I looked at it from the opposite side, it was dark and silent like all the rest. The chairs we had occupied were still on the balcony, but they were empty effigies of life.

It was a strange feeling, as I thought how for blocks and blocks, covering miles, in those sealed brick boxes lay hushed and unconscious

as in their tombs all the thousands who but a few hours before made the teeming city alive. I only was awake,—unless it were some night-prowler threading his way like a fox through tombs; some watchman keeping vigil like a watcher by the dead; some sick person tossing on a bed of languor. It suddenly made me feel closer to the ill and desolate than ever before. I seemed like a lonely sentinel on a solitary outpost guarding the slumbers of the world.

The moon began to redden as it sank lower in the sky, and it disappeared in a long bank of cloud before it set. The morning broke rainy and dismal.

With the daylight, however, my spirit returned, and after breakfast I began to think there might be hope. I decided that I had been treated badly and she must apologize. I waited all day for a note. But none came. Every step on my stair set my heart to beating. But there were no notes.

About noon I decided that I would go a little further. I would give her an opportunity to apologize. So I was weak enough to go around to that part of the town, as if casually, on the chance of seeing her. I did see her, at a dis-

tance. She was driving with Goodrich! This gave me a revulsion. She was a heartless creature!

I went back to my office and to gloom.

Next day the light again inspirited me. I would meet her halfway. So after writing a dozen notes, conveying every shade of disapprobation, and consigning them to the waste-basket, I started out to play my new game.

I had, however, counted without my cost. Miss Elizabeth Dale was not to be thus toyed with. I had struck too deep, and the arrow rankled. My first overture met a rebuff so serious that I was completely floored. When I called she was excused.

I freely confess that even after this I would have been mean enough to tumble down in the dirt and eat ever so much humble pie, if I had thought it would have done any good. The young lady, however, was so inexorable in her indignation that I found not the slightest ground for hope that she would relent and accept my apologies, though I sought one with the diligence of Esau. I was, accordingly, forced to assume the "High horse" as my sole salvation; which I did with what outward grace I might, though I was inwardly consumed between consterna-

tion, regret, and rage, and cursed Mr. Goodrich heartily.

The "High horse" is sometimes, perhaps, a successful steed, but it is mighty poor riding; and I spent an autumn as wretched as my summer had been delightful, passing my time meditating insults to my successful rival and punishment for my young lady. It was a sad autumn.

Sorrow is somehow related to Religion, and in my gloom I began to think of becoming good.

Providence helped me once.

I heard one evening of a poor woman who, with a house full of little children, had been left destitute by the death of her husband in a railroad accident. He had been an engineer, and had run into a "washout," one night after a heavy rain. He had seen the danger ahead, and had had time to jump, his fireman, who escaped, reported; but after reversing his lever and applying the brakes, he had stuck to his engine, "to put sand on," and had gone down under it. The only "sand" in that engine was not in the box.

Hall came from my county, and that was always a tie with me. So, though I was not much in the way of charity work, and though the weather was what Basham Miles would have called "inclement," I went down to see if the

woman was in as great need as I had heard she was in.

I had some difficulty in finding the little frame house in the street which was full of such houses, all as much alike as those which the maid had to pick between in Ali Baba's history.

It was, by the way, the same street in which I had found my little mudpie-maker making his pies that day so long ago.

At length, however, a poor woman, whose face instantly grew sympathetic when I mentioned the name of the widow, pointed me to the house. I found the family not destitute, indeed, of food, for Hall had been "a saving man," but yet in a sad plight, as might have been expected. I recognized the widow at the first glance as the woman who had fed the mudpie-maker with bread and jam that summer day: though grief had sorely changed her appearance.

Every one was kind, she said. At the mention of my name her countenance lightened, and she said she had heard of me, and had meant to write to me, as a lady had told her to place her case in my hands, and maybe I could get some money for her from the Company.

I told her I would look into the matter; but,

regretfully, I had to inform her that she had no case in law against the railroad.

I went again, however, and was enabled to take her a small fund which two or three sympathetic friends, moved by the story of her sorrow, had contributed. When I knocked, the door was opened by Elizabeth Dale.

I should not have been more surprised had I walked into a new sphere. But the ways of women are wonderful. She was as calm and self-possessed as though she had proof that my post was always on Mrs. Hall's front door step. She shook hands with me as naturally as if she had expected to meet me there, and we had parted only the evening instead of the autumn before.

"How do you do?" Then looking back into the dim little room behind her:

"Mrs. Hall, here is a gentleman to see you. Can he come in?"

I heard an affirmative answer, and she stepped aside.

"Won't you walk in?"

As I entered she said, "I am glad Mrs. Hall has so good a friend." And before I could reply, she had passed out of the door and closed it behind her.

I felt suddenly as if I were shut up in a cave. My visit was a hurried one. When I opened the door a minute later I caught a glimpse of her at the top of the street, and just as I looked, she disappeared. She was walking rapidly.

Mrs. Hall's praises of her cost me all the money I had in my pocket, and a night's sleep in the bargain.

It was she who had recommended me as a lawyer.

Though after that I obeyed the Scriptural injunction and visited the widow and the fatherless more than once, and though Miss Dale visited them frequently, as I heard from her charges, yet I never met her there again.

Truly the ways of a woman are past finding out.

XI

A WARNING AND AN EXAMPLE

"SWEET are the uses of Adversity," no doubt. But for all that, it does not commend itself to a young man, if Adversity happen to take the form of a particularly pretty girl's refusal to see him when he happens to think her the one girl in all the world for him.

I was enabled to make this observation from experience.

I tried "Adversity's sweet milk, Philosophy"; but to no purpose. I found it crabbed and hard, as ever the roughest pagan found it.

I summoned Reason to my aid, and plainly proved how foolish my view was. Women could not be so unlike each other, I argued. I pointed out the folly of ruining my happiness and my life because, forsooth, one woman of all the countless myriads in the world refused to be my mate,—a girl whom only two or three, or, at most, a half-dozen men thought in any

way superior to the rest, and in whom all the others saw no more than in any fair face, soft voice, gentle air, and kindly ways. The chances were—I clearly showed—that I was wrong, the rest of Mankind right.

All to no purpose. My coolest summing up of judgment went down like straw before my heart's advocacy in the simple reply, "I love her."

I was bewitched. I knew it, and yet I could not stir.

Although at times I raged against myself like a poor beast tangled in a net, I knew I was hopelessly caught, and for the most part submitted dumbly.

Unfortunately for me there was no war then in progress, or I should probably have gone and left the obdurate creature to repine for having missed the imperishable laurels I should gain, and mourn too late the fatal madness of driving such a Paladin of courage to despair.

I thought of going West, and reaping there the large rewards of my abilities; but I doubted whether civic spoils would touch her, and I hesitated to take a step which would proclaim my defeat.

I knew enough of war to know that after a

battle he that sleeps on the field is held the victor, though he may have suffered most.

So, though stricken sorely, I held the field, and faced the world.

Adversity winnows one's friends like a sieve. I first lost happiness, then appetite, then sleep. They follow each other like the numerals, 1, 2, 3. I, who had never known what it was to be conscious of an hour between the time I went to bed and that when my alarm clock awoke me, any more than if I had crossed the bed from night to day, now thrashed around for hours and vainly waited with stout resolution and firmly closed eyes the coming of Sleep. I never knew before how stealthy is Sleep, or how coy. My friends began to remark to me on my changed appearance; at least, those whom I might term my second-best friends did so, to my annoyance. My closest friends only looked anxious and tried in secret, easily discoverable ways to divert me.

Some of them went so far as to try to find another girl for me. But "surely in vain the net is spread in the sight of any bird." I could not be caught even with so fair a bait as they proposed. "Thisbe" was "a gray eye or so; but not to the purpose." I felt that my case was different from all the others in their lexicon

of experience. Like the man in the grammar, I would be destroyed, no one should help me.

Time, however, is the great helper. He works with a secrecy that steals through our alertest watch and overcomes our stoutest defences. He gives the buried seed help to burst its shell and make its way up to the light. He lends his aid to soothe the sorest hurt. And, as he helps to knit the lacerated flesh, so he helps to heal the deeper wounds of the spirit.

In time my pride awoke, and did what my friends had not been able to effect. Then accident helped me even against my will.

Among my friends was one in whose society I had always found a great deal of pleasure. She was no more like Elizabeth Dale with her extremes of cruelty and sympathy, her pitfalls of sauciness, her unexpectedness, her infinite variety and unvarying charm, than I was like St. Francis of Assisi. But she was clever, intelligent, and high-minded. And she was very sympathetic with me. I saw a great deal of her, and was aware that my friends were associating our names.

As Miss Elizabeth Dale was now off teaching, I had no fear of her hearing too much of my consolement.

Winter had now come to the rest of the

world, as well as to my heart, and Winter always gives courage. Christmas was approaching. A freeze gave us the coveted opportunity to skate, and I took my friend skating. As we were returning across the fields and reached a fence on the roadside, she complained that one of her hands was quite numbed by the cold, and I undertook to warm it by rubbing it, though it was cold work. I was engaged in the dismal task when she gave a little exclamation and quickly drew her hand away. I glanced up just in time to see Elizabeth Dale look away as she came down the hill. The next second she turned her eyes our way and gave us a smiling greeting. She had just come home for the holidays. My friend laughed at my discomfiture. It was just my luck.

In my time of tribulation I began to think of many persons and things that I had rather forgotten in the times of my prosperity, and among them was old Mr. Basham Miles. I had not seen him on the street during the whole fall, as I generally did at that season of the year, and one day I asked William about him. He told me that he was ill at home; he had come back from the country sick, and had been confined to his room ever since.

"Fact is, suh, I 's mighty troubled 'bout him," said the old servant. "He ain't gittin' no better: jes' gittin' punier an' punier. I don' b'lieve he 's gwine to last much longer."

This was serious, and I questioned him as to what the old gentleman did.

"He don' do nuttin' sep' set dyah all day in de big cheer," he said. "He use' to read—read all de time, night an' day, but he don' eben do dat no longer!"

"Who is with him?"

"D' ain' no-body wid him, suh. He won' have no-body. He never wuz no han' for havin' folks 'bout him pesterin' him, no-how, —strange folks expressly; he would n' even have a doctor to come to see him, after old Dr. Thomas die. *He* used to come sometimes. Since den he would n' have no-body; but me and Jane got him to le' me go and ax Dr. Williams to come an' see him, an' he say he pretty sick, an' gi' him some physic. But he would n' teck it, suh! He say he gwine die anyhow, an' he ain't gwine take no nasty physic. He got de bottle dyah now in he room, an' it jes full as 't was when I bring it from de drug-sto'!"

I said that I would go and see him.

"Yes, suh, wish you would; maybe he would

see yo', and maybe he won't. He mighty fond o' you. He won't see many folks. Several ladies been to inquire after him, and Mrs. Miller, she and annur' lady too, sen' him things; but he won' see no-body, an' he won' eat nuttin'. I 's right smartly troubled about him, suh.''

I was troubled, too, and repeated my intention of calling to see him.

''I tell you, suh,'' the old servant said suddenly, ''a man ought to have wife and chillern to take keer on him when he git ole, any'ow!''

I had not thought of this view of the case before, but it did not strike me as wholly unreasonable.

When I called to see Mr. Miles that evening, he received me.

I was shocked to find what a change there was in him since I had seen him last.

I was shown through the cold and dark hall, and by the vacant library,—the door of which stood open as I passed, and the fireplace of which showed empty and black,—and up the wide stairs to the room Mr. Miles occupied.

He was sitting up in his old arm-chair by the fire, which was the only cheerful thing I had seen in the house.

If I had thought the old man lonely when I was there before, much more he seemed so now: he was absolutely solitary. A row of books was on the table beside him, but their very number was an evidence that he had no appetite for them, and had them but to taste.

The only volume that looked as if he had been using it was an old Bible. It lay nearest him on his table, and had a marker in it.

He was only partly dressed, and had on an old, long, flowered dressing-gown and slippers, presenting a marked contrast to his general neatness of apparel, whilst a beard, which he had allowed to grow for a month or more, testified to his feebleness and added to the change in his appearance.

I never saw a picture of dejection greater than he presented as I entered. His head was sunk on his breast, and loneliness seemed to encircle him round almost palpably.

I think my visit cheered him a little, though he was strangely morose, and spoke of the world with unwonted bitterness. He was, however, manifestly pleased at my coming to see him, though he dwelt on the regret he felt at the trouble he caused me.

I tried to interest him in books and engage

him in talking of them. But he declared that they were like people, they interested only when one was strong and vigorous, and deserted you when you were ill or unfortunate.

"They fail you at the crucial time, sir," he said bitterly. "They forsake you or bore you."

I said I hoped they were not so bad as that.

"Yes, sir, they are!" he asserted testily. "I esteemed them my friends; lived with them, cultivated them, and at the very moment when I needed them most they failed me!"

He reached over and took up the old Bible from his table.

"This book alone," he said, "has held out. This has not deserted me. I have read something of all the philosophies, but none has the spirituality and power that I find in certain parts of this. No wonder Scott said, 'There is but one book.' "

He laid the book down again, and I picked it up idly and opened it at the place where his paper was. A marked passage caught my eye.

"As one whom his mother comforteth."

I laid the book back from where I had taken it.

"That volume was my mother's," said the old man, softly. "She died with it on her pillow, as she had lived with it in her heart."

I persuaded him before I left to let me send a doctor to see him; and coming away, I went by and saw Dr. Williams, one of the leading physicians in the town, who said he would go to him at once.

I called to see the doctor the next day to ask about the old fellow, and he said he was a very ill man.

"He is going to die," said the doctor, calmly.

"Well, Doctor, ought not he to have some one to stay with him?" I asked.

"Of course he ought," said the doctor; "and I have told him so. But he is a very difficult man to deal with. What can you do with him? He is going to die anyhow, and knows it, and he says the idea of any one staying in the house with him makes him nervous. I have told his man William to stay in the house to-night, but I don't know that he will let him do it."

I went to see Mr. Miles that night, for I

was very anxious about him, and found William much stirred up, and sincerely glad to see me. He had proposed to stay with him as the doctor had directed, but the old gentleman had positively forbidden it.

"He won' have no-body roun' him 't all, suh," said the old servant, hopelessly. "Two or three people been heah to see him to-day, but he won' see none on 'em; he 'll hardly see me, an' he tell me when bedtime come, jes to shet up as ushal, an' let him 'lone.

"But I 'm gwine to stay in dat house to-night, don' keer what he say!" said the old servant, positively.

I asked if he thought the old gentleman would see me. And we agreed that the best thing for me to do was to go right up and announce myself.

So I did it, and found him sitting up as before. He looked, if anything, feebler than he had done the evening before. He talked in a weaker voice, and was more drowsy. He said he could not lie down. I made up my mind to sit up with him that night if he did not actually drive me out of the house; so after a time, as he seemed sleepy, I settled myself comfort-

ably in an arm-chair, which I emptied of a score of books.

I think my presence comforted him, for he said little, and simply drowsed on. Toward midnight he roused up, and having taken a stimulant which the doctor had left him, seemed stronger and rather inclined to talk.

The first question he asked surprised me. He said suddenly, "Is your mother living?"

I told him that she was.

"That is the greatest blessing a man can have," he said. "Mine died when I was ten years old, and I have never gotten over the loss. I have missed her every hour since. Had she lived, my life might have been different. It might not then have been the failure which it has been."

I was surprised to hear him speak so of himself, for I had always thought of him as one of the most self-contained of men, and I made some polite disavowal of his remark. He turned on me almost fiercely:

"Yes, sir, it has been a complete and utter failure!" He spoke bitterly. "I was a man of parts, and look at me now! A woman's influence might have changed me."

As he appeared inclined to talk, I prepared to listen. He seemed to find a grim pleasure in talking of himself and reviewing his life. His mother's death he continued to dwell on.

"She used to sit out on that seat under the beech tree," he told me. "And I love that tree better than almost anything in the world. It is associated with almost every happy moment I have ever spent.

"Young man," he said, sitting up in the energy of his speech, "marry—marry. I do not say marry for your own happiness,—though Heaven knows I am a proof of the truth of my words, dying here alone and almost friendless!—but marry for the good you may accomplish in the world and the happiness you may give others."

Not to marry, he said, was the extreme of selfishness, for if a man does not marry, generally it is because he is figuring for something more than love. He then told me that his great fault was selfishness.

"I made one mistake, sir," he said, "early in life, and it has lasted me ever since. I put Brains before everything, Intellect before Heart. It was all selfishness: that was the rock on which I split. I was a man of parts, sir, and

I thought that with my intellect I could do everything. But I could not."

I began to think of my own life.

"Young man, were you ever in love?" he asked.

Under the sudden question I stammered, and finally said, I did not know; I believed I had been, but it was over now, anyhow.

"Young man," he said, "treasure it—treasure it as your life. I was in love once—really in love only once—and I believed I had my happiness in my own hands, and I flung it away, and wrecked my life."

He then proceeded to tell me the story of his love-affair, and how, instead of being content with the affection of the lovely and beautiful girl whose heart he had won, he had wanted to excel with every one, and to shine in all eyes.

"And I simply flung away salvation!" he said.

"I am not speaking groundlessly," he asserted; "for I was not even left the poor consolation of doubt as to whether I should have succeeded. When at last I awoke from my besotted condition my chance was gone. The woman for whom I had given up the one I

loved, because I thought she would advance me in life, proved as shallow and heartless as I was myself, and, after I had made my plans and prepared my house for her, threw me over remorselessly for what she deemed a better match, and married a rich fool; and when at length I went back to the woman I loved and offered her my heart, which, indeed, had always been hers, she had given hers to another.

"Heaven knows I did not blame her, for though I had been fool enough to despise him, he was a thousand times worthier of her than I was, and made her a thousand times happier than I should have done with my selfishness.

"She told me that she had cared for me once, and might have married me had I spoken; but that time was long past, and she now loved another better than she had ever loved me.

"My pride was stung; but I fell back on my intellect, and determined again to marry brilliantly. I might have done so, perhaps, but I could not forget the woman I had loved and I was not quite base enough to offer again an empty heart to another woman, and so the time passed by.

"I had means enough to obviate the necessity of working for my support, and so did not

work as I should have done had I been dependent on my profession, and men who had less than half my intellect outstripped me. At length, having no incentive to labor, I threw up my profession and travelled abroad. In time that failed me, and I returned to my beech tree only to find that I had dropped out of the current of life, and had exchanged the happiness of a home for the experiences of a wanderer.

"I had lost the universal touch in all the infinite little things which make up the sum of life, and even my friends, with few exceptions, were not just what they had been. If they were necessary to me, I was no longer necessary to them. They had other ties; had married, had children, and new interests formed in my absence. I found myself alone; everywhere a visitor; welcomed at some places —because I was agreeable when I chose to be— tolerated at others, but still only a visitor, an outsider, an alien.

"Then I fell back on my books. They lasted me for a while, and I read omnivorously; but only for amusement, and in time my appetite was satiated and my stomach turned. I had not the tastes of a scholar, nor even of a stu-

dent, but only those of a dilettante. I was too social to enjoy long alone even books, and I did not read for use.

"So I turned to the world again, to find it even worse than it had been before. I was as completely alone as if I had been on a desert island, and it was too late for me to re-enter life."

