EDWARDS HARRY STILLWELL

SONS AND FATHERS

Harry Edwards

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Содержание

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CHAPTER I
TWO SONS

At a little station in one of the gulf states, where the east and west trains leave and pick up a few passengers daily, there met in the summer of 1888 two men who since they are to appear frequently in this record, are worthy of description. One who alighted from the west-bound train was about 29 years of age. Tall and slender, he wore the usual four-button cutaway coat, with vest and trousers to match, which, despite its inappropriateness in such a climate, was the dress of the young city man of the south, in obedience to the fashion set by the northern metropolis. His small feet were incased in neat half-moroccos, and his head protected by the regulation derby of that year. There was an inch of white cuffs visible upon his wrists, held with silver link buttons, and an inch and a half of standing collar, points turned down. He carried a small traveling bag of alligator skin swung lightly over his left shoulder, after the English style, and a silk umbrella in lieu of a cane. This man paced the platform patiently.

His neighbor was about the same age, dressed in a plain gray cassimer suit. He wore a soft felt traveling hat and the regulation linen. He was, however, of heavier build, derived apparently from free living, and restless, since he moved rapidly from point to point, speaking with train hands and others, his easy, good-fellow air invariably securing him courtesy. His face was full and a trifle florid, but very mobile in expression; while that of the first mentioned was somewhat sallow and softened almost to sadness by gray eyes and long lashes. As they passed each other the difference was both noticed and felt. The impressions that the two would have conveyed to an analyst were action and reflection. Perhaps in the case of the man in gray the impression would have been heightened by sight of his two great commercial traveling bags of Russia leather, bearing the initials "N. M. Jr."

There was one other passenger on the platform – a very handsome young woman, seated on her trunk and trying to interest herself in a pamphlet spread upon her lap, but from time to time she lifted her face, and when the eyes of the man glanced her way she lowered hers with a half-smile on her lips. There was something in his tone and manner that disarmed reserve.

An officer in uniform came from the little eating-house near by and approached the party.

"Are there any passengers for the coast here?" he asked.

"I am going to Charleston," the young lady said.

"Where are you from, miss?" Then, seeing her surprise, he continued: "You must excuse the question but I am a quarantine

officer and Charleston has quarantined against all points that have been exposed to yellow fever."

"That, then, does not include me," she said, confidently. "I am from Montgomery, where there is no yellow fever, and a strict quarantine."

"Have you a health certificate?"

"A what?"

"A ticket from any of the authorities or physicians in Montgomery."

"No, sir; I am Miss Kitty Blair, and going to visit friends in Charleston."

The officer looked embarrassed. The health-certificate regulation and inland quarantine were new and forced him frequently into unpleasant positions.

"You will excuse me," he said, finally; "but have you anything that could establish that fact, visiting cards, correspondence – "

"I have told you," she replied, flushing a little, "who I am and where I am from."

"That would be sufficient, miss, if all that is needed is a lady's word, but I am compelled to keep all persons from the east-bound train who cannot prove their residence in a non-infected district. The law is impartial."

"And I cannot go on, then?" There were anxiety and pathos in her eyes and tones. The gentleman in gray approached.

"I can fix that, sir," he said, briskly addressing the officer. "I am not personally acquainted with Miss Blair, but I can testify

to what she says as true. I have seen her in Montgomery almost daily. My name is Montjoy – Norton Montjoy, Jr. Here are my letters and my baggage is over yonder."

"Are you a son of Col. Norton Montjoy of Georgia, colonel of the old 'fire-eaters,' as we used to call the regiment?"

"Yes, indeed," and a happy smile illumined his face.

"My name is Throckmorton," said the officer. "I followed your father three years during the war, and you are – by Jove! you are the brat that they once brought to camp and introduced as the latest infantry recruit! Well, I see the likeness now."

The two men shook hands fervently. The officer bowed to the lady. "The matter is all right," he said, smiling; "I will give you a paper presently that will carry you through." The new friends then walked aside talking with animation. The quarantine officer soon got into war anecdotes. The other stranger was now left to the amusement of watching the varying expressions of the girl's face. She continued low over her book and began to laugh. Presently, with a supreme effort she recovered herself. Montjoy had shaken off his father's admirer and was coming her way. She looked up shyly. "I am very much obliged to you for getting me out of trouble; I – "

"Don't mention it, miss; these fellows haven't much discretion."