I do not mean to give this as a connected speech, for it was not: it was what he said at times through the long night, as he dwelt on the past and felt like talking.

Finally he broke in suddenly:

"Cultivate the affections, young man: cultivate the affections. Take an old man's word for it, that the men who are happy are those who love and are loved. Better love the meanest thing that lives than only yourself. Even as a matter of policy it is best. I had the best intellect of any young man of my time and set, and I have seen men with half my brains, under the inspiration of love and the obligations and duties it creates, go forward to success which I could never achieve. Whilst I was narrowing and drying up, they were broadening and reaching out in every direction. Often I have gone along the street and envied the

poorest man I met with his children on their holiday strolls. My affections had been awakened, but too late in life; and I could not win friendship then. That child that you had in your arms the day I met you was the first child I had seen in years who looked at me without either fear or repugnance."

He sat back in a reverie.

The old man had, of course, mentioned no names; but I had recalled the conversation of the two ladies that evening, and now under his earnestness I was drawn to admit that I had been in love, and feared I was yet.

He was deeply interested, and when I told him that he had already had his part in my affair, he was no less astonished.

Then I recalled to him the advice he had given me on the street corner on that May morning several years before. He remembered the incident of the carriage, with its burden of young girls, but he had had no idea I was the young man. He was evidently pleased at the coincidence.

"So you took my advice and picked a girl out of that very carriage, did you?" His wan face lit with the first smile I had seen on it since I had been with him.

"Whose carriage was it, and what was her name, if you do not mind telling an old man?" he asked. Then, as I hesitated a little, he said gently:

"Oh, no matter; don't feel obliged to tell me."

"No," I said; "I was only thinking. It was the 'Hill-and-Dale' carriage, and her name is 'Elizabeth Dale.'"

"Elizabeth Dale?" he said, his eyes opening wide as they rested on my face; and then, as he turned to the fire and let them fall, he said to himself, "How strange!"

"Has she beauty?" he inquired, presently, after a reverie, in which he repeated to himself, softly, over and over, "Very strange."

"I think she has," I said, "and others think so, too. I believe you do yourself."

"How is that? I have never seen her."

"Yes, you have," I said. "Do you remember your hat blowing off one day last spring on Richardson Street, and a young girl running out of a house, bareheaded, and catching it for you? Well, that was Elizabeth Dale."

"Was it, indeed?" he said; and then added: "I ought to have known it, she looked so like her! Only I thought it was simply her beauty

which made the resemblance. All youth and beauty coupled with sweetness have brought up Elizabeth Green to me through the years," he said gently.

"And the child who offered you the bread and jam that day was her nephew."

But he was now past further surprise, and simply said,

"Indeed!"

"Do you think she would come and see me?" he asked me presently, after a long reverie, in which he had been looking into the fire.

I said I was sure she would if she knew he wished it; and then I went off into a reverie, too.

"Cannot you bring her?" he asked.

"Why, I do not know—Yes, I suppose she would come with me,—only—only—. Why, yes, I could see if she would."

"Ask her to come and see an old man who has not long to stay here, and who wishes to see the girl whom you are going to marry."

"But I am not going to marry her," I said. "We barely speak now."

"Then the girl to whom you 'barely speak now'," he said, with something of a smile, and then added gravely: "the girl who picked up

his hat for him,—an old man who knew her mother.''

I promised to do my best to get Miss Dale to come and see him, and then the old fellow dropped off into a doze, which soon became a sounder sleep than he had had at all.

XII

ELIZABETH DALE MAKES TEA FOR TWO LONE MEN

THE next day, after a long contention with myself, I called on Miss Dale to propose the visit which the Old Gentleman of the Black Stock had requested.

As I mounted the steps I felt as if I were charging a battery. But the servant said she had gone to drive with Mr. Goodrich. The woman gave me a look which I would have given much to interpret. Having screwed my courage, or whatever it was, up to the point of visiting Miss Dale at all, I found it stuck there; and even in the face of this last outrage to my feelings,—going to ride with the man about whom I had quarrelled with her,—I called on her again that afternoon, late enough to insure her return home and her presence in the house.

I will not undertake to describe my sensations as I sat in the little darkened parlor, hat in hand and overcoat still on, to indicate that

I had not called socially, but on business, and business alone.

I awaited the return of the servant who announced me, in some doubt, if not apprehension, for I was not absolutely sure that Miss Dale would see me. So when the maid returned and said Miss Elizabeth would be down directly, and proceeded to light the gas in the parlor, I found my heart beating unpleasantly.

Then the servant disappeared, and left me in solitude.

I looked over the photographs and into the old books with which I was once so familiar, and listened to the movement going on upstairs. Then I sat down. But the glare was so oppressive that I rose and turned down the light a little.

Presently I heard some one—or something—coming down the stairs, a step at the time, and when it reached the point where I could see it through the door, it proved to be Burton.

"I tummin' to see you," he said to me through the banisters, calling me by my name, for we had been famous friends that summer. "I dot on bitches!"

"Come on." I felt cheered by the boy's friendliness.

He came in and showed himself off, pointed out his pockets, stuck his hands in them, and strutted around, and rode "a cock-horse" with all a boy's delight. I was just feeling something of my old easiness when he stopped suddenly, and striking an attitude, said:

"I dot a horse."

"What! Who gave it to you?"

"Mist' Oodrich."

This was a blow.

"Mist' Oodrich dave me dis too," diving a hand into one of his pockets and tugging at something.

But I did not learn what it was, for just then I heard another step coming slowly down the stair. The boy heard it, too, and with a shout ran out to meet his aunt.

Fortunately, I was sitting somewhat behind the door, so I was screened from observation and could not see what went on outside. But I could hear. The first thing was Burton's announcement that I was there in the parlor, giving me by my first name.

"Yes, aunty knows it," in an undertone.

Then I heard her say something to him in an even lower undertone, and he answered:

"No, no!"

After that I heard her low voice in a sort of subdued murmur, as she talked to him to try to persuade him to do something,—in a tone Circe might well have used to wile Ulysses,—and his replies:

"No, no, don't want to do up tairs." The little monster!

Then she grew more positive, and he started, with a little whimper as he went up.

I heard her say, "If you don't cry, I will let you ride my horse the first time I go to ride." This soothed him.

"Awe yite!" And he went on up as rapidly as one step at the time would take him.

There was a pause while she waited to see him pass up beyond the chance of return, and then I heard her begin to descend again.

As she approached the door I tried to appear natural, but I felt myself decidedly discomposed.

She came in with a great deal of dignity, and, I must say, ease of manner. I, however, was not to be put at my ease. I hardly waited for her to make her little apology for keeping me waiting. She had "just come in from a ride, and had to take off her hat."

It was not necessary to acquaint me with

her having been to ride! I knew that quite as well as she!

I, without delay, therefore, explained my call, and relieved her mind of any misapprehension she might be under as to the object of my visit. I was still stiff and ungracious enough, Heaven knows, and she was evidently a little surprised at my manner, for she became more formal herself. But I had made myself plain, and had set forth the old man's loneliness with some skill. I saw her eyes soften and her face grow tender.

And though she had stiffened a little, she said she would go as soon as she could put on her hat—if I would wait. If not, she would get her brother-in-law to take her after tea.

I said I would wait, and she left me.

I joined her in the little hall as she came down-stairs again, and ceremoniously opened the door for her and followed her into the street.

The only thing we talked of was the old gentleman she was going to see, and I was aware that my voice sounded very unnatural. Hers seemed as soft as usual, but a little pensive.

I stole a glance at her now and then and thought that, as well as I could tell in the waning light, she was a little thinner than when I saw her last. This gave me a certain base satisfaction.

The trees on the street were leafless, and the air was chilly and a bit raw as the dusk of the winter evening fell. The tree tops looked like an etching against the steely sky.

I led the way to the next street, and let her in at the old gate where I had first met Mr. Basham Miles several years before, and which I had helped her over that summer evening when we read her mother's initials on the beech tree.

We went up the long, uneven walk, through the old yard towards the now dark house, and I remember the mournful way the white, dry leaves on the lower boughs of the old beech rustled in the chilly wind.

William Kemp opened the door after my second knock, and looked with unfeigned surprise at my companion. He said the old gentleman was much the same, and he would find out whether he could see us.

I determined to take no chances; so, whilst William lit the gas in the dark, cold library, I

"tipped" up stairs and went to the old gentleman's door.

I found him glad to see me, and as ready as he could be to receive his visitor. So, without giving him time to think much about it, I acted on his half consent, and a moment later showed Elizabeth Dale into his room.

She paused for a moment at the threshold and then advanced, and as the old gentleman tried to rise to greet her, quickened her step, giving a little exclamation of protest against his getting up.

I have never forgotten the picture they presented. She sat by his side, and he held her hand, so white and slender and fine, his wrinkled long fingers clasped tremulously around hers, as he begged her pardon for the trouble he had given her, and thanked her for the favor she had granted him.

He had more strength than I had seen him show.

The fine, old-fashioned courtliness of the one and the sweet graciousness of the other were counterparts, whilst the grayness and feebleness of the invalid and the roses and health of the young girl set each other off in strong contrast.

They might have sat for Immortal Age and Immortal Youth.

In a little while she was holding the old man's hand, not he hers, and as he mentioned my name in terms of kindness, I drew somewhat apart and left them together, he doing most of the talking, and she listening and stroking his hand as if she had been his daughter.

Presently—he had been talking of his youth in that house, and of the appearance that part of the town used to present when the hill was crowned with houses embowered in trees—he said:

"My dear, did you ever hear your mother speak of me?" His voice was so gentle that I scarcely caught it.

I could see her embarrassment. She said, very slowly, after trying to recollect:

"I—cannot remember that I ever did."

And then, as if distressed that she might have given him pain, she said kindly, leaning forward and stroking his hand softly:

"She may have done it, you know, without my recollecting it, for I was a heedless young thing."

How sweet her voice sounded, and what sorrow was in her eyes—sorrow that she must

have given that old man sorrow, though she sacrificed all to Truth!

He did not speak immediately; but presently he said gravely:

"I am not surprised." And then he added quietly:

"My dear, I used to be in love with your mother, and I never loved any one else. I was most unworthy of her. But I have carried her image in my heart all these years."

Without a word the young girl rose and leant over and kissed him.

Just then William opened the door and brought in a waiter with tea-things for his master's tea. It was not very inviting, though it was the best the faithful William and his wife could do.

Without a word of apology the young girl stepped forward and took the tray, and then, with no more explanation than if she had done it every evening of her life for him, she set to work to prepare the old man's tea.

It was marvellous to see what a woman's hands could do. Her touch was as deft as an enchantress' wand. Out of the somewhat crowded and unappetizing waiter came an order and daintiness which were miraculous.

And when she handed Mr. Miles his tea in the old blue china cup I knew that he could not help taking it.

The same instinct seemed to teach her what was needed in the room. She flitted hither and thither, a touch here, a touch there—and when she arose to leave a half-hour later, the room was transformed; she left behind her comfort and something like order where before there had been only confusion. She left more than that—she left an old man cheered and comforted as he had not been in years.

As she rose to go she said:

"I want you now to grant me a favor—I want you to let me come again?—To-morrow?—Will you?"

No one could have resisted that appeal, least of all, Basham Miles; for she was leaning over him, arranging a pillow for him as he had never had one arranged before in all his life.

He could not answer her question; he merely took her hand in both his, and raising it to his lips, said tremulously:

"God bless you!"

The young girl bent over and kissed him good-night—kissed him twice, as she might have issed her father.

He said again, "God bless you!" and again, when she was at the door, he repeated, "God bless you!"

We came down the stairs without a word, and William let us out of the door.

We were down on the walk when I remembered that I had not told him that I would return later, and I went back to the door.

When I came down the steps again my companion was standing a little way down the walk waiting for me, and I found she had her hand to her eyes. I said—I do not remember just what I said, but she turned a little way off the walk, and sat down on a seat under the nearest tree. It was the old Beech tree which Basham Miles treasured so.

"That poor old man!" she sobbed, and fell to weeping as if her heart would break.

I never could see either a man or a woman weep and remain unmoved. I dropped down by her, hardly knowing what I was doing, except that Elizabeth Dale was there weeping and needed comforting, and I was at her side. And before I knew it, I had forgotten my pride, my jealousy, everything, and had told her all that was in my heart. It was much. But it was all in one word. I loved her.

She did not stop crying immediately, and she did not say a word. But before I was through she was sobbing on my shoulder, and she did not take her hand away from me. And when I came out of Basham Miles's broken gate I did not hate Hamilton Goodrich any more. In fact, I was rather sorry for him; for I had learned that he had received his final, though by no means his first, refusal that afternoon.

I do not remember just how we got home, but I suppose we walked. I only know that it was through a new town and a new life.

We were too late for tea, but I went in, and Elizabeth Dale made tea for the second time that evening, though it was her first time for me.

The other members of the family were all out of the way, and as I sat opposite Elizabeth at the shining old mahogany table, with its odd pieces of old silver, which I knew must be bits of salvage from Hill-and-Dale, I felt as a sea-beaten mariner might feel who has reached home after long voyaging. I had been tossed on many seas, but had reached haven at last.

The Old Gentleman of the Black Stock had proved a good pilot.

XIII

BASHAM MILES'S WILL

WHEN I went back to Mr. Miles's, which I did not do, I believe, until Elizabeth Dale sent me off, William told me that he had gone to bed and was asleep, and had told him he might stay in his room that night, and I must not come until next day.

This I acceded to, and the next evening I took Elizabeth Dale to make tea for him again. He seemed really better: his eye had a new light in it, and his voice a new tone.

Elizabeth Dale went to see him every day after that, twice a day, and sat with him, took him flowers, and made tea for him. Other friends came too, and he saw them and enjoyed them.

One afternoon Elizabeth took her little nephew to see him, and he enjoyed the child and took him on his knee and played with him. In fact, the old gentleman appeared so much better that we were all talking about his

being out again—all except himself. Therefore, I was much shocked one morning when William Kemp knocked at my door and told me he was dead. He had retired that night, "about as usual," and when William went to him in the morning he found him dead in his bed.

"He 's lyin' dyah, jes same 's he 'sleep," said the old servant, mournfully.

"He tol' me when he die he want me to send for you to come—an' dat 's de reason I come."

I went around immediately and found several neighbors there already, for he had more friends than he had known of.

By common consent it appeared that I was the person to take charge of arrangements. William had told them what his old master had said.

"An' dere 's a letter for you, suh," he said to me. "Somewhar in he ole secketary. He writ it not long ago, an' he tole me he had put it in dyah for you, and I wuz to tell you 'bout it when he died. He said dat would tell all 'bout de 'rangements for de funeral an' ev'-thing. He knowed he wuz gwine, suh, better 'n we all."

Thus notified, some time during the day, after I had telegraphed to his relatives, none of whom were very near or bore his name, I looked for and found the letter.

It was a large envelope, addressed to me and sealed with his crest, and on opening it I found a letter in it couched in most affectionate terms, and giving explicit directions as to his funeral, which he said he did to save me and others trouble.

He requested that he might be buried in the simplest manner and with the least expense possible, and that his grave should be beside his mother's.

There was one singular request: that a carriage should be provided especially for William Kemp and his wife, and that William should be one of the men to lower him into the grave.

There was in the envelope another envelope, also sealed and addressed to me, and on the back was endorsed:

"HOLOGRAPH WILL OF BASHAM MILES.
TO BE OPENED ONLY AFTER HIS FUNERAL."

The relatives (there were only one or two of them to come) arrived next day. And that

afternoon, as the winter sun sank below the horizon, the little funeral procession crept out to the old and now almost disused cemetery looking towards the west, and in the soft afterglow of the evening the remains of Basham Miles were laid to rest beside those of his mother, over which rose a beautiful white marble monument with a touching inscription, which I knew was written by him.

There were not a great many people in the church, and they were nearly all old people, in black. Among them I observed my two old ladies who had told me of Basham Miles when he was young. They came together in their old, black dresses, the younger helping her three months senior quietly and pensively along.

The relatives, of course, walked first. But of all there, I was sure that there was no sincerer mourner than the young girl who came last. With her dark veil drawn close about her little head she sat far back in the church alone. But I knew that it was that she might weep unobserved.

The will was opened in the presence of witnesses that night, as the relatives had to re-

turn home. It was all in Basham Miles's handwriting, and covered only a single sheet. It left a certain sum to his "faithful servants, William Kemp and Jane, his wife, to buy them a house and lot of their own"; bequeathed small amounts to two or three distant relatives; left me his library; left his watch to "Burton Dale Davis."

And then gave, "The old Bible, once my sainted mother's, together with all the rest of my property, of every kind whatsoever, to Elizabeth Dale, youngest daughter of Elizabeth Dale, formerly Elizabeth Green, now deceased."

I was appointed executor.

The sole condition he proposed to Elizabeth Dale was that she should try to have the old beech tree in his yard spared as long as was practicable. Even this, however, was particularly stated to be but a request.

But I feel sure that the Old Gentleman of the Black Stock knew it would be as binding on my wife as if it had been in the form of an express condition, and that so long as Elizabeth Dale should live, the old beech tree, under which Basham Miles remembered his

mother sitting, in his childhood, and on which he had carved her mother's name in his youth, would stand in proof that Basham Miles was not forgotten.

SANTA CLAUS'S PARTNER

TO MY FATHER

WHO AMONG ALL THE MEN THE WRITER KNEW IN HIS YOUTH WAS THE MOST FAMILIAR WITH BOOKS; AND WHO OF ALL THE MEN THE WRITER HAS EVER KNOWN HAS EXEMPLIFIED BEST THE VIRTUE OF OPEN-HANDEDNESS, THIS LITTLE BOOK IS AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED BY HIS SON,

THE AUTHOR

SANTA CLAUS'S PARTNER

I

BERRYMAN LIVINGSTONE was a successful man, a very successful man, and as he sat in his cushioned chair in his inner private office (in the best office-building in the city) on a particularly snowy evening in December, he looked it every inch. It spoke in every line of his clean-cut, self-contained face, with its straight, thin nose, closely drawn mouth, strong chin and clear gray eyes; in every movement of his erect, trim, well-groomed figure; in every detail of his faultless attire; in every tone of his assured, assertive, incisive speech. As some one said of him, he always looked as if he had just been ironed.

He used to be spoken of as "a man of parts"; now he was spoken of as "a man of wealth—a capitalist."

Not that he was as successful as he intended

to be; but the way was all clear and shining before him now. It was now simply a matter of time. He could no more help going on to further heights of success than his "gilt-edged" securities, stored in thick parcels in his safe-deposit boxes, could help bearing interest.

He contemplated the situation this snowy evening with a deep serenity that brought a transient gleam of light to his somewhat cold face.

He knew he was successful by the silent envy with which his acquaintances regarded him; by the respect with which he was treated and his opinion was received at the different Boards, of which he was now an influential member, by men who fifteen years ago hardly knew of his existence. He knew it by the numbers of invitations to the most fashionable houses which crowded his library table; by the familiar and jovial air with which presidents and magnates of big corporations, who could on a moment's notice change from warmth—temperate warmth—to ice, greeted him; and by the cajoling speeches with which fashionable mammas with unmarried daughters of a certain or uncertain age rallied him about his big, empty house on a fashionable street, and his handsome dinners,

where only one thing was wanting—the thing they had in mind.

Berryman Livingstone had, however, much better proof of success than the mere plaudits of the world. Many men had these who had no real foundation for their display. For instance, "Meteor" Broome, the broker, had just taken the big house on the corner above him, and had filled his stable with high-stepping, high-priced horses—much talked of in the public prints—and his wife wore jewels as handsome as Mrs. Parke-Rhode's who owned the house and twenty more like it. Colonel Keightly was one of the largest dealers on 'Change this year and was advertised in all the papers as having made a cool million and a half in a single venture out West. Van Diver was always spoken of as the "Grain King," "Mining King," or some other kind of Royalty, because of his infallible success, and Midan touch.

But though these and many more like them were said to have made in a year or two more than Livingstone with all his pains had been able to accumulate in a score of years of earnest toil and assiduous devotion to business, were now invited to the same big houses that Livingstone visited, and were greeted by almost as

flattering speeches as Livingstone received, Livingstone knew of discussions as to these men at Boards other than the "festal board," and of "stiffer" notes that had been sent them than those stiff and sealed missives which were left at their front doors by liveried footmen.

Livingstone, however, though he "kept out of the papers," having a rooted and growing prejudice against this form of vulgarity, could at any time, on five minutes' notice, establish the solidity of his foundation by simply unlocking his safe-deposit boxes. His foundation was as solid as gold.

On the mahogany table-desk before him lay now a couple of books: one a long, ledger-like folio in the russet covering sacred to the binding of that particular kind of work which a summer-hearted writer of books years ago inscribed as "a book of great interest," the other, a smaller volume, a memorandum book, more richly attired than its sober companion, in Russia leather.

For an hour or two Mr. Livingstone, with closely-drawn, thin lips, and eager eyes, had sat in his seat, silent, immersed, absorbed, and compared the two volumes, from time to time making memoranda in the smaller book, whilst

his clerks had sat on their stools in the large office outside looking impatiently at the white-faced clock on the wall as it slowly marked the passing time, or gazing enviously and grumblingly out of the windows at the dark, hurrying crowds below making their way homeward through the falling snow.

The young men could not have stood it but for the imperturbable patience and sweet temper of the oldest man in the office, a quiet-faced, middle-aged man, who, in a low, cheery, pleasant voice, restrained their impatience and soothed their ruffled spirits.

Even this, however, was only partially successful.

"Go in there, Mr. Clark, and tell him we want to go home," urged fretfully one youth, a tentative dandy, with a sharp nose and blunt chin, who had been diligently arranging his vivid necktie for more than a half-hour at a little mirror on the wall.

"Oh! He 'll be out directly now," replied the older man, looking up from the account-book before him.

"You 've been saying that for three hours!" complained the other.

"Well, see if it does n't come true this time,"

said the older clerk, kindly. "He 'll make it up to you."

This view of the case did not seem to appeal very strongly to the young man; he simply grunted.

"*I* 'm going to give him notice. I 'll not be put upon this way—" bristled a yet younger clerk, stepping down from his high stool in a corner and squaring his shoulders with martial manifestations.

This unexpected interposition appeared to be the outlet the older grumbler wanted.

"Yes, you will!" he sneered with disdain, turning his eyes on his junior derisively. He could at least bully Sipkins.

For response, the youngster walked with a firm tread straight up to the door of the private office; put out his hand so quickly that the other's eyes opened wide; then turned so suddenly as to catch his derider's look of wonder; stuck out his tongue in triumph at the success of his ruse, and walked on to the window.

"He 'll be through directly, see if he is not," reiterated the senior clerk with kindly intonation. "Don't make a noise, there 's a good fellow;" and once more John Clark, the dean of

the office, guilefully buried himself in his columns.

"He must be writing his love-letters. Go in there, Hartley, and help him out. You 're an adept at that," hazarded the youngster at the window to the dapper youth at the mirror.

There was a subdued explosion from all the others but Clark, after which, as if relieved by this escape of steam, the young men quieted down, and once more applied themselves to looking moodily out of the windows, whilst the older clerk gave a secret peep at his watch, and then, after another glance at the closed door of the private office, went back once more to his work.

Meantime, within his closed sanctum Livingstone still sat with intent gaze, poring over the pages of figures before him. The expression on his face was one of profound satisfaction. He had at last reached the acme of his ambition—that is, of his later ambition. (He had once had other aims.) He had arrived at the point towards which he had been straining for the last eight—ten—fifteen years—he did not try to remember just how long—it had been a good while. He had at length accumulated, "on the most conservative estimate" (he framed

the phrase in his mind, following the habit of his Boards)—he had no need to look now at the page before him: the seven figures that formed the balance, as he thought of them, suddenly appeared before him in facsimile. He had been gazing at them so steadily that now even when he shut his eyes he could see them clearly. It gave him a little glow about his heart;—it was quite convenient: he could always see them.

It was a great sum. He had attained his ambition.

Last year when he balanced his books at the close of the year, he had been worth only—a sum expressed in six figures, even when he put his securities at their full value. Now it could only be written in seven figures, "on the most conservative estimate."

Yes, he had reached the top. He could walk up the street now and look any man in the face, or turn his back on him, just as he chose. The thought pleased him.

Years ago, a friend—an old friend of his youth, Harry Trelane, had asked him to come down to the country to visit him and meet his children and see the peach trees bloom. He had pleaded business, and his friend had asked

him gravely why he kept on working so hard when he was already so well off. He wanted to be rich, he had replied.

"But you are already rich—you must be worth half a million! and you are a single man, with no children to leave it to."

"Yes, but I mean to be worth double that."

"Why?"

"Oh!—so that I can tell any man I choose to go to the d——l," he had said half jestingly, being rather put to it by his friend's earnestness. His friend had laughed too, he remembered, but not heartily.

"Well, that is not much of a satisfaction after all," he had said; "the real satisfaction is in helping him the other way;"—and this Livingstone remembered he had said very earnestly.

Livingstone now had reached this point of his aspiration—he could tell any man he chose "to go to the devil."

His content over this reflection was shadowed only by a momentary recollection that Henry Trelane was since dead. He regretted that his friend could not know of his success.

Another friend suddenly floated into his memory. Catherine Trelane was his college-mate's

sister. Once she had been all the world to Livingstone, and he had found out afterwards that she had cared for him too, and would have married him had he spoken at one time. But he had not known this at first, and when he began to grow, he could not bring himself to it. He could not afford to burden himself with a family that might interfere with his success. Then later, when he had succeeded and was well off and had asked Catherine Trelane to be his wife, she had declined. She said Livingstone had not offered her himself, but his fortune. It had stung Livingstone deeply, and he had awakened, but too late, to find for a while that he had really loved her. She was well off too, having been left a comfortable sum by a relative.

However, Livingstone was glad now, as he reflected on it, that it had turned out so. Catherine Trelane's refusal had really been the incentive which had spurred him on to greater success. It was to revenge himself that he had plunged deeper into business than ever, and he had bought his fine house to show that he could afford to live in style. He had intended then to marry; but he had not had time to do so; he had always been too busy.

Catherine Trelane, at least, was not dead. He had not heard of her in a long time; she had married, he knew, a man named—Shepherd, he believed, and he had heard that her husband was dead.

He would see that she knew he was worth —the page of figures suddenly flashed in before his eyes like a magic-lantern slide. Yes, he was worth all that! and he could now marry whom and when he pleased.

II

LIVINGSTONE closed his books. He had put everything in such shape that Clark, his confidential clerk, would not have the least trouble this year in transferring everything and starting the new books that would be necessary.

Last year Clark had been at his house a good many nights writing up these private books; but that was because Clark had been in a sort of muddle last winter,—his wife was sick, or one of his dozen children had met with an accident, —or something,—Livingstone vaguely remembered.

This year there would be no such trouble. Livingstone was pleased at the thought; for Clark was a good fellow, and a capable bookkeeper, even though he was a trifle slow.

Livingstone felt that he had, in a way, a high regard for Clark. He was attentive to his duties, beyond words. He was a gentleman, too,—of a first-rate family—a man of principle. How he could ever have been content

to remain a simple clerk all these years, Livingstone could not understand. It gave him a certain contempt for him. That came, he reflected, of a man's marrying indiscreetly and having a houseful of children on his back.

Clark would be pleased at the showing on the books. He was always delighted when the balances showed a marked increase.

Livingstone was glad now that he had not only paid the old clerk extra for his night-work last year, but had given him fifty dollars additional, partly because of the trouble in his family, and partly because Livingstone had been unusually irritated when Clark got the two accounts confused.

Livingstone prided himself on his manner to his employees. He prided himself on being a gentleman, and it was a mark of a gentleman always to treat subordinates with civility. He knew men in the city who were absolute bears to their employees; but they were blackguards.

He, perhaps, ought to have discharged Clark without a word; that would have been "business"; but really he ought not to have spoken to him as he did. Clark undoubtedly acted with dignity. Livingstone had had to apologize to him and ask him to remain, and had made the

amend (to himself) by giving him fifty dollars extra for the ten nights' work. He could only justify the act now by reflecting that Clark had more than once suggested investments which had turned out most fortunately.

Livingstone determined to give Clark this year a hundred dollars—no, fifty—he must not spoil him, and it really was not "business."

The thought of his liberality brought to Livingstone's mind the donations that he always made at the close of the year. He might as well send off the cheques now.

He took from a locked drawer his private cheque-book and turned the stubs thoughtfully. He had had that cheque-book for a good many years. He used to give away a tenth of his income. His father before him used to do that. He remembered, with a smile, how large the sums used to seem to him. He turned back the stubs only to see how small a tenth used to be. He no longer gave a tenth or a twentieth or even a—he had no difficulty in deciding the exact percentage he gave; for whenever he thought now of the sum he was worth, the figures themselves, in clean-cut lines, popped before his eyes. It was very curious. He could

actually see them in his own handwriting. He rubbed his eyes, and the figures disappeared.

Well, he gave a good deal, anyhow—a good deal more than most men, he reflected. He looked at the later stubs and was gratified to find how large the amounts were,—they showed how rich he was,—and what a diversified list of charities he contributed to: hospitals, seminaries, asylums, churches, soup-kitchens, training schools of one kind or another. The stubs all bore the names of those through whom he contributed—they were mostly fashionable women of his acquaintance, who either for diversion or from real charity were interested in these institutions.

Mrs. Wright's name appeared oftenest. Mrs. Wright was a woman of fortune and very prominent, he reflected, but she was really kind; she was just a crank, and, somehow, she appeared really to believe in him. Her husband, Livingstone did not like: a cold, selfish man, who cared for nothing but money-making and his own family.

There was one name down on the book for a small amount which Livingstone could not recall.—Oh yes, he was an assistant preacher

at Livingstone's church: the donation was for a Christmas-tree in a Children's Hospital, or something of the kind. This was one of Mrs. Wright's charities too. Livingstone remembered the note the preacher had written him afterwards—it had rather jarred on him, it was so grateful. He hated "gush," he said to himself; he did not want to be bothered with details of yarn-gloves, flannel petticoats, and toys. He took out his pencil and wrote Mrs. Wright's name on the stub. That also should be charged to Mrs. Wright. He carried in his mind the total amount of the contributions, and as he came to the end a half-frown rested on his brow as he thought of having to give to all these objects again.

That was the trouble with charities,—they were as regular as coupons. Confound Mrs. Wright! Why did she not let him alone! However, she was an important woman—the leader in the best set in the city. Livingstone sat forward and began to fill out his cheques. Certain cheques he always filled out himself. He could not bear to let even Clark know what he gave to certain objects.

The thought of how commendable this was crossed his face and lit it up like a glint of

transient sunshine. It vanished suddenly as he began to calculate, leaving the place where it had rested colder than before. He really could not spend as much this year as last—why, there was—for pictures, so much; charities, so much, etc. It would quite cut into the amount he had already decided to lay by. He must draw in somewhere: he was worth only—the line of figures slipped in before his eyes with its lantern-slide coldness.

He reflected. He must cut down on his charities. He could not reduce the sum for the General Hospital Fund; he had been giving to that a number of years.—Nor that for the asylum; Mrs. Wright was the president of that board and had told him she counted on him.—Hang Mrs. Wright! It was positive blackmail!—Nor the pew-rent; that was respectable—nor the Associated Charities; every one gave to that. He must cut out the smaller charities.

So he left off the Children's Hospital Christmas-tree Fund, and the soup-kitchen, and a few insignificant things like them into which he had been worried by Mrs. Wright and other troublesome women. The only regret he had was that taken together these sums did not amount to a great deal. To bring the saving up he came

near cutting out the hospital. However, he decided not to do so. Mrs Wright believed in him. He would leave out one of the pictures he had intended to buy; he would deny himself, and not cut out the big charity. This would save him the trouble of refusing Mrs. Wright and would also save him a good deal more money.

Once more, at the thought of his self-denial, that ray of wintry sunshine passed across Livingstone's cold face and gave it a look of distinction—almost like that of a marble statue.

Again he relapsed into reflection. His eyes were resting on the pane outside of which the fine snow was filling the chilly afternoon air in flurries and scurries that rose and fell and seemed to be blowing every way at once. But Livingstone's eyes were not on the snow. It had been so long since Livingstone had given a thought to the weather, except as it might affect the net earnings of railways in which he was interested, that he never knew what the weather was, and so far as he was concerned there need not have been any weather. Spring was to him but the season when certain work could be done which in time would yield a crop of dividends; and Autumn was but the time when crops would be moved and stocks sent up or down.

So, though Livingstone's eyes rested on the pane, outside of which the flurrying snow was driving that meant so much to so many people, and his face was thoughtful—very thoughtful—he was not thinking of the snow, he was calculating profits.

III

A NOISE in the outer office recalled Livingstone from his reverie. He aroused himself, almost with a start, and glanced at the gilt clock just above the stock-indicator. He had been so absorbed that he had quite forgotten that he had told the clerks to wait for him. He had had no idea that he had been at work so long. He reflected, however, that he had been writing charity-cheques: the clerks ought to appreciate the fact.

He touched a button, and the next second there was a gentle tap on the door, and Clark appeared. He was just the person to give just such a tap: a refined-looking, middle-aged, middle-sized man, with a face rather pale and a little worn; a high, calm forehead, above which the grizzled hair was almost gone; mild, blue eyes which beamed through black-rimmed glasses; a pleasant mouth which a drooping, colorless moustache only partly concealed, and a well-formed but slightly retreating chin. His

figure was inclined to be stout, and his shoulders were slightly bent. He walked softly, and as he spoke his voice was gentle and pleasing. There was no assertion in it, but it was perfectly self-respecting. The eyes and voice redeemed the face from being commonplace.

"Oh!—Mr. Clark, I did not know I should have been so long about my work. I was so engaged getting my book straight for you, and writing—a few cheques for my annual contributions to hospitals, etc.,—that the time slipped by—"

The tone was unusually conciliatory for Livingstone; but he still retained it in addressing Clark. It was partly a remnant of his old time relation to Mr. Clark when he, yet a young man, first knew him, and partly a recognition of Clark's position as a man of good birth who had been unfortunate, and had a large family to support.

"Oh! that 's all right, Mr. Livingstone," said the clerk pleasantly.

He gathered up the letters on the desk and was unconsciously pressing them into exact order.

"Shall I have these mailed or sent by a messenger?"

"Mail them, of course," said Livingstone. "And Clark, I want you to—"

"I thought possibly that, as to-morrow is—" began the clerk in explanation, but stopped as Livingstone continued speaking without noticing the interruption.

—"I have been going over my matters," pursued Livingstone, "and they are in excellent shape—better this year than ever before—"

The clerk's face brightened.

"That 's very good," said he, heartily. "I knew they were."

—"Yes, very good, indeed," said Livingstone condescendingly, pausing to dwell for a second on the sight of the line of pallid figures which suddenly flashed before his eyes. "And I have got everything straight for you this year; and I want you to come up to my house this evening and go over the books with me quietly, so that I can show you—"

"This evening?" The clerk's countenance fell and the words were as near an exclamation as he ever indulged in.

"Yes—, this evening. I shall be at home this evening and to-morrow evening—Why not this evening?" demanded Livingstone almost sharply.

"Why, only—that it 's—However,—" The

speaker broke off. "I 'll be there, sir. About eight-thirty, I suppose?"

"Yes," said Livingstone, curtly.

He was miffed, offended, aggrieved. He had intended to do a kind thing by this man, and he had met with a rebuff.

"I expect to pay you," he said, coldly.

The next second he knew he had made an error. A shocked expression came involuntarily over the other's face.

"Oh! it was not that!—It was—" He paused, reflected half a second. "I 'll be there," he added, and, turning quickly, withdrew, leaving Livingstone feeling very blank and then somewhat angry. He was angry with himself for making such a blunder, and then angrier with the clerk for leading him into it.

"That is the way with such people!" he reflected. "What is the use of being considerate and generous? No one appreciates it!"

The more he thought of it, the warmer he became. "Had he not taken Clark up ten—fifteen years ago when he had not a cent in the world, and now he was getting fifteen hundred dollars a year—yes, sixteen hundred, and almost owned his house; and he had made every cent for him!"

At length, Livingstone's sense of injury be-

came so strong, he could stand it no longer. He determined to have a talk with Clark.

He opened the door and walked into the outer office. One of the younger clerks was just buttoning up his overcoat. Livingstone detected a scowl on his face. The sight did not improve Livingstone's temper. He would have liked to discharge the boy on the spot. How often had he ever called on them to wait? He knew men who required their clerks to wait always until they themselves left the office, no matter what the hour was. He himself would not do this; he regarded it as selfish. But now when it had happened by accident, this was the return he received!

He contented himself with asking somewhat sharply where Mr. Clark was.

"Believe he 's gone to the telephone," said the clerk, sulkily. He picked up his hat and said good-night hurriedly. He was evidently glad to get off.

Livingstone returned to his own room; but left the door ajar so that he could see Clark when he returned. When, however, a few moments afterwards Clark appeared Livingstone had cooled down. Why should he expect grati-

tude? He did not pay Clark for gratitude, but for work, and this the clerk did faithfully. It was an ungrateful world, anyhow.

At that moment there was a light knock at the outer door, and, on Clark's bidding, some one entered.

Livingstone, from where he sat, could see the door reflected in a mirror that hung in his office.

The visitor was a little girl. She was clad in a red jacket, and on her head was a red cap, from under which her hair pushed in a profusion of ringlets. Her cheeks were like apples, and her whole face was glowing from the frosty air. It was just her head that Livingstone saw first, as she poked it in and peeped around. Then, as Mr. Clark sat with his back to the door and she saw that no one else was present, the visitor inserted her whole body and, closing the door softly, with her eyes dancing and her little mouth puckered up in a mischievous way, she came on tiptoe across the floor, stealing towards Clark until she was within a few feet of him, when with a sudden little rush she threw her arms about his head and clapped her hands quickly over his eyes:

"Guess who it is?" she cried.

Livingstone could hear them through the open door.

"Blue Beard," hazarded Mr. Clark.

"No—o!"

"Queen Victoria?"

"No—o—o!"

"Mary, Queen of Scots?—I know it 's a queen."

"No. Now you are not guessing—It is n't any queen, at all."

"Yes, I am—Oh! I know—Santa Claus."

"No; but somebody 'at knows about him."

"Mr. L—m—m—"

Livingstone was not sure that he caught the name.

"No!" in a very emphatic voice and with a sudden stiffening and a vehement shake of the head.

Livingstone knew now whose name it was.

"Now, if you guess right this time, you 'll get a reward?"

"What reward?"

"Why,—Santa Claus will bring you a whole lot of nice—"

"I don't believe that;—he will be too busy with some other folks I know, who—"

"No, he won't—I know he 's going to bring you—Oh!" She suddenly took one hand from Clark's eyes and clapped it over her mouth—but next second replaced it.—"And besides, I 'll give you a whole lot of kisses."

"Oh! yes, I know—the Princess with the Golden Locks, Santa Claus's Partner—the sweetest little kitten in the world, and her name is—Kitty Clark."

"Umhm—m!" And on a sudden, the arms were transferred from about the forehead to the neck and the little girl, with her sunny head canted to one side, was making good her promise of reward. Livingstone could hear the kisses.

The next second they moved out of the line of reflection in Livingstone's mirror. But he could still catch fragments of what they said. Clark spoke too low to be heard; but now and then, Livingstone could catch the little girl's words. Indeed, he could not help hearing her.

"Oh! papa!" she exclaimed in a tone of disappointment, replying to something her father had told her.

"But papa you *must* come—You *promised!*" Again her father talked to her low and soothingly.

"But papa—I 'm so disappointed—I 've saved all my money just to have you go with me. And mamma—I 'll go and ask him to let you come."

Her father evidently did not approve of this, and the next moment he led the child to the door, still talking to her soothingly, and Livingstone heard him kiss her and tell her to wait for him below.

Livingstone let himself out of his side-door. He did not want to meet Clark just then. He was not in a comfortable frame of mind. He had a little headache.

As he turned into the street, he passed the little girl he had seen up-stairs. She was wiping her little, smeared face with her handkerchief, and had evidently been crying. Livingstone, as he passed, caught her eye, and she gave him such a look of hate that it stung him to the quick.

"The little serpent!" thought he. "Here he was supporting her family, and she looking as if she could tear him to pieces! It showed how ungrateful this sort of people were."

IV

LIVINGSTONE walked up town. It would, he felt, do his head good. He needed exercise. He had been working rather too hard of late. However, he was worth—yes, all that! —Out in the snow the sum was before him in cold facsimile.

He had not gone far before he wished he had ridden. The street was thronged with people: some streaming along; others stopping in front of the big shop-windows, blocking the way and forcing such as were in a hurry to get off the sidewalk. The shop-windows were all brilliantly dressed and lighted. Every conception of fertile brains was there to arrest the attention and delight the imagination. And the interest of the throngs outside and in testified the shopkeepers' success.

Here Santa Claus, the last survivor of the old benefactors, who has outlasted whole hierarchies of outworn myths and, yet firm in the devotion of the heart of childhood, snaps his

fingers alike at arid science and blighting stupidity, was driving his reindeer, his teeming sleigh filled with wonders from every region: dolls that walked and talked and sang, fit for princesses; sleds fine enough for princes; drums and trumpets and swords for young heroes; horses that looked as though they were alive and would spring next moment from their rockers; bats and balls that almost started of themselves from their places; little uniforms, and frocks; skates; tennis-racquets; baby caps and rattles; tiny engines and coaches; railway trains; animals that ran about; steamships; books; pictures—everything to delight the soul of childhood and gratify the affection of age.

There Kris Kringle, Santa Claus's other self, with snowy beard, and fur coat hoary with the frost of Arctic travel from the land of unfailing snow and unfailing toys, stood beside his tree glittering with crystal and shining with the fruits of every industry and every clime.

These were but a part of the dazzling display that was ever repeated over and over and filled the windows for squares and squares. Science and Art appeared to have combined to pay tribute to childhood. The very street seemed to have blossomed with Christmas.

But Livingstone saw nothing of it. He was filled with anger that his way should be blocked. The crowds were gay and cheery. Strangers in sheer good-will clapped each other on the shoulder and exchanged views, confidences and good wishes. The truck-drivers, usually so surly, drew out of each other's way and shouted words of cheer after their smiling fellows.

The soul of Christmas was abroad on the air.

Livingstone did not even recall what day it was. All he saw was a crowd of fools that impeded his progress. He tried the middle of the street; but the carriages and delivery wagons were so thick, that he turned off, growling, and took a less frequented thoroughfare, a back street of mean houses and small shops where a poorer class of people dwelt and dealt.

Here, however, he was perhaps even more incommoded than he had been before. This street was, if anything, more crowded than the other, and with a more noisy and hilarious throng. Here, instead of fine shops, there were small ones; but their windows were every bit as attractive to the crowds on the street as those Livingstone had left. People of a much poorer class surged in and out of the doors; small gamins, some in ragged overcoats, more

in none, gabbled with and shouldered each other boisterously at the windows and pressed their red noses to the frosty panes, to see through the blurred patches made by their warm breath the wondrous marvels within. The little pastry-shops and corner groceries vied with the toy-shops and confectionaries and were packed with a population that hummed like bees, the busy murmur broken every now and then by jests and calls and laughter, as the customers squeezed in empty-handed, or slipped out with carefully-wrapped parcels hugged close to their cheery bosoms or carried in their arms with careful pride.

Livingstone finally was compelled to get off the sidewalk again and take to the street. Here, at least, there were no fine carriages to block his way.

As he began to approach a hill, he was aware of yells of warning ahead of him, and, with shouts of merriment, a swarm of sleds began to shoot by him, some with dark objects lying flat on their little stomachs, kicking their heels high in the air; others with small single or double or triple headed monsters seated upright and all screaming at the top of their merry voices. All were unmindful of the falling snow and nip-

ping air, their blood hot with the ineffable fire of youth that flames in the warm heart of childhood, glows in that of youth, and cools only with the cooling brain and chilling pulse.

Before Livingstone could press back into the almost solid mass on the sidewalk he had come near being run down a score of times. He felt that it was an outrage. He fairly flamed with indignation. He, a large taxpayer, a generous contributor to asylums and police funds, a supporter of hospitals,—that he should be almost killed!

He looked around for a policeman—

"Whoop! Look out! Get out of the way!" Swish! Swish! Swish! they shot by. Livingstone had to dodge for his life. Of course, no policeman was in sight!

Livingstone pushed his way on to the top of the ascent, and a square further on he found an officer inspecting silently a group of noisy urchins squabbling over the division of two sticks of painted candy. His back was towards the hill from which were coming the shouts of the sliding miscreants.

Livingstone accosted him:

"That sliding, back there, must be stopped. It is a nuisance," he asserted.—It was danger-

ous, he declared; he himself had almost been struck by one or more of those sleds and if it had run him down it might have killed him.

The officer, after a long look at him, turned silently and walked slowly in the direction of the hill. He moved so deliberately and with such evident reluctance that Livingstone's blood boiled. He hurried after him.

"Here," he said, as he overtook him, "I am going to see that you stop that sliding and enforce the law, or I shall report you for failure to perform your duty. I see your number —268."

"All right, sir. You can do as you please about that," said the officer, rather surlily, but politely.

Livingstone walked close after him to the hill-top. The officer spoke a few words in a quiet tone to the boys who were at the summit, and instantly every sled stopped. Not so the tongues. Babel broke loose. Some went off in silence; others crowded about the officer, expostulating, cajoling, grumbling. It was "the first snow"; they "always slid on that hill"; "it did not hurt anybody"; "nobody cared," etc.

"This gentleman has complained. and you must stop," said the officer.

They all turned on Livingstone with sudden hate.

"Arr-oh-h!" they snarled in concert. "We ain't a-hurtin' him! What 's he got to do wid us anyhow!"

One more apt archer than the rest, shouted, "He ain't no gentleman—a *gentleman* don't never interfere wid poor little boys what ain't a-done him no harm!"

But they stopped, and the more timid or impatient stole off to find new and less inconveniently guarded inclines.

Livingstone passed on. He did not know that the moment he left and the officer turned his back, the whole hillside swarmed again into life and fun and joy. He did not know this; but he bore off with him a new thorn which even his feeling of civic virtue could not keep from rankling. His head ached, and he grew crosser and crosser with every step.

He had never seen so many beggars. It was insufferable. For this evening, at least, every one was giving—except Livingstone. Want was stretching out its withered hand even to

Poverty and found it filled. But Livingstone took no part in it. The chilly and threadbare street-venders of shoe-strings, pencils and cheap flowers, who to-night were offering in their place tin toys, mistletoe and holly-boughs, he pushed roughly out of his way; he snapped angrily at beggars who had the temerity to accost him.

"Confound them! They ought to be run in by the police!"

A red-faced, collarless man fell into the same gait with him, and in a cajoling tone began to mutter something of his distress.

"Be off. Go to the Associated Charities," snarled Livingstone, conscious of the biting sarcasm of his speech.

"Go where, sir?"

"Go to the devil!"

The man stopped in his tracks.

A ragged, meagre boy slid in through the crowd just ahead of Livingstone, to a woman who was toiling along with a large bundle. Holding out a pinched hand, he offered to carry the parcel for her. The woman hesitated.

—"For five cents," he pleaded.

She was about to yield, for the bundle was heavy. But the boy was just in front of Liv-

ingstone and in his eagerness brushed against him. Livingstone gave him a shove which sent him spinning away across the sidewalk; the stream of passers-by swept in between them, and the boy lost his job and the woman his service.

The man of success passed on.

V

IF Livingstone had been in a huff when he left his office, by the time he reached his home he was in a rage.

As he let himself in with his latch-key his expression for a moment softened. The scene before him was one which might well have mellowed a man just out of the snowy street. A spacious and handsome house, both richly and artistically furnished, lay before him. Rich furniture, costly rugs, fine pictures and rare books, gave evidence not only of his wealth but of his taste. He was not a mere business machine, a mere money-maker. He knew men who were. He despised them. He was a man of taste and culture, a gentleman of refinement. He spent his money like a gentleman, to surround himself with objects of art and to give himself and his friends pleasure. Connoisseurs came to look at his fine collection and to revel in his rare editions. Dealers had told him his collection was worth double what it had cost

him. He had frowned at the suggestion; but it was satisfactory to know it.

As Livingstone entered his library and found a bright fire burning, his favorite armchair drawn up to his especial table, his favorite books lying within easy reach, he felt a momentary glow.

He stretched himself out before the fire in his deep lounging-chair with a feeling of relief. The next moment, however, he was sensible of his fatigue, and was conscious that he had quite a headache. What a fool he had been to walk up through the snow! And those people had worried him!

His head throbbed. He had been working too hard of late. He would go and see his doctor next day and talk it over with him. He could now take his advice and stop working for a while; he was worth—Confound those figures! Why could not he think of them without their popping in before his eyes that way!

There was a footfall on the heavily carpeted floor behind him, so soft that it could scarcely be said to have made a sound, but Livingstone caught it. He spoke without turning his head.

"James!"

"Yes, sir. Have you dined, sir?"

"Dined? No, of course not! Where was I to dine?"

"I thought perhaps you had dined at the club. I will have dinner directly, sir," said the butler quietly.

"Dine at the club! Why should I dine at the club? Have n't I my own house to dine in?" demanded Livingstone.

"Yes, sir. We had dinner ready, only—as you were so late we thought perhaps you were dining at the club. You had not said anything about dining out."

Livingstone glanced at the clock. It was half-past eight. He had had no idea it was so late. He had forgotten how late it was when he left his office, and the walk through the snow had been slow. He was hopelessly in the wrong.

Just then there was a scurry in the hall outside and the squeak of childish voices. James coughed and turned quickly towards the door.

Livingstone wanted an outlet.

"What is that?" he asked, sharply.

James cleared his throat nervously. The squeak came again—this time almost a squeal.

"Whose children are those?" demanded Livingstone.

"Ahem! I thinks they 's the laundress's, sir. They just came around this evening—"

Livingstone cut him short.

"Well! I—!" He was never nearer an outbreak, but he controlled himself.

"Go down and send them and her off immediately; and you—" He paused, closed his lips firmly, and changed his speech. "I wish some dinner," he said coldly.

"Yes, sir."

James had reached the door when he turned.

"Shall you be dining at home to-morrow, sir?" he asked, quietly.

"Yes, of course," said Livingstone, shortly. "And I don't want to see any one to-night, no matter who comes. I am tired." He had forgotten Clark.

"Yes, sir."

The butler withdrew noiselessly, and Livingstone sank back in his chair. But before the butler was out of hearing Livingstone recalled him.

"I don't want any dinner."

"Can have it for you directly, sir," said James, persuasively.

"I say I don't want any."

James came a little closer and gave his master a quick glance.

"Are you feeling bad, sir?" he asked.

"No, I only want to be let alone. I shall go out presently to the club."

This time James withdrew entirely.

What happened when James passed through the door which separated his domain from his master's was not precisely what Livingstone had commanded. What the tall butler did was to gather up in his arms two very plump little tots who at sight of him came running to him with squeals of joy, flinging themselves on him, and choking him with their chubby arms, to the imminent imperiling of his immaculate linen.

Taking them both up together, James bore them off quietly to some remote region where he filled their little mouths full of delightful candy which kept their little jaws working tremendously and their blue eyes opening and shutting in unison, whilst he told them of the dreadful unnamed things that would befall them if they ventured again through that door. He impressed on them the calamity it would be to lose the privilege of holding the evergreens

whilst they were being put up in the hall, and the danger of Santa Claus passing by that night without filling their stockings.

The picture he drew of two little stockings hanging limp and empty at the fireplace while Santa Claus went by with bulging sleigh was harrowing.

At mention of it, the tots both looked down at their stockings and were so overcome that they almost stopped working their jaws, so that when they began again they were harder to work than ever. To this James added the terror of their failing to see next day the great plum-pudding suddenly burst into flame in his hands. At this, he threw up both hands and opened them so wide that the little ones had to look first at one of his hands and then at the other to make sure that he was not actually holding the dancing flames now.

When they had promised faithfully and with deep awe, crossing their little hearts with smudgy fingers, the butler entrusted them to some one to see to the due performance of their good intention, and he himself sought the cook, who, next to himself, was Livingstone's oldest servant. She was at the moment, with plump

arms akimbo on her stout waist, laying down the law of marriage to a group of merry servants as they sorted Christmas wreaths.

"Wait till you 've known a man twenty years before you marry him, and then you 'll never marry him," she said. The point of her advice being that she was past forty and had never married.

The butler beckoned her out and confided to her his anxiety.

"He is not well," he said gloomily. "I have not see him this a-way in ten years. He is not well."

The cook's cheery countenance changed.

"But you say he have had no dinner." Her excessive grammar was a reassurance. She turned alertly towards her range.

"But he won't have dinner."

"What!" The stiffness went out of her form in visible detachments. "Then he air sick!"

She made one attempt to help matters. "Can't I make him something nice? Very nice?—And light?" She brightened at the hope.

"No, nothink. He will not hear to it."

"Then you must have the doctor." She spoke decisively.

To this the butler made no reply, at least in words. He stood wrapt in deep abstraction, his face filled with perplexity and gloom, and as the cook watched him anxiously her face too took on gradually the same expression.

"I has not see him like this before, not in ten year—not in twelve year. Not since he go that letter from that young lady what—" He stopped and looked at the cook.—"He was hactually hirascible!"

"He must be got to bed, poor dear!" said the cook, sympathetically. "And you must get the doctor, and I 'll make some good rich broth to have it handy.—And just when we were a-goin' to dress the house and have it so beautiful!"

She turned away, her round face full of woe.

"Ah! Well!—" The butler tried to find some sentence that might be comforting; but before he could secure one that suited, the door bell rang, and he went to answer it.

VI

IT was Mr. Clark, who as soon as the door was opened stepped within and taking off his hat began to shake the snow from it, even while he greeted James and wished him a merry Christmas.

James liked Mr. Clark. He did not rate him very highly in the matter of intelligence; but he recognized him as a gentleman, and appreciated his kindly courtesy to himself. He knew it came from a good heart.

Many a man who drove up to the door in a carriage James relieved of his coat and showed into the drawing-room in silence; but the downcast eyes were averted to conceal inconvenient thoughts and the expressionless face was a mask to hide views which the caller might not have cared to discover. Mr. Clark, however, always treated James with consideration, and James reciprocated the feeling and returned the treatment.

Mr. Clark was giving James his hat when the

butler took in that he had come to see Mr. Livingstone.

"Mr. Livingstone begs to be excused this evening, sir," he said.

"Yes." Mr. Clark laid a package on a chair and proceeded to unbutton his overcoat.

"He says he regrets he cannot see any one," explained the servant.

"Yes. That 's all right. I know." He caught the lapels of the coat preparatory to taking it off.

"No, sir. He cannot see *anybody* at all this evening," insisted James, confident in being within his authority.

"Why, he told me to come and bring his books! I suppose he meant—!"

"No, sir. He is not very well this evening."

Mr. Clark's hands dropped to his side.

"Not well! Why, he left the office only an hour or two ago."

"Yes, sir; but he walked up, and seemed very tired when he arrived. He did not eat anything, and—the doctor is coming to see him."

Mr. Clark's face expressed the deepest concern.

"He has been working too hard," he said,

shaking his head. "He ought to have let me go over those accounts. With all he has to carry!"

"Yes, sir, that 's it," said James, heartily.

"Well, don't you think I 'd better go up and see him?" asked the old clerk, solicitously. "I might be able to suggest something?"

"No, sir. He said quite positive he would not see *anybody.*" James looked the clerk full in the face. "I was afraid something might 'ave 'appened down in the—ah—?"

Mr. Clark's face lit up with a kindly light.

"No, indeed. It 's nothing like that, James. We never had so good a year. You can make your mind easy about that."

"Thank you, sir," said the servant. "We 'll have the doctor drop in to see him, and I hope he 'll be all right in the morning. Snowy night, sir."

"I hope so," said Mr. Clark, not intending to convey his views as to the weather. "You 'll let me know if I am wanted—if I can do anything. I will come around first thing in the morning to see how he is. I hope he 'll be all right. Good-night. A merry Christmas to you."

"Good-night, sir. Thankee, sir; the same

to you, sir. I 'm going to wait up to see how he is. Good-night, sir.''

And James shut the door softly behind the visitor, feeling a sense of comfort not wholly accounted for by the information as to the successful year. Mr. Clark, somehow, always reassured him. The butler could understand the springs that moved that kindly spirit.

What Mr. Clark thought as he tramped back through the snow need not be fully detailed. But at least, one thing was certain, he never thought of himself.

If he recalled that a mortgage would be due on his house just one week from that day, and that the doctors' bills had been unusually heavy that year, it was not on his own account that he was anxious. Indeed, he never considered himself; there were too many others to think of. One thought was that he was glad his friend had such a good servant as James to look after him. Another was pity that Livingstone had never known the joy that was awaiting himself when at the end of that mile of snow he should peep into the little cosy back room (for the front room was mysteriously closed this evening), where a sweet-faced, frail-looking woman would be lying on a lounge with a half-dozen

little curly heads bobbing about her. He knew what a scream of delight would greet him as he poked his head in; and out in the darkness and cold John Clark smiled and smacked his lips as he thought of the kisses and squeezes, and renewed kisses that would be his lot as he told how he would be with them all the evening.

Yes, he was undoubtedly sorry for Livingstone, a poor lonely man in that great house; and he determined that he would not say much about his being ill. Women did not always exactly understand some men, and when he left home, Mrs. Clark had expressed some very strong views as to Livingstone which had pained Clark. She had even spoken of him as selfish and miserly. He would just say now that Livingstone on his arrival had sent him straight back home.

No, Mr. Clark never thought of himself, and this made him richer than Mr. Livingstone.

When Mr. Clark reached home his expectation was more than realized. From the way in which he noiselessly opened the front door and then stole along the little passage to the back room, from which the sound of many voices was coming as though it were a mimic Babel, you might have thought he was a thief.

And when he opened the door softly and, with dancing eyes, poked his head into the room, you might have thought he was Santa Claus himself. There was one second of dead silence as a half-dozen pair of eyes stretched wide and a half-dozen mouths opened with a gasp, and then, with a shout which would have put to the blush a tribe of wild Indians, a half-dozen bodies flung themselves upon him with screams and shrieks of delight. John Clark's neck must have been of iron to withstand such hugs and tugs as it was given.

The next instant he was drawn bodily into the room and pushed down forcibly into a chair, whilst the whole half-dozen piled upon him with demands to be told how he had managed to get off and come back. No one but Clark could have understood them or answered them, but somehow, as his arms seemed able to gather in the whole lot of struggling, squeezing, wriggling, shoving little bodies, so his ears seemed to catch all the questions and his mind to answer each in turn and all together.

" 'How did I come?'—Ran every step of the way.—'Why did I come back?'—Well! that 's a question for a man with eight children who will sit up and keep Santa Claus out of the house unless their father comes home and puts

them to bed and holds their eyelids down to keep them from peeping and scaring Santa Claus away!

—"'What did Mr. Livingstone say?'—Well what do you suppose a man would say Christmas Eve to another man who had eight wide-awake children who will sit up in front of the biggest fire-place in the house until midnight Christmas Eve so that Santa Claus can't come down the only chimney big enough to hold his presents? He would say, 'John Clark, I have no children of my own, but you have eight, and if you don't go home this minute and see that those children are in bed and fast asleep and snoring,—yes, snoring, mind,—by ten o'clock, I 'll never, and Santa Claus will never—!'

—"'Did I see anything of Santa Claus?' Well, if I were to tell you—what I saw this night, why,—you 'd never believe me. There 's a sleigh so big coming in a little while to this town, and this street, and this house, that it holds presents enough for—.

"'When will it be here?' Well, from the sleigh-bells that I heard I should say—. My goodness, gracious! If it is n't almost ten o'clock, and if that sleigh should get here whilst there 's a single eye open in this house, I don't know what Santa Claus might do!"

And, with a strength that one might have thought quite astonishing, John Clark rose somehow from under the mass of little heads, and, with his arms still around them, still talking, still cajoling, still entertaining and still caressing, he managed to bear the whole curly, chattering flock to the door where, with renewed kisses and squeezes and questions, they were all finally induced to release their hold and run squeaking and frisking off upstairs to bed.

Then, as he closed the door, Clark turned and looked at the only other occupant of the room, a lady whose pale face would have told her story even had she not remained outstretched on a lounge during the preceding scene.

If, however, Mrs. Clark's face was pale, her eyes were brilliant, and the look that she and her husband exchanged told that even invalidism and narrow means have alleviations, so full was the glance they gave of confidence and joy.

Yet, as absolute as was their confidence, Mr. Clark did not now tell his wife the truth. He gave her in a few words the reason of his return. Mr. Livingstone was feeling unwell, he said. He had not remembered it was Christmas Eve,

he added; and, turning quickly and opening the door into the front room he guilefully dived at once into the matter of the Christmas-tree which was standing there waiting to be dressed.

Whether or not Mr. Clark deceived Mrs. Clark might be a matter of question. Mr. Clark was not good at deception. Mrs. Clark was better at it; but then, to-night was a night of peace and good-will, and since her husband had returned she was willing to forgive even Livingstone.

VII

LIVINGSTONE, at this moment, was not feeling as wealthy as the row of figures in clean-cut lines that were now beginning to be almost constantly before his eyes might have seemed to warrant. He was sitting sunk deep in his cushioned arm-chair. The tweaks in his forehead that had annoyed him earlier in the evening had changed to twinges, and the twinges had now given place to a dull, steady ache. And every thought of his wealth brought that picture of seven staring figures before his eyes, whilst, in place of the glow which they had brought at first, he now at every recollection of them had a cold thrill of apprehension lest they might appear.

James's inquiry, "Shall you be dining at home to-morrow?" had recurred to him and now disturbed him. It was a simple question; nothing remarkable in it. It now came to him that to-morrow was Christmas Day, and he had forgotten it. This was remarkable. He had

never forgotten it before, but this year he had been working so hard and had been so engrossed he had not thought of it. Even this reflection brought the spectral figures back sharply outlined before his eyes. They stayed longer now. He must think of something else.

He thought of Christmas. This was the first Christmas he had ever been at home by himself. A Christmas dinner alone! Who had ever heard of such a thing! He must go out to dinner, of course. He glanced over at his table where James always put his mail. Everything was in perfect order: the book he had read the night before; the evening paper and the last financial quotation were all there; but not a letter. James must have forgot them.

He turned to rise and ring the bell and glanced across the room towards it. What a dark room it was! What miserable gas!

He turned up the light at his hand. It did not help perceptibly. He sank back. What selfish dogs people were, he reflected. Of all the hosts of people he knew,—people who had entertained him and whom he had entertained, —not one had thought to invite him to the Christmas dinner. A dozen families at whose houses he had often been entertained flashed

across his mind. Why, years ago he used to have a half-dozen invitations to Christmas dinner, and now he had not one! Even Mrs. Wright, to whom he had just sent a contribution for—Hello! that lantern-slide again! It would not do to think of figures.—Even she had not thought of him.

There must be some reason? he pondered. Yes, Christmas dinners were always family reunions—that was the reason he was left out and forgotten;—yes, forgotten. A list of the people who he knew would have such reunions came to him;—almost every one of his acquaintances had a family;—even Clark had a family and would have a Christmas dinner.

At the thought, a pang almost of envy of Clark smote him.

Suddenly his own house seemed to grow vast and empty and lonely; he felt perfectly desolate, —abandoned—alone—ill! He glanced around at his pictures. They were cold, staring, stony, dead! The reflection of the cross lights made them look ghastly.

As he gazed at them the figures they had cost shot before his eyes. My God! he could not stand this! He sprang to his feet. Even the pain of getting up was a relief. He stared

around him. Dead silence and stony faces were all about him. The capacious room seemed a vast, empty cavern, and as he stood he saw stretching before him his whole future life spent in this house, as lonely, silent, and desolate as this. It was unbearable.

He walked through to his drawing-room. The furniture was sheeted, the room colder and lonelier a thousand-fold than the other;—on into the dining-room;—the bare table in the dim light looked like ice; the sideboard with its silver and glass, bore sheets of ice. "Pshaw!" He turned up the lights. He would take a drink of brandy and go to bed.

He took a decanter, poured out a drink and drained it off. His hand trembled, but the stimulant helped him a little. It enabled him to collect his ideas and think. But his thoughts still ran on Christmas and his loneliness.

Why should not he give a Christmas dinner and invite his friends? Yes, that was what he would do. Whom should he ask? His mind began to run over the list. Every one he knew had his own house; and as to friends—why, he did n't have any friends! He had only acquaintances. He stopped suddenly, appalled by the fact. He had not a friend in the world!

Why was it? In answer to the thought the seven figures flashed into sight. He put his hand to his eyes to shut them out. He knew now why. He had been too busy to make friends. He had given his youth and his middle manhood to accumulate—those seven figures again!—And he had given up his friendships. He was now almost aged.

He walked into his drawing-room and turned up the light—all the lights to look at himself in a big mirror. He did look at himself and he was confounded. He was not only no longer young—he was prepared for this—but he was old. He would not have dreamed he could be so old. He was gray and wrinkled.

As he faced himself his blood seemed suddenly to chill. He was conscious of a sensible ebb as if the tide about his heart had suddenly sunk lower. Perhaps it was the cooling of the atmosphere as the fire in his library died out,—or was it his blood?

He went back into his library not ten minutes, but ten years older than when he left it.

He sank into his chair and insensibly began to scan his life. He had just seen himself as he was; he now saw himself as he had been long ago, and saw how he had become what

he was. The whole past lay before him like a slanting pathway.

He followed it back to where it began—in an old home far off in the country.

He was a very little boy. All about was the bustle and stir of preparation for Christmas. Cheer was in every face, for it was in every heart. Boxes were coming from the city by every conveyance. The store-room and closets were centres of unspeakable interest, shrouded in delightful mystery. The kitchen was lighted by the roaring fire and steaming from the numberless good things preparing for the next day's feast. Friends were arriving from the distant railway and were greeted with universal delight. The very rigor of the weather was deemed a part of the Christmas joy, for it was known that Santa Claus with his jingling sleigh came the better through the deeper snow. Everything gave the little boy joy, particularly going with his father and mother to bear good things to poor people who lived in smaller houses. They were always giving; but Christmas was the season for a more general and generous distribution. He recalled across forty years his father and mother putting the presents into his hands to bestow, and his father's words, "My boy, learn the pleasure of giving."

The rest was all blaze and light and glow, and his father and mother moving about like shining spirits amid it all.

Then he was a schoolboy, measuring the lagging time by the coming Christmas; counting the weeks, the days, the hours in an ecstasy of impatience until he should be free from the drudgery of books and the slavery of classes, and should be able to start for home with the friends who had leave to go with him. How slowly the time crept by, and how he told the other boys of the joys that would await them! And when it had really gone, and they were free! how delicious it used to be!

As the scene appeared before him Livingstone could almost feel again the thrill that set him quivering with delight; the boundless joy that filled his veins as with an elixir.

The arrival at the station drifted before him and the pride of his introduction of the servants whose faces shone with pleasure; the drive home through the snow, which used somehow to be warming, not chilling, in those days; and then, through the growing dusk, the first sight of the home-light, set, he knew, by the mother in her window as a beacon shining from the home and mother's heart. Then the last, toilsome climb up the home-hill and the out-

pouring of welcome amid cheers and shouts and laughter.

Oh, the joy of that time! And through all the festivity was felt, like a sort of pervading warmth, the fact that that day Christ came into the world and brought peace and good will and cheer to every one.

The boy Livingstone saw was now installed regularly as the bearer of Christmas presents and good things to the poor, and the pleasure he took then in his office flashed across Livingstone's mind like a sudden light. It lit up the faces of many whom Livingstone had not thought of for years. They were all beaming on him now with a kindliness to which he had long been a stranger; that kindliness which belongs only to our memory of our youth.

Was it possible that he could ever have had so many friends! The man in the chair put his hand to his eyes to try and hold the beautiful vision, but it faded away, shut out from view by another.

VIII

THE vision that came next was of a college student. The Christmas holidays were come again. They were still as much the event of the year as when he was a schoolboy. Once more he was on his way home accompanied by friends whom he had brought to help him enjoy the holidays, his enjoyment doubled by their enjoyment. Once more, as he touched the soil of his own neighborhood, from a companion he became a host. Once more with his friends he reached his old home and was received with that greeting which he never met with elsewhere. He saw his father and mother standing on the wide portico before the others with outstretched arms, affection and pride beaming in their faces. He witnessed their cordial greeting of his friends. "Our son's friends are our friends," he heard them say.

Henry Trelane said afterwards, "Why, Livingstone, you have told me of your home and your horses, but never told me of your father

and mother. Do you know that they are the best in the world?'' Somehow, it had seemed to open his eyes, and the manner in which his friends had hung on his father's words had increased his own respect for him. One of them had said, ''Livingstone, I like you, but I love your father.'' The phrase, he remembered, had not altogether pleased him, and yet it had not altogether displeased him either. But Henry Trelane was very near to him in those days. Not only was he the soul of honor and high-mindedness, with a mind that reflected the truth as an unruffled lake reflects the sky, but he was the brother of Catherine Trelane, who then stood to Livingstone for Truth itself.

It was during a Christmas-holiday visit to her brother that Livingstone had first met Catherine Trelane; as he now saw himself meet her. He had come on her suddenly in a long avenue. Her arms were full of holly-boughs; her face was rosy from a victorious tramp through the snow, rosier at the hoped-for, unexpected, chance meeting with her brother's guest; a sprig of mistletoe was stuck daringly in her hood, guarded by her mischievous, laughing eyes. She looked like a dryad fresh from the winter woods. For years after that Living-

stone had never thought of Christmas without being conscious of a certain radiance that vision shed upon the time.

The next day in the holly-dressed church she seemed a saint wrapt in divine adoration.

Another shift of the scene; another Christmas.

Reverses had come. His father, through kindness and generosity, had become involved beyond his means, and, rather than endure the least shadow of reproach, gave up everything he possessed to save his name and shield a friend. Livingstone himself had been called away from college.

He remembered the sensation of it all. He recalled the picture of his father as he stood calm and unmoved amid the wreck of his fortune and faced unflinchingly the hard, dark future. It was an inspiring picture: the picture of a gentleman, far past the age when men can start afresh and achieve success, despoiled by another and stripped of all he had in the world, yet standing upright and tranquil; a just man walking in his integrity; a brave man facing the world; firm as an immovable rock; serene as an unblemished morning.

Livingstone had never taken in before how

fine it was. He had at one time even felt aggrieved by his father's act; now he was suddenly conscious of a thrill of pride in him.

If he were only living! He himself was now worth—! Suddenly that lantern-slide shot before his eyes and shut out the noble figure standing there.

Livingstone's mind reverted to his own career.

He was a young man in business; living in a cupboard; his salary a bare pittance; yet he was rich; he had hope and youth; family and friends. Heavens! how rich he was then! It made the man in the chair poor now to feel how rich he had been then and had not known it. He looked back at himself with a kind of envy, strange to him, which gave him a pain.

He saw himself again at Christmas. He was back at the little home which his father had taken when he lost the old place. He saw himself unpacking his old trunk, taking out from it the little things he had brought as presents, with more pride than he had ever felt before, for he had earned them himself. Each one represented sacrifice, thought, affection. He could see again his father's face lit up with pride and his mother's radiant with delight in

his achievement. His mother was handing him her little presents,—the gloves she had knit for him herself with so much joy; the shaving-case she had herself embroidered; the cup and saucer from the old tea-service that had belonged to his great-grandfather and great-grandmother and which had been given his mother and father when they were married. He glanced up as she laid the delicate piece of Sèvres before him, and caught her smile—That smile! Was there ever another like it? It held in it—everything.

Suddenly Livingstone felt something moving on his cheek. He put his hand up to his face and when he took it down his fingers were wet.

With his mother's face, another face came to him, radiant with the beauty of youth. Catherine Trelane, since that meeting in the long avenue, had grown more and more to him, until all other motives and aims had been merged in one radiant hope.

With his love he had grown timid; he scarcely dared look into her eyes; yet now he braved the world for her; bore for her all the privations and hardships of life in its first struggle. Indeed, for her, privation was no hardship. He was poor in purse, but rich in hope. Love

lit up his life and touched the dull routine of his work with the light of enchantment. If she made him timid before her, she made him bold towards the rest of the world. 'T was for her that he had had the courage to take that plunge into the boiling sea of life in an unknown city, and it was for her that he had had strength to keep above water, where so many had gone down.

He had faced all for her and had conquered all for her. He recalled the long struggle, the painful, patient waiting, the stern self-denial. He had deliberately chosen between pleasure and success,—between the present and the future. He had denied himself to achieve his fortune, and he had succeeded.

At first, it had been for her; then Success had become dear to him for itself, had ever grown larger and dearer as he advanced, until now— A thrill of pride ran through him, which changed into a shiver as it brought those accursed, staring, ghastly figures straight before his eyes.

He had great trouble to drive the figures away. It was only when he thought fixedly of Catherine Trelane as she used to be that they disappeared. She was a vision then to banish

all else. He had a picture of her somewhere among his papers. He had not seen it for years, but no picture could do her justice: as rich as was her coloring, as beautiful as were her eyes, her mouth, her *riante* face, her slim, willowy, girlish figure and fine carriage, it was not these that came to him when he thought of her; it was rather the spirit of which these were but the golden shell: it was the smile, the music, the sunshine, the radiance which came to him and warmed his blood and set his pulses throbbing across all those years. He would get the picture and look at it.

But memory swept him on.

He had got in the tide of success and the current had borne him away. First it had been the necessity to succeed; then ambition; then opportunity to do better and better always taking firmer hold of him and bearing him further and further until the pressure of business, change of ambition and, at last, of ideals swept him beyond sight of all he had known or cared for.

He could almost see the process of the metamorphosis. Year after year he had waited and worked and Catherine Trelane had waited; then had come a time when he did not wish her to

wait longer. His ideals had changed. Success had come to mean but one thing for him: gold; he no longer strove for honors but for riches. He abandoned the thought of glory and of power, of which he had once dreamed. Now he wanted gold. Beauty would fade, culture prove futile; but gold was king, and all he saw bowed before it. Why marry a poor girl when another had wealth?

He found a girl as handsome as Catherine Trelane. It was not a chapter in his history in which he took much pride. Just when he thought he had succeeded, her father had interposed and she had yielded easily. She had married a fool with ten times Livingstone's wealth. It was a blow to Livingstone, but he had recovered, and after that he had a new incentive in life; he would be richer than her father or her husband.

He had become so and had bought his house partly to testify to the fact. Then he had gone back to Catherine Trelane. She had come unexpectedly into property. He had not dared quite to face her, but had written to her, asking her to marry him. He had her reply somewhere now; it had cut deeper than she ever knew or would know. She wrote that the time

had been when she might have married him even had he asked her by letter, but it was too late now. The man she might have loved was dead. He had gone to see her then, but had found what she said was true. She was more beautiful than when he had last seen her—so beautiful that the charm of her maturity had almost eclipsed in his mind the memory of her girlish loveliness. But she was inexorable. He had not blamed her, he had only cursed himself, and had plunged once more into the boiling current of the struggle for wealth. And he had won—yes, won!

With a shock those figures slipped before his eyes and would not go away. Even when he shut his eyes and rubbed them the ghastly line was there.

He turned and gazed down the long room. It was as empty as a desert. He listened to see if he could hear any sound, even hoping to hear some sound from his servants. All was as silent as a tomb.

He rubbed his eyes, with a groan that was almost a curse. The figures were still there.

He suddenly rose to his feet and gave himself a shake. He determined to go to his club; he would find company there,—perhaps not the

best, but it would be better than this awful loneliness and deadly silence.

He went through the hall softly, almost stealthily; put on his hat and coat; let himself quietly out of the door and stepped forth into the night.

It had stopped snowing and the stars looked down from a clearing sky. The moon just above the housetops was sailing along a burnished track. The vehicles went slowly by with a muffled sound broken only by the creaking of the wheels in the frosty night. From the cross streets, sounded in the distance the jangle of sleigh-bells.

IX

LIVINGSTONE plodded along through the snow, relieved to find that the effort made him forget himself and banished those wretched figures. He traversed the intervening streets and before he was conscious of it was standing in the hall of the brilliantly lighted club. The lights dazzled him, and he was only half sensible of the score of servants that surrounded him with vague, half-proffers of aid in removing his overcoat.

Without taking off his coat, Livingstone walked on into the large assembly-room to see who might be there. It was as empty as a church. The lights were all turned on full and the fires burned brightly in the big hearths; but there was not a soul in the room, usually so crowded at this hour.

Livingstone turned and crossed the marble-paved hall to another spacious suite of rooms. Not a soul was there. The rooms were swept and garnished, the silence and loneliness seem-

ing only intensified by the brilliant light and empty magnificence.

Livingstone felt like a man in a dream from which he could not awake. He turned and made his way back to the outer door. As he did so he caught sight of a single figure at the far end of one of the big rooms. It looked like Wright,—the husband of Mrs. Wright to whom Livingstone had sent his charity-subscription a few hours before. He had on his overcoat and must have just come in. He was standing by the great fire-place rubbing his hands with satisfaction. As Livingstone turned away, he thought he heard his name called, but he dashed out into the night. He could not stand Wright just then.

He plunged back through the snow and once more let himself in at his own door. It was lonelier within than before. The hall was ghastly. The big rooms, bigger than they had ever seemed, were like a desert. It was intolerable! He would go to bed.

He slowly climbed the stairs. The great clock on the landing stared at him as he passed and in deep tones tolled the hour—of ten. It was impossible! Livingstone knew it must have been hours since he left his office. To him it

seemed months, years;—but his own watch marked the same hour.

As he entered his bedroom, two pictures hanging on the wall caught his eye. They were portraits of a gentleman and a lady. Any one would have known at a glance that they were Livingstone's father and mother. They had hung there since Livingstone built his house, but he had not thought of them in years. Perhaps that was why they were still there.

They were early works of one who had since become a master. Livingstone remembered the day his father had given the order to the young artist.

"Why do you do that?" some one had asked. "He perhaps has parts, but he is a young man and wholly unknown."

"That is the very reason I do it," had said his father. "Those who are known need no assistance. Help young men, for thereby some have helped angels unawares."

It had come true. The unknown artist had become famous, and these early portraits were now worth—no, not those figures which suddenly gleamed before Livingstone's eyes!—

Livingstone remembered the letter that the artist had written his father, tendering him aid

when he learned of his father's reverses—he had said he owed his life to him—and his father's reply, that he needed no aid, and it was sufficient recompense to know that one he had helped remembered a friend.

Livingstone walked up and scanned the portrait nearest him. He had not really looked at it in years. He had had no idea how fine it was. How well it portrayed him! There was the same calm forehead, noble in its breadth; the same deep, serene, blue eyes;—the artist had caught their kindly expression;—the same gentle mouth with its pleasant humor lurking at the corners;—the artist had almost put upon the canvas the mobile play of the lips;—the same finely cut chin with its well marked cleft. It was the very man.

Livingstone had had no idea how handsome a man his father was. He remembered Henry Trelane saying he wished he were an artist to paint his father, but that only Van Dyck could have made him as distinguished as he was.

He turned to the portrait of his mother. It was a beautiful face and a gracious. He remembered that every one except his father had said it was a fine portrait, but his father had

said it was, "only a fine picture; no portrait of her could be fine."

Moved by the recollection, Livingstone opened a drawer and took from a box the daguerreotype of a boy. He held it in his hand and looked first at it and then at the portraits on the wall. Yes, it was distinctly like both. He remembered it used to be said that he was like his father; but his father had always said he was like his mother. He could now see the resemblance. There were, even in the round, unformed, boyish face, the same wide open eyes; the same expression of the mouth, as though a smile were close at hand; the same smooth, placid brow. His chin was a little bolder than his father's. Livingstone was pleased to note it.

He determined to have his portrait painted by the best painter he could find. He would not consider the cost. Why should he? He was worth—at the thought the seven gleaming figures flashed out clear between his eyes and the portrait in his hand.

Livingstone turned suddenly and faced himself in the full length mirror at his side. The light caught him exactly and he stood and

looked himself full in the face. What he saw horrified him. He felt his heart sink and saw the pallor settle deeper over his face. His hair was almost white. He was wrinkled. His eyes were small and sharp and cold. His mouth was drawn and hard. His cheeks were seamed and set like flint. He was a hard, wan, ugly old man; and as he gazed, unexpectedly in the mirror before his eyes, flashed those cursed figures.

With almost a cry Livingstone turned and looked at the portraits on the wall. He half feared the sharp figures would appear branded across those faces. But no, thank God! the figures had disappeared. The two faces beamed down on him sweet and serene and comforting as heaven.

Under an impulse of relief Livingstone flung himself face downward on the bed and slipped to his knees. The position and the association it brought fetched to his lips words which he used to utter in that presence long years ago.

It had been long since Livingstone had prayed. He attended church, but if he had any heart it had not been there. Now this prayer came instinctively. It was simple and childish enough: the words that he had been taught at

his mother's knee. He hardly knew he had said them; yet they soothed him and gave him comfort; and from some far-off time came the saying, *"Except ye become as little children, ye shall not enter—"* and he went on repeating the words.

Another verse drifted into his mind: *"And he took a child and set him in the midst of them, and said, * * * Whosoever shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest. And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me. But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea."*

The events of the evening rose up before Livingstone—the little girl in her red jacket, with her tear-stained face, darting a look of hate at him; the rosy-cheeked boys shouting with glee on the hillside, stopped in the midst of their fun, and changing suddenly to yell their cries of hate at him; the shivering beggar asking for work,—for but five cents, which he had withheld from him.

Livingstone shuddered. Had he done these things? Could it be possible? Into his memory

came from somewhere afar off: "*Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.*"

There flashed through his mind the thought, might he not retrieve himself? Was it too late? Could he not do something for some one?—perhaps, for some little ones?

It was like a flash of light and Livingstone was conscious of a thrill of joy at the idea, but it faded out leaving him in blanker darkness than before. He did not know a single child.—He knew in a vague, impersonal way a number of children whom he had had a momentary glimpse of occasionally at the fashionable houses which he visited; but he knew them only as he would have known handsomely dressed dolls in show windows. He had never thought of them as children, but only as a part of the personal belongings of his acquaintances—much as he thought of their bric-a-brac or their poodles. They were not like the children he had once known. He had never seen them romp and play or heard them laugh or shout.

He was sunk in deep darkness.

In his gloom he glanced up. His father's serene face was beaming down on him. A speech he had heard his father make long, long ago,

came back to him: "Always be kind to children. Grown people may forget kindness, but children will remember it. They forgive, but never forget either a kindness or an injury."

Another speech of his father's came floating to Livingstone across the years: "If you have made an enemy of a child, make him your friend if it takes a year! A child's enmity is never incurred except by injustice or meanness."

Livingstone could not but think of Clark's little girl. Might she not help him? She would know children. But would she help him?

If she were like Clark, he reasoned, she would be kind-hearted. Besides, he remembered to have heard his father say that children did not bear malice: that was a growth of older minds. It was strange for Livingstone to find himself recurring to his father for knowledge of human nature—his father whom he had always considered the most ignorant of men as to knowledge of the world.

He sprang to his feet and looked at his watch. Perhaps it was not yet too late to see the little girl to-night if he hurried. Clark lived not very far off, in a little side street, and they would sit up late Christmas Eve.

As he turned to the mirror it was with trepi-

dation, his last glance at it had been so dreadful; but he was relieved to find a pleasanter expression on his face. He almost saw a slight resemblance to his father.

The next moment he hurried from the room; stole down the stair; slipped on his overcoat, and hastily let himself out of the door.

X

IT was quite clear out now and the moon was riding high in a cloudless heaven. The jingle of sleigh-bells had increased and just as Livingstone turned the corner a sleigh dashed past him. He heard the merry voices of young people, and amid the voices the ringing laughter of a young girl, clear as a silver bell.

Livingstone stopped short in his tracks and listened. He had not heard anything so musical in years—he had not heard a young girl's laughter in years—he had not had time to think of such things. It brought back across the snow-covered fields—across the snow-covered years—a Christmas of long ago when he had heard a young girl's musical laughter like a silvery chime, and, standing there in the snow-covered street, for one moment Livingstone was young again—no longer a grayhaired man in the city; but a young man in the country, somewhere under great arching boughs; face to face with

one who was also young;—and, looking out from a hood that surrounded it like a halo, a girlish face flashed on him; cheeks like roses, brilliant with the frosty air; roguish eyes, now dancing, now melting; a laughing mouth from which came such rippling music that there was no simile for it in all the realm of silvery sound, the enchanting music of the joy of youth.

With a cry, Livingstone sprang forward with outstretched, eager hands to catch the vision; but his arms enclosed only vacancy and he stood alone in the empty street.

A large sleigh came by and Livingstone hailed it. It was a livery vehicle and the driver having just put down at their homes a party of pleasure-seekers was on his way back to his stable. He agreed with Livingstone to take him to his destination and wait for him, and Livingstone, giving him a number, sprang in and ordered him to drive rapidly.

The sleigh stopped in front of a little house, in a narrow street filled with little houses, and Livingstone getting out mounted the small flight of steps. Inside, pandemonium seemed to have broken loose somewhere up-stairs, such running and shouting and shrieks of joyous laughter Livingstone heard. Then, as he could not find the bell, Livingstone knocked.

At the sound the noise suddenly ceased, but the next moment it burst forth again louder than before. This time the shouts came rolling down the stairs and towards the door, with a scamper of little feet and shrieks of childish delight. They were interrupted and restrained by a quiet, kindly voice which Livingstone recognized as Clark's. The father was trying to keep the children back.

It might be Santa Claus himself, Livingstone heard him urge, and if they did not go back to bed immediately, or into the back room,—or even if they peeped, Santa Claus might jump into his sleigh and drive away and leave nobody at the door but a grocer's boy with a parcel. This direful threat had its effect. The gleeful squeals were hushed down into subdued and half-awed murmurs and after a little a single footstep came along the passage and the front door was opened cautiously.

At sight of Livingstone, Clark started, and by the light of the lamp the caller could see his face pale a little. He asked Livingstone in with a voice that almost faltered. Leaving Livingstone in the little passage for a moment Clark entered the first room—the front room—and Livingstone could hear him sending the occupants into a rear room. He heard the communicating door

close softly. Every sound was suddenly hushed. It was like the sudden hush of birds when a hawk appears. Livingstone thought of it and a pang shot through him. Then the door was opened and Clark somewhat stiffly invited Livingstone in.

The room was a small front parlor.

The furniture was old and worn, but it was not mean. A few old pieces gave the room, small as it was, almost an air of distinction. Several old prints hung on the walls, a couple of portraits in pink crayon, such as St. Mimin used to paint, and a few photographs in frames, most of them of children,—but among them one of Livingstone himself.

All this Livingstone took in as he entered. The room was in a state of confusion, and a lounge on one side, with its pillows still bearing the imprint of an occupant, showed that the house held an invalid. In one corner a Christmas-tree, half dressed, explained the litter. It was not a very large tree; certainly it was not very richly dressed. The things that hung on it were very simple. Many of them evidently were of home-manufacture—knots of ribbon, little garments, second-hand books, even home-made toys.

A small pile of similar articles lay on the floor,

where they had been placed ready for service and had been left by the tree-dressers on their hasty departure.

Clark's eye followed instinctively that of the visitor.

"My wife has been dressing a tree for the children," he said simply.

He faced Livingstone and offered him a chair. He stiffened as he did so. He was evidently prepared for the worst.

Livingstone sat down. It was an awkward moment. Livingstone broke the ice.

"Mr. Clark, I have come to ask you a favor —a great favor—"

Clark's eyes opened wide and his lips even parted slightly in his astonishment.

"—I want you to lend me your little girl— the little girl I saw in the office this afternoon."

Clark's expression was so puzzled that Livingstone thought he had not understood him.

" 'The Princess with the Golden Locks,' " he explained.

"Mr. Livingstone! — I—I don't understand." He looked dazed.

Livingstone broke out suddenly: "Clark, I have been a brute, a cursed brute!"

"Oh! Mr. Liv—!"

With a gesture of sharp dissent Livingstone cut him short.

"It is no use to deny it, Clark,—I have—I have!—I have been a brute for years and I have just awakened to the fact!" He spoke in bitter, impatient accusation. "I have been a brute for years and I have just realized it."

The face of the other had softened.

"Oh, no, Mr. Livingstone, not that. You have always been just—and—just"; he protested kindly. "You have always—"

—"Been a brute," insisted Livingstone, "a blind, cursed, selfish, thoughtless—"

"You are not well, Mr. Livingstone," urged Clark, looking greatly disturbed. "Your servant, James, said you were not well this evening when I called. I wanted to go in to see you, but he would not permit me. He said that you had given positive orders that you would not see—"

"I was not well," assented Livingstone. "I was suffering from blindness. But I am better, Clark, better. I can see now—a little."

He controlled himself and spoke quietly. "I want you to lend me your little girl for—" He broke off suddenly. "How many children have you, Clark?" he asked, gently.

"Eight," said the old clerk. "But I have n't one I could spare, Mr. Livingstone."

"Only for a little while, Clark?" urged the other; "only for a little while.—Wait, and let me tell you what I want with her and why I want her, and you will—For a little while?" he pleaded.

He started and told his story and Clark sat and listened, at first with a set face, then with a wondering face, and then with a face deeply moved, as Livingstone, under his warming sympathy, opened his heart to him as a dying man might to his last confessor.

"—And now will you lend her to me, Clark, for just a little while to-night and to-morrow?" he pleaded in conclusion.

Clark rose to his feet. "I will see what I can do with her, Mr. Livingstone," he said, gravely. "She is not very friendly to you, I am sorry to say—I don't know why."

Livingstone thought he knew.

"Of course, you would not want me to compel her to go with you?"

"Of course not," said Livingstone.

XI

THE father went out by the door that opened into the passage, and the next moment Livingstone could hear him in deep conference in the adjoining room; at first with his wife, and then with the little girl herself.

The door did not fit very closely and the partition was thin, so that Livingstone could not help hearing what was said, and even when he could shut out the words he could not help knowing from the tones what was going on.

The mother was readily won over, but when the little girl was consulted she flatly refused. Her father undertook to coax her.

To Livingstone's surprise the argument he used was not that Livingstone was rich, but that he was so poor and lonely; not well off and happy like him, with a house full of little children to love him and make him happy and give him a merry Christmas.

The point of view was new to Livingstone—

at least, it was recent; but he recognized its force and listened hopefully. The child's reply dashed his hopes.

"But, papa, I hate him so—I just *hate* him!" she declared, earnestly. "I'm *glad* he has n't any little children to love him. When he would n't let you come home to us this evening, I just prayed so hard to God not to let him have any home and not to let him have any Christmas —not *ever!*"

The eager little voice had risen in the child's earnestness and it pierced through the door and struck Livingstone like an arrow. There came back to him that sentence, "*Whoso offendeth one of these little ones, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck—.*"

Livingstone fairly shivered, but he had able defenders.

"Oh, Kitty!" exclaimed both her father and mother, aghast at the child's bitterness.

They next tried the argument that Livingstone had been so kind to the father. He had "given him last year fifty dollars besides his salary."

Livingstone was not surprised that this argument did not prove as availing with the child as the parents appeared to expect.—Fifty dollars! He hated himself for it. He felt that he would

give fifty thousand to drop that millstone from his neck.

They next tried the argument that Livingstone wanted to have a Christmas-tree for poor children and needed her help. He wanted her to go with him to a toy-shop. He did not know what to get and wished her to tell him. He had his sleigh to take her.

This seemed to strike one of the other members of the family, for suddenly a boy's eager voice burst in:

"I'll go with him. I'll go with him in a sleigh. I'll go to the toy-shop. Maybe, he'll give me a sled. Papa, mamma, please let me go."

This offer, however, did not appear to meet all the requisites of the occasion and Master Tom was speedily suppressed by his parents. Perhaps, however, his offer had some effect on Kitty, for she finally assented and said she would go, and Livingstone could hear the parents getting her ready. He felt like a reprieved prisoner.

After a few moments Mr. Clark brought the little girl in, cloaked and hooded and ready to go.

When Livingstone faced the two blue eyes that were fastened on him in calm, and, by no means,

wholly approving inspection, he felt like a deep-dyed culprit. Had he known of this ordeal in advance he could not have faced it, but as it was he must now carry it through.

What he did was, perhaps, the best that any one could have done. After the cool, little hand-shake she vouchsafed him, Livingstone, finding that he could not stand the scrutiny of those quiet, unblenching eyes, threw himself on the child's mercy.

"Kitty," he said earnestly, "I did you this evening a great wrong, and your father a great wrong, and I have come here to ask you to forgive me.—I have been working so hard that I did not know it was Christmas, and I interfered with your father's Christmas — and with your Christmas; for I had no little girls to tell me how near Christmas was. And now I want to get up a Christmas for some poor children, and I don't know how to do it, so I have come to ask you to help me. I want you to play Santa Claus for me, and we will find the toys, and then we will find the children. I have a great big sleigh, and we will go off to a toy-shop, and presently I will bring you back home again."

He had made his speech much longer than he had intended, because he saw that the child's

mind was working; the cumulative weight of the sleigh-ride, the opportunity to play a part and to act as Santa Claus for other children, was telling on her.

When he ended, Kitty reflected a moment and then said quietly, "All right."

Her tone was not very enthusiastic, but it was assent and Livingstone felt as though he had just been redeemed.

The next moment the child turned to the door.

Livingstone rose and followed her. He was amused at his feeling of helplessness and dependence. She was suddenly the leader and without her he felt lost.

She stepped into the sleigh and he followed her.

"Where shall we go first?" she asked.

This was a poser for Livingstone. All the shops of which he knew anything were closed long ago.

"Why, I think I will let you select the place," he began, simply seeking for time.

"What do you want to get?" she asked calmly, gazing up at him.

Livingstone had never thought for a second that there would be any difficulty about this. He was hopelessly in the dark. Stocks, "common"

or "preferred," bonds and debentures, floated through his mind. Even horses or pictures he would have had a clear opinion on, but in this field he was lost. He had never known, or cared to know, what children liked.

Suddenly a whole new realm seemed to open before him, but it was shrouded in darkness. And that little figure at his side with large, sober, searching eyes fixed calmly on him was quietly demanding his knowledge and waiting for his answer. He had passed hundreds of windows crowded with Christmas presents that very evening and had never looked at one. He had passed as between blank walls. What would he not have given now for but the least memory of one glance!

But the eyes were waiting and he must answer.

"Why—ah—you know,—ah—*toys!*"

It was an inspiration and Livingstone shook himself with self-approval.

"Yes—ah—TOYS! you know?" he repeated.

He glowed with satisfaction over his escape.

The announcement, however, did not appear to astonish his companion as much as he felt it should have done. She did not even take her eyes from his face.

"How many children are there?"

"Why—twenty." Livingstone caught at a number, as a sinking man catches at a twig.

As she accepted this, Livingstone was conscious of elation. He felt as though he were playing a game and had escaped the ignominy of a wrong answer: he had caught a bough and it held him.

"How old are they?"

Livingstone gasped. The little ogress! Was she just trifling with him? Could it be possible that she saw through him? As he looked down at her the eyes fastened on him were as calm as a dove's eyes.

"Why—ah—. How many brothers and sisters have you?" he asked.

He wished to create a diversion and gain time. She answered promptly.

"Seven: four sisters and three brothers. John, he's my oldest brother; Tom, he's next—he's eight. Billy is the baby."

This contribution of family history was a relief, and Livingstone was just trying to think of something else to say, when she demanded again,

"What are the ages of your children?"

"I have no children," said Livingstone, think-

ing how clever he was to be so ready with an answer.

"I know.—But I mean the children you want the toys for?"

Livingstone felt for his handkerchief. The perspiration was bginning to come on his brow.

"Why,—ah—the same ages as your brothers and sisters—about," he said desperately, feeling that he was at the end of his resources and would be discovered by the next question.

"We will go to Brown's," said the child quietly, and, dropping her eyes, she settled herself back in the furs as though the problem were definitely solved.

XII

LIVINGSTONE glanced at the little figure beside him, hoping she would indicate where "Brown's" was, but she did not. Every one must know "Brown's."

The only "Brown" Livingstone knew was the great banker, and a grim smile flickered on his cheek at the thought of the toys in which that Brown dealt. He shifted the responsibility to the driver.

"Driver, go to Brown's. You know where it is?"

"Well, no, sir, I don't believe I do. Which Brown do you mean, sir?"

"Why—ah—the toy-man's, of course."

The driver stopped his horses and reflected. He shook his head slowly. Livingstone, however, was now equal to the emergency. Besides, there was nothing else to do. He turned to his companion.

"Where is it?" he began boldly, but as he

saw the look of surprise in the little girl's face he added, "I mean—exactly?"

"Why, right across from the grocer's with the parrot and the little white woolly dog."

She spoke with astonishment that any one should not know so important a personage. And Livingstone, too, was suddenly conscious of the importance of this information. Clearly he had neglected certain valuable branches of knowledge.

Happily, the driver came to his rescue.

"Where is that, Miss?" he asked.

"You go to the right and keep going to the right all the way," she said definitely.

Livingstone was in despair; but the driver appeared to understand now.

"You tell me when I go wrong," he said, and drove on.

He must have children at home, thought Livingstone to himself as the sleigh after a number of turns drew up in front of one of the very windows Livingstone had passed that evening on the back street. He felt as though he would like to reward the driver. It was the first time Livingstone had thought of a driver in many years.

Just as they drove up the door of the shop

was being closed, and the little girl gave an exclamation of disappointment.

"Oh, we are too late!" she cried.

Livingstone felt his heart jump into his throat. He sprang to the door and rapped. There was no answer. The light was evidently being turned off inside. Livingstone rapped again more impatiently. Another light was turned down. Livingstone was desperate. His loud knocking produced no impression, and he could have bought out the whole square!

Suddenly a little figure pushed against him as Kitty slipped before him, and putting her mouth to the crack of the door, called,

"Oh! Mr. Brown, please let me in. It 's *me,* Kitty Clark, Mr. Clark's little girl."

Instantly the light within was turned up. A step came towards the door, the bolts were drawn back and half the door was opened.

Livingstone was prepared to see the shopkeeper confounded when he should discover who his caller was. On the contrary, the man was in nowise embarrassed by his appearance. Indeed, he paid no attention whatever to Livingstone. It was to Kitty that he addressed himself, ignoring Livingstone's presence utterly.

"Why, Kitty, what are you doing out at this

time of night? Are n't you afraid Santa Claus will come while you are away, and not bring you anything? You know what they say he does if he don't find everybody asleep in bed?''

Kitty nodded, and leaning forward on her toes, dropped her voice to a mysterious whisper:

''I know who Santa Claus is.'' The whisper ended with a little chuckle of delight at her astuteness. ''I found it out last Christmas.''

''Kitty, you did n't! You must have been mistaken?'' said the shopkeeper with a grin on his kindly countenance. ''Who is he?''

''Mr.—Brown, and Mr. and Mrs.—Clark,'' said Kitty slowly and impressively, as though she were adding up figures and the result would speak for itself. She took in the shop with a wave of her little hand and a sweep of her eyes.

''I'm playing Santa Claus myself, to-night,'' she said, tossing her hooded head, her eyes kindling at the thought. The next look around was one of business.

''This is Mr. Livingstone, papa's employer.'' She indicated that gentleman.

Mr. Brown held out his plump and not wholly immaculate hand.

''How d'ye do, sir? I think I've heard of you?''

He turned back to Kitty.

"Who for?" he asked.

"For him," Kitty nodded. "He's got a whole lot of children—not his own children—other people's children—that he's going to give Christmas presents to, and I've come to help him. What have you got left, Mr. Santa Claus?"

She stood on tiptoe and peered over the shelves.

"Well, not a great deal, Miss Wide-awake," said the shopkeeper dropping into her manner and mood. "You see there's lots of children around this year as don't keep wide-awake all night an Santa Claus has had to look after 'em quite considerable. I can't tell you how many sleighs full of things he's taken away from this here very shop. He did n't leave nothing but them things you see and the very expensive things in the cases. He said they were too high-priced for him."

He actually gave Livingstone a wink, and Livingstone actually felt flattered by it.

The reply recalled Kitty to her business. She turned to Mr. Livingstone.

"How much money have you got to spend?" she asked.

"Umhm—I don't know," said Livingstone.

"As much as a dollar?"

"Yes."

"More?"

"Yes."

"How much more?"

"As much as you want. Suppose you pick out the things you like and then we can see about the price," he suggested.

"Some things cost a heap."

She was looking at a doll on whose skirt was pinned a little scrap of card-board marked, "*25c.*"

"Yes, they do," assented Livingstone. "But they are worth it," he thought. "I tell you what! —Suppose you look around and see just what you like, and I'll go off here and talk with Mr. Brown so as not to disturb you."

He was learning and the lesson was already bringing him pleasure.

He took the shopkeeper aside and had a little talk with him, learning from him all he could of Clark's family and circumstances. It was an amazement to him. He had never known what a burden Clark had carried. The shopkeeper spoke of him with great affection and with great respect.

"He is the best man in the world," he said.

He treated Livingstone with familiarity, but he spoke of Clark with respect.

"He ought to be on the Avenue," he asserted; "and if everybody had their rights some would be where Mr. Clark is and Mr. Clark would be in their place."

Livingstone was not prepared just then to gainsay this.

He explained to Mr. Brown his wishes. He wanted to get many things, but did not know how to keep the child from suspecting his plan. The shopkeeper gave him a suggestion. Close association and sympathy with children had given Brown knowledge.

XIII

THEY returned to Kitty. She was busy figuring on a little piece of paper, moistening her little stub of a pencil, every other second, with her tongue. Her little red mouth showed streaks of black. She was evidently in some trouble.

Livingstone drew near.

"How are you coming on?" he asked.

She looked up with a face full of perplexity.

"Oh! I 've spent nearly the whole dollar and I have n't but nine presents yet. We must get something cheaper.—But they were so pretty!" she lamented, her eyes glancing longingly towards the articles she had selected.

"Let 's see. Maybe, you have made a mistake," said Livingstone. He took the bit of paper and she handed him the pencil.

"I 'm not very good at making figures," she observed.

"I 'm not either," said Livingstone, glancing at the paper. "I 'll tell you what let 's do," he

said. "Let 's get Mr. Brown to open all his cases and boxes, and let 's look at everything and just see what we would select if we could have our choice?"

The little girl's eyes opened wide.

"You mean, let 's make pretense that we are real sure-enough Santa Claus and just pick out everything we want to give everybody, and pretend that we could get it and give it to them?"

Livingstone nodded.

"Yes."

That was just what he ought to have meant, he knew.

The inquiry in Kitty's big eyes became light. She sprang to her feet and with a little squeak of delight marched to the middle of the shop and taking her stand began to sweep the shelves with her dancing eyes.

Livingstone gave a nod to the shopkeeper and he drew back the curtains that protected the cases where the finer and more expensive goods were kept and began to open the boxes.

Kitty approached on tiptoe and watched him with breathless silence as though she were in a dream which a word might break.

Then when she had seen everything she turned back to Livingstone.

"Well!" she said slowly.

"Well, what do you say?" He too was beginning to feel a spell.

"Well, if I were a real, sure-'nough Santa Claus, I 'd just get—everything in those cases." The spread of her little arms took it all in.

"And what would you do with it?" asked Livingstone in the same low tone, fearful of breaking the reverie in which she stood wrapped.

He had never before in all his life been taken into partnership by a little girl, and deep down beneath his breast-pocket was a kindling glow which was warming him through and through.

"I 'd carry that doll—to Jean, and that—to Sue, and that—to Mollie, and that—to Dee, and those skates to Johnny, and—that sled to Tom, and—that woolly lamb to little Billy, 'cause he loves squshy things.—And then—I 'd take all the rest in my sleigh and I 'd go to the hospital where the poor little children have n't got any good papas and mammas like me to give them anything, and where Santa Claus can't ever go, and I 'd put something by the side of every bed —of every one, and, maybe, they 'd think at first it was only a dream; but when they waked up wide they 'd find Santa Claus had been there, sure enough!"

In her energy she was gesticulating with earnest hands that seemed to take each present and bear it to its destination, and she concluded with a little nod to Livingstone that seemed to recognize him as in sympathy with her, and to say, "Would n't we if we only could?"

It seemed to Livingstone as though a casing of ice in which he had been enclosed had suddenly broken and he were bathed in warmth.

The millstone round his neck had suddenly dropped and he shot upward into the light.

The child was leading him into a new and vernal world. He wanted to take her in his arms and press her to his heart. The difference between the glance she now gave him and that she had shot at him at the door of his office that evening came to him and decided him. It was worth it all.

"Yes. Is there anything else you wish?" he asked, hoping that there might be, for she had not mentioned herself.

"Yes, but it's not anything Santa Claus can give," she said calmly; "I have asked God for it."

"What?" asked Livingstone.

"Something to make mamma well: to help papa pay for the house. He says it 's that 'at

keeps her ill, and she says if she were well he could pay for it: and I just pray to God for it every day."

Livingstone caught his breath quickly as if from a sudden pain. The long years of Clark's faithful service flashed before him. He shivered at the thought of his own meanness. He was afraid those great eyes might see into his heart. He almost shrivelled at the thought.

"Well, let 's take a sleigh-ride and see if any other shops are open. Then we can return."

He spoke a few words aside to Mr. Brown. The shopkeeper's eyes opened wide.

"But you say you have n't money enough with you, and I don't know you?"

Livingstone smiled.

"Why, man, I am worth—" He stopped short as a faint trace of seven figures appeared vaguely before his eyes. "I am worth enough to buy all this square and not feel it," he said, quickly correcting himself.

"That may be all so, but I don't know you," persisted the shopkeeper. "Do you know anybody in this part of the town?"

"Well, I know Mr. Clark. He would vouch for me, but—"

The shopkeeper turned to the child.

"Kitty, you know this gentleman, you say?"

"Yes. Oh, he 's all right," said Kitty decisively. "He 's my papa 's employer and he gave him *fifty* dollars last Christmas, 'cause my papa told me so."

This magnificent gift did not appear to impress Mr. Brown very much, any more than it did Livingstone, who felt himself flush.

"Business is business, you know?" said the shopkeeper,—an aphorism on which Livingstone had often acted, but had never had cited against him.

The shopkeeper was evidently considering.

Livingstone was half angry and half embarrassed. He felt as he had not done in twenty years. The shopkeeper was weighing him in his scales as he might have done a pound of merchandise, and Livingstone could not tell what he would decide. There was Kitty, however, her eyes still filled with light. He could not disappoint her. She, too, felt that he was being weighed and suddenly came to his rescue.

"He 's an awful kind man," she said earnestly. "He has n't got any little children of his own, and he 's going to give things to little poor children. He always does that, I guess," she added.

"Well, no, I don't," said Livingstone, looking

at the shopkeeper frankly; "but I wish I had, and I 'll pay you."

"All right. She knows you and that will do," said Mr. Brown.

Kitty, with the light of an explorer in her eyes, was making new discoveries on the shelves, and the two men walked to the back of the shop where the shopkeeper wrote a list of names. Then Livingstone and Kitty got into the sleigh and drove for a half-hour or so.

On their return Mr. Brown was ready.

His shop looked as though it had been struck by a whirlwind. The floor and counters were covered with boxes and bundles, and he and Livingstone packed the big sleigh as full as it would hold, leaving only one seat deep in the furs amid the heaped up parcels. Then suddenly from somewhere Mr. Brown produced a great, shaggy cape with a hood, and Livingstone threw it around Kitty and getting in lifted her into the little nest between the furs.

Kitty's eyes were dancing and her breath was coming quickly with excitement.

It was a supreme moment.

"Where are we going, Mr. Livingstone?" she whispered. She was afraid to speak aloud lest she might break the spell and awake.

"Just where you like."

"To the Children's Hospital," she panted.

"To the Children's Hospital, driver," repeated Livingstone.

Kitty gave another gasp.

"We 'll play you 're Santa Claus," she said, in a voice of low delight.

"No. Play you are Santa Claus's partner," said Livingstone.

"And you?"

"You are not to say anything about me."

XIV

LIVINGSTONE had not had such a drive in years. The little form snuggled against him closer and closer and the warm half sentences of childish prattle, as the little girl's imagination wove its fancies, came to him from amid the furs and made him feel as though he had left the earth and were driving in a new world. It was like a dream. Had youth come back? Was it possible?

The sleigh stopped in front of a great long building.

"You have to ring at the side door at night," said the driver. He appeared to know a good deal about the hospital.

Livingstone sprang out and rang the bell and then stepped back.

"When they open the door, you are to do all the talking," he said to Kitty as he lifted her down.

"Who shall I say rang?" she asked.

"Santa Claus's partner."

"But you—?"

"No. You are not to mention my name. Remember!"

Before the child could reply the door opened a little way and a porter looked out.

"Who's there?" he called to the sleigh, rather overlooking the little figure in the snow.

"Santa Claus's partner," said Kitty.

"What do you want?" He peered out at the sleigh. He was evidently sleepy and a little puzzled. "We don't take in anything at this hour except patients." He looked as if he were about to shut the door when a woman's voice was heard within speaking to him and the next moment the door was opened wide and he gave way as a matronly figure came forward and stood in the archway.

"Who is it?" she asked in a very pleasant voice, looking down at the little figure in the snow before her.

"Santa Claus's partner," said Kitty, gazing up at her.

"What do you want, dear?" The voice was even pleasanter.

"To leave some presents for the children."

"What children?"

"All the good children—all the sick children, I mean—all the children," said Kitty.

The matron turned and spoke to the porter, showing to Livingstone, as she did so, a glimpse of a finely cut profile and a comely figure silhouetted against the light within. The bolts were drawn from the gate of the driveway and the doors rolled back.

"Come in," said the matron, and the little figure enveloped in the shaggy cape and hood walked in under the big arch followed by the sleigh, whilst Livingstone withdrew a short distance into the shadow.

It was some time before the doors opened again and Kitty reappeared, but Livingstone did not mind it. It was cold, too, but neither did he mind that. He was warm. As he walked up and down in the empty street before the long building his heart was warmed with a glow which had not been there for many and many a long year. He was not alone. Once more the memory of other Christmases passed through his mind in long processional, but now not stamped with irretrievable opportunity, to mock him with vain regret for lost happiness; only tinged with a sadness for lost friends who came

trooping about him; yet lightened by his resolve to begin from now on and strive as best he might to retrieve his wasted life, and whilst he bore his punishment do what he could to make atonement for his past.

Just then across the town the clocks began to sound the midnight hour, and, as they ceased, from somewhere far-away church bells mellowed by the distance began to chime the old Christmas hymn:—

"While shepherds watched their flocks by night,
All seated on the ground,
The angel of the Lord came down,
And glory shone around."

Livingstone stood still to listen, in a half-dream.

Suddenly before him in the snow stood a little figure muffled in a shaggy cape with hood half thrown back. The childish face was uplifted in the moonlight. With lips half parted she too was listening, and for a moment Livingstone could hardly take in that she was real. She seemed—!

Could she be—?

"The angel of the Lord came down,"—chimed the mellow bells.

The chiming died out.

"Christ is born," said the child. "You heard the bells?"

"Yes," said Livingstone humbly.

"It 's all done," she said; "and I prayed so hard that not one of them stirred, and now when they wake they'll think it was real Santa Claus. They say he always comes at twelve and I counted the clocks.—I wonder if he went home?" She was speaking now to herself; but Livingstone answered.

"I 'm sure of it," he said.

"*The angel of the Lord came down,*" still chimed in his ears.

Suddenly a little warm hand was slipped into his confidingly.

"I think we'd better go home now." The voice was full of deep content.

Livingstone's hand closed on hers and as he said "Yes," he was conscious of a pang at the thought of giving her up.

He lifted her to put her in the sleigh. As he did so the little arms were put about his neck and warm little lips kissed him. Livingstone pressed her to his breast convulsively and climbed into the sleigh without putting her down.

Neither spoke and when the sleigh stopped in front of Mr. Clark's door the child was still

in Livingstone's arms, her head resting on his shoulder, the golden curls falling over his sleeve. Even when he transferred her to her father's arms she did not wake. She only sighed with sweet content and as Livingstone bent over and kissed her softly, muttered a few words about "Santa Claus's partner."

A half-hour later, Livingstone, after another interview with Mr. Brown who was awaiting him patiently, drove back again to Mr. Clark's door with another sleighful of packages which were all duly transferred to the small room where stood the little Christmas-tree.

The handshake Livingstone gave John Clark as he came down the steps of the little house was the warmest he had given any man in twenty years. It was so warm that it seemed to send the blood tingling through Livingstone's heart and warm it anew.

XV

LIVINGSTONE drove home through silent streets, but they were not silent for him. In his ears a chime was still ringing and it bore him far across the snow-filled streets and the snow-filled years to a land of warmth and light. The glow was still about his heart, and the tingle which the pressure of Kitty Clark's arms about his neck and John Clark's clasp of his hand had started, still kept it warm.

At his door Livingstone dismissed his driver and as he cheerily wished him a merry Christmas the man's cheery reply showed that Livingstone had already found the secret of good cheer.

"The same to you, your honor; the same to you sir," said the driver heartily, as he buttoned up his pocket with a pat of satisfaction. "We 've had a good time to-night, sir, have n't we? And I wish you many more like it, sir. And when Christmas comes along next time I hope you 'll remember me, for I 'll remember you;

I 've had a little child in that 'ere same horspital. God took her to Himself twelve years ago. They 're good to 'em there, rich and poor all alike;—and 't is n't every night I can drive 'Santa Claus's partner.' "

Livingstone stood and watched the sleigh till it drove out of sight. Even after it had disappeared around a corner, he still listened to the bells. It seemed to him he had a friend in it.

Livingstone let himself in noiselessly at his door, but the softness with which he turned the key this time was to keep from disturbing his servants, not to keep them from seeing him.

He stopped stock still on the threshold. The whole house seemed transformed. The hall was a bower of holly and mistletoe, and the library, as Livingstone entered it, with its bright fire roaring in the hearth and its festoons and wreaths, seemed once more a charming home: a bower where cheer might yet make its abode.

As quietly, however, as Livingstone had entered, his butler had heard him.

As Livingstone turned to take in all the beauty of the room, James was standing before him. His face showed some concern, and his voice, as he spoke, had a little tremor in it.

"When we found you had gone out, sir, we

were afraid you might be sick, and the cook has got something hot for you?''

Livingstone glanced about to find a phrase with which to thank him for the trouble they had taken; but the butler spared him the pains.

''We thought we would try to make the house look a little cheery, sir. Hope you don't mind, sir?''

''Mind!'' said Livingstone, ''I am delighted; and I thank you very much. Mind? I should think not!''

The tone of his voice and the light in his eye showed that there was a change in him and it acted like a tonic on the butler. The light came into his eyes too. He drew a breath of deep relief as though a mountain of care had rolled off him, and he came a step nearer his master, who had flung himself into a chair and picked up a cigar.

The next minute Livingstone plunged into the subject on his mind. It was a plan which made the butler's eyes first open wide and then sparkle with pleasure.

The difficulty with Livingstone, however, was that the next day was a holiday and he did not know whether what he wanted could be got.

The butler came to his rescue. It was no diffi-

culty to James. Such an emergency only quickened his powers. He knew places where whatever was wanted could be got, holiday or no holiday, and, "If Mr. Livingstone would only allow him—?"

"Allow you!" said Livingstone, "I give you *carte blanche,* only have everything ready by five o'clock.—Ask the cook to send up whatever she has; I 'm hungry, and we 'll talk it over whilst I 'm taking supper."

"Yes, sir; yes, sir; yes, sir;" and James withdrew with a step as light as air.

"Extraordinary servant!" thought Livingstone. "Wonder I never took it in before!"

Ten minutes later Livingstone was seated at the table with an appetite like a schoolboy's.

It was the happiest meal Livingstone had eaten in many a long day; for, all alone as he was, he was not alone. Thought-of-others sat at the board and a cheery companion it is.

"Tell the laundress to be sure and bring her children around to-morrow, and be sure you make them have a good time," he said to James, as he rose from the table. James bowed.

"Yes, sir."

"And ascertain where policeman, No. 268, is to be found to-morrow. I want to send a con-

tribution to make a good slide for some boys on his beat.''

James bowed again, his eyes somewhat wider than before.

As Livingstone mounted the stair, though he was sensible of fatigue it was the fatigue of the body, so delicious to those who have known that of the mind. And he felt pity as well as loathing for the poor, worn creature who had climbed the same stair a few hours before.

As he entered his room the warmth and home feeling had come back there also. The portraits of his father and mother first caught his eye. Some one had put a wreath around each and they seemed to beam on him with a pleased and tender smile. They opened afresh the floodgates of memory for him, but the memories were sweet and tender.

He glanced at a mirror almost with trembling. The last time he had looked at himself he had seen only that old, haggard face with the ghostly figures branded across the brow. Thank God! they were gone now, and he could even see in his face some faint resemblance to the portraits on the wall.

He went to bed and slept as he had not slept for months, perhaps for years—not dreamlessly,

but the dreams were pleasant.—Now and then lines of vague figures appeared to him, but a little girl with a smiling face came and played bo-peep with him over them, and presently sprang up and threw her arms about his neck and made him take her in a sleigh to a wonderful shop where they could get marvellous presents; among them Youth, and Friendship, and Happiness. The door was just being shut as they arrived, but when he called his father's name it was opened wide—and his father and mother greeted him—and led him smiling into places where he had played as a child.—And Catherine Trelane in a shaggy coat and hood pulled the presents from a forest of Christmas-trees and gave them to Santa Claus's partner to give to others. And suddenly his father, with his old tender smile, picked the little girl up in his arms and she changed into a wonderful child that shone so that it dazzled Livingstone and—he waked to find the bright sun shining in through the window and falling on his face.

He sprang from bed with a cry almost of joy so bright was the day; and as he looked out of the window on the sparkling snow outside it seemed a new world.

XVI

ALL the morning Livingstone "rushed" as he had never "rushed" in the wildest excitement of "the street." He had to find a banker and a lawyer and a policeman. But he found them all. He had to get presents to Sipkins and Hartly and the other clerks; but he managed to do it.

His servants, too, had caught the contagion, and more than once big wagons driven by smiling, cheery-faced men drove up to the door and unloaded their contents. And when the evening fell and a great sleigh with six seats and four horses, and every seat packed full, drove up and emptied its shouting occupants out at Livingstone's door everything was ready.

It was Livingstone himself who met the guests at the door, and the driver, in his shaggy coat, must have been an old friend from the smiling way in which he nodded and waved his fur-gloved hands to him, as he helped Mrs. Clark out tenderly and took Kitty into his arms.

When Kitty was informed that this was Santa Claus's Partner's party, and that she was to be the hostess, she was at first a little shy, partly, perhaps, on account of the strangeness of being in such a big, fine house, and partly on account of the solemn presence of James, until the latter had relieved her in ways of which that austere person seemed to have the secret where children were concerned. Finally she was induced to take the children over the house, and the laughter which soon came floating back from distant rooms showed that the ice was broken.

Only two rooms, the library and the dining-room, were closed, and they were not closed very long.

Just as it grew dark Kitty was told to marshal her eager forces and James with sparkling eyes rolled back the folding doors.

The children had never seen anything before in all their lives like that which greeted their eyes. The library was a bower of evergreen and radiance. In the centre was a great tree of crystal and stars which reflected the light of a myriad twinkling candles. It had undoubtedly come from fairy-land, if the place was not fairy-land itself, on the border of which they stood amazed.

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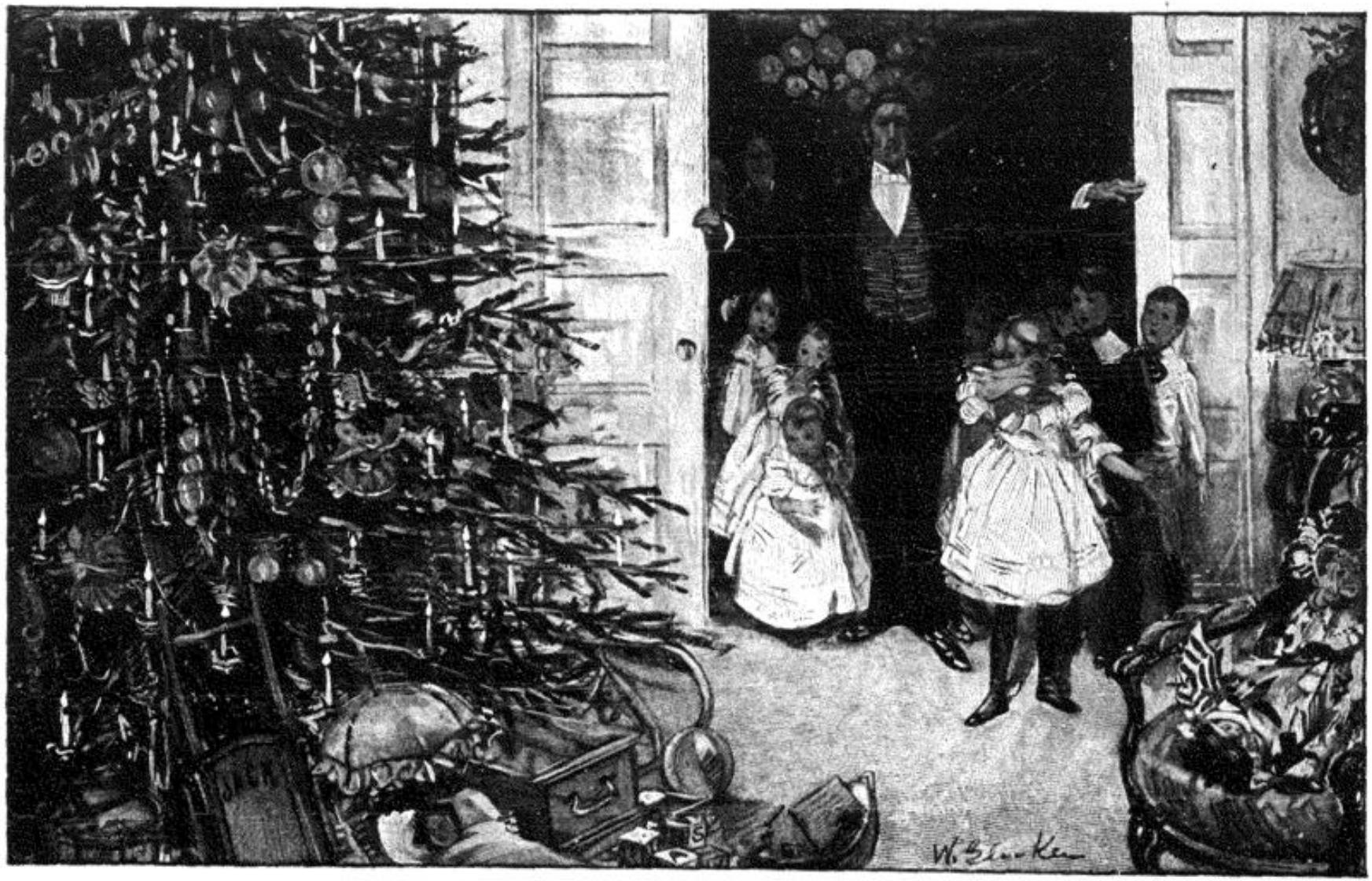

And James, with sparkling eyes, rolled back the folding-doors.

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Kitty was asked by Mr. Livingstone to lead the other children in, and as she approached the tree she found facing her a large envelope addressed to,

Santa Claus's Partner, Miss Kitty Clark.

This she was told to open, and in it was a letter from Santa Claus himself.

It stated that the night before, as the writer was engaged in looking after presents for some poor children, he saw a little girl in a shop engaged in the same work, and when he reached a certain hospital he found that she had been there, too, before him, and now as he had to go to another part of the world to keep ahead of the sun, he hoped that she would still act for him and look after his business here.

The letter was signed,

Your partner, Santa Claus.

The postscript suggested that a few of the articles he had left on the tree for her were marked with names, but that others were unmarked, so that her friends might choose what

they preferred, and he had left his pack at the foot of the tree as a grab-bag.

This letter broke the spell and next moment every one was shouting and rollicking as though they lived there.

In all the throng there was no one so delighted as Mr. Clark. Livingstone had had no idea how clever he was. He was the soul of the entertainment. It was he who discovered first the packages for each little one; he who, without appearing to do so, guided them in their march around the tree, so that all might find just the presents that suited them. He seemed to Livingstone's quickened eye to divine just what each child liked and wished. He appeared to know all that Livingstone desired to know.

At length, he alone of all the guests had received no present. The others had their little arms packed so full that Livingstone had to step forward to the tree to help a small tot bear away his toppling load.

The next moment Kitty discovered a large envelope lying at the foot of the tree. It was addressed,

John Clark, Esq.,
Father of Santa Claus's Partner.

It was strange that Kitty should have overlooked it before.

With a spring she seized it and handed it to her father with a little shout of joy, for she had not been able to keep from showing disappointment that he had received nothing.

Clark smiled at her pleasure, for he knew that the kisses which she had given him from time to time had been to make amends to him, and not, as others thought, from joy over her own presents.

Clark knew well the hand-writing, and even as he opened the envelope he glanced around to catch Livingstone's eye and thank him. Livingstone, however, had suddenly disappeared; so Clark read the letter.

It was very brief. It said that Livingstone had never known until the night before how much he owed him; that he was not sure even now that he knew the full extent of his indebtedness, but at least he had come to recognize that he owed much of his business success to Mr. Clark's wisdom and fidelity; and he asked as a personal favor to him that Clark would accept the enclosed as a token of his gratitude, and would consider favorably his proposal.

Opening an enclosed envelope, Clark found

two papers. One was a full release of the mortgage on Clark's house (Livingstone had spent the morning in securing it), the other was a Memorandum of "Articles of Partnership" between Berryman Livingstone and John Clark, beginning from that very day,—indeed, from the day before,—all ready, signed by Livingstone and wanting only Mr. Clark's signature to make it complete.

Mr. Clark, with his face quite white and looking almost awed, turned and walked into the next room where he found Livingstone standing alone. The old clerk was still holding the papers clutched in his hand and was walking as if in a dream.

"Mr. Livingstone," he began, "I can never — I am overwhelmed! — Your letter — your gifts—" But Livingstone interrupted him. His face was not white but red.

"Nonsense!" he said, as he turned and put his hand on the other's shoulder. "Clark, I am not giving you anything. I am paying.—I mean, I owe you everything, and what I don't owe you, I owe Kitty. Last night you lent me—" He stopped, caught himself, and began again.

"It was more than even you knew, Clark," he said, looking the other kindly in the eyes,

"and I 'll owe you a debt of gratitude all my life. All I ask is, that you will forget the past and help me in the future and sometimes lend me Kitty. I never knew until now how good it was to have a partner."

Just then he became conscious that someone else was near him. Kitty, with wide-open, happy eyes, was standing beside them looking up inquiringly in their faces. The child seemed to know that something important had happened, for she put up her arms, and pulling her father down to her kissed him, and then turning quickly she caught Livingstone and, drawing him down, kissed him too.

"I love you," she said, in a whisper.

Livingstone caught her in his arms.

"Let's go and have a game of blind-man's buff. I am beginning to feel young again," he said, and linking his arm in Clark's, he dragged him back to the others, where, in a few minutes they were all of one age, and a very riot of fun seemed to have broken loose.

Matters had just reached this delightful point, and Livingstone was down on his hands and knees trying with futile dexterity to avoid the clutch of a pair of little arms that apparently were pursuing him with infallible instinct into

an inextricable trap, when he became conscious of a presence he had not observed before. Some one not there before was standing in the doorway.

Livingstone sprang to his feet and faced Mrs. Wright.

He felt very red and foolish as he caught her eyes and found them smiling at him. The idea of being discovered in so ridiculous a situation and posture by the most fashionable and elegant woman of his acquaintance! But Mrs. Wright waved to him to go on with his game and the next moment the little arms had clutched him, and, tearing off her bandage, Kitty, with dancing eyes, declared him "caught."

"Well, this is my final triumph over Will," exclaimed Mrs. Wright, advancing into the room, as Livingstone, drawing the little girl along with him, approached her. And she began to tell Livingstone how they had particularly wanted him to dine with them that day as an old friend of his had promised to come to them, but they had supposed, of course, that he had been overrun with invitations for the day and, as they had not seen him of late, thought that he had probably gone out of town, until her husband saw him at the club the night before

where he had gone to find some poor lone bachelor who might have no other invitation.

"You know Will has always been very fond of you," she said; "and he says you have been working too hard of late and have not been looking well. When I did n't get my usual contributions from you this Christmas I did n't know what to make of it, but I think that on my round this morning I have found out the reason?"

Livingstone knew the reason, but he did not tell her. The knowing smile that lit her face, however, mystified him and he flushed a little under her searching eyes.

"Will was sure he saw you in the club last night," she persisted, "and he tried to catch you, but you ran off; and now I have come for you and will take no refusal."

Livingstone expressed his regret that he could not come. A wave of his hand towards the curly heads and beaming faces clustered before them and towards the long table gleaming in the dining-room beyond explained his reason.

"I am having a Christmas dinner myself," he said.

"Then you will come in after they go?" insisted Mrs. Wright, and as Livingstone knew they were going early he assented.

"Who are your friends?" she asked. "What a pleasant-looking man, and what lovely children! That little girl,—I thought it was Cupid when she had the bandage on her eyes, and now I am sure of it."

"Let me present them to you," said Livingstone, and he presented Mr. Clark as his partner and Kitty as Santa Claus's partner.

"I did not know you had a partner?" she asked.

"It is my Christmas gift from Santa Claus," he said. "One of them; I have many."

XVII

WHEN Livingstone walked into Mrs. Wright's drawing-room that evening he had never had such a greeting, and he had never been in such spirits. His own Christmas dinner had been the success of his life. He could still see those happy faces about his board, and hear those joyous voices echoing through his house.

The day seemed to have been one long dream of delight. From the moment when he had turned to go after the little child to ask her to show him the way to help others, he had walked in a new land; lived in a new world; breathed a new air; been warmed by a new sun.

Wright himself met him with a cordiality so new to Livingstone and yet so natural and unforced that Livingstone wondered whether he could have been living in a dream all these years or whether he was in a dream to-night.

Among the guests he suddenly came on one who made him think to-night must be the dream.

Mrs. Wright, with glowing eyes, presented

him to a lady dressed in black, as "an old friend, she believed:" a fair, sweet-looking woman with soft eyes and a calm mouth.

The name Mrs. Wright mentioned was "Mrs. Shepherd," but as Livingstone looked the face was that of Catherine Trelane.

The evening was a fitting ending to a happy day—the first Livingstone had had in many a year. Even Mrs. Shepherd's failure to give him the opportunity he sought to talk with her could not wholly mar it.

Later, Livingstone heard Mrs. Wright begin to tell some one of his act of the night before, in buying up a toy-shop for the children at the hospital.

"I always believed in him," she asserted warmly.

Livingstone caught his name and, turning to Mrs. Wright, with some embarrassment and much warmth, declared that she was mistaken, that he had not done it.

Mrs. Wright laughed incredulously.

"I suspected it this morning when I first heard of it; but now I have the indisputable proof."

She held up a note.

" 'I think I 've heard of you before,' " she

laughed, with a capital imitation of Mr. Brown's manner.

"I still deny it," insisted Livingstone, blushing, and as Mrs. Wright still affirmed her belief, he told her the story of Santa Claus's partner.

Insensibly, as he told it, the other voices hushed down.

He told it well; for his heart was full of the little girl who had led him from the frozen land back to the land of light.

As he ended, from another room somewhere up-stairs, came a child's clear voice singing,

> God west you, mer-wy gentle-men,
> Let nossing you dismay;
> For Jesus Chwist our Sa-wiour
> Was born this ve-wy day.

Livingstone looked at Mrs. Shepherd.

She was standing under the long evergreen festoons just where they met and formed a sort of verdant archway. Two of the children of the house, attracted by Livingstone's story, had come and pressed against her as they listened with interested faces, and she had put her arms about them and drawn their curly heads close to her side. A spray of holly with scarlet berries

was at her throat and one of the children had mischievously stuck a sprig of mistletoe in her hair. Her face was turned aside, her eyes were downcast, the long, dark lashes drooping against her cheek, and on her face rested a divine compassion; and as Livingstone gazed on her he saw the same gracious figure and fine profile that he had seen the night before outlined against the light in the archway of the gate of the Children's Hospital. It was the reflective face of one who has felt; but when she raised her eyes they were the eyes of Catherine Trelane. And suddenly, as Livingstone looked into them they had softened, and she seemed to be standing, as she had stood so long ago, in the Christmas evening light in a long avenue under swaying boughs, in the heart of the land of his youth.

While still, somewhere above, the child's voice carolled,

> —Let nossing you dismay;
> For Jesus Chwist our Sa-wiour
> Was born this ve-wy day.

FINIS


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