"But what a fib it was!"

"How?"

"I haven't been in Montgomery in two weeks. I came here

from an aunt's in Macon."

"And I haven't been there in six months!" His laugh was hearty and infectious. "Here comes your train; let me put you aboard." He secured her a seat; the repentant quarantine officer supplied her with a ticket, and then, shaking hands again with his father's friend, Montjoy hurried to the southwester, which was threatening to get under way. The other traveler was in and had a window open on the shady side.

There were men only in the car, and as Montjoy entered he drew off his coat and dropped it upon his bags. The motion of the starting train did not add to his comfort. The red dust poured in through the open windows, invading and irritating the lungs. He thought of the moonlit roof gardens in New York with something like a groan.

"Confound such a road!" and down went the book he was seriously trying to lose himself in. His silent companion's face was lifted toward him:

"A railroad company that will run cars like this on such a schedule ought to be abolished, the officers imprisoned, track torn up and rolling stock burned! But then," he continued, "I am the fool. I ought not to have come by this God-forsaken route."

"It is certainly not pleasant traveling to-day," his companion remarked, sympathetically, showing even, white teeth under his brown mustache. Montjoy had returned to his seat, but the smooth, even, musical tones of the other echoed in his memory. He glanced back and presently came and took a seat near by.

"Are you a resident of the south?" It was the stranger who spoke first. This delicate courtesy was not lost on Montjoy.

"Yes. That is, I count myself a citizen of this state. But I sell clothing for a New York house and am away from home a great deal."

"You delivered the young lady at the junction from quite a predicament."

"Didn't I, though! Well, she is evidently a fine little woman and pretty. Lies for a pretty woman don't count. By the way – may I ask? What line of business are you in?"

CHAPTER II
THE STRANGER ON THE THRESHOLD

"I am not in business," said the other. "I am a nephew of John Morgan, of Macon. I suppose you must have known him."

"Yes, indeed."

"And am going out to wind up his affairs. I have been abroad and have only just returned. The news of his death was quite a surprise to me. I had not been informed that he was ill."

"Then you are the heir of John Morgan?"

"I am told so. It is but three days now since I reached this country, and I have no information except as contained in a brief notice from attorneys."

"How long since you have seen him?"

"I have never seen him – at least not since I was an infant, if then. My parents left me to his care. I have spent my life in schools until six or seven years ago, when, after graduating at Harvard and then at Columbia college in law, I went abroad. Have never seen so much as the picture of my uncle. I applied to him for one through his New York lawyer once, sending a new one of myself, and he replied that he had too much respect for art to have his taken."

"That sounds like him," and Montjoy laughed heartily. "He

was a florid, sandy-haired man, with eyes always half-closed against the light, stout and walked somewhat heavily. He has been a famous criminal lawyer, but for many years has not seemed to care for practice. He was a heavy drinker, but with all that you could rely implicitly upon what he said. He left a large property, I presume?"

"So I infer." Edward looked out of the window, but presently resumed the conversation.

"My uncle stood well in the community, I suppose?"

"Oh, yes; we have lost a good citizen. Do you expect to make your home with us?"

"That depends upon circumstances. Very likely I shall."

"I see! Well, sir, I trust you will. The Morgan place is a nice one and has been closed to the young people too long."

"I am afraid they will not find me very gay." A shadow flitted over his face, blotting out the faint smile.

The towns and villages glided away.

Edward Morgan noticed that there was little paint upon the country houses, and that the fences were gone from the neighborhoods. And then the sun sank below the black cloud, painting its peaks with gold, and filling the caverns with yellow light; church spires, tall buildings and electric-light towers filed by with solemn dignity and then stood motionless. The journey was at an end.

"My home is six miles out," said Montjoy, "and if you will go with me I shall be glad to have you. It is quite a ride, but anything

is preferable to the hotels."

Morgan's face lighted up quickly at this unexpected courtesy.

"Thank you," he said "but I don't mind the hotels. I have never had any other home, sir, except boarding houses." Through his smile there fell the little, destroying shadow. Montjoy had not expected him to accept, but he turned now, with his winning manner.

"Well, then, I insist. We shall find a wagon waiting outside, and to-morrow I am coming in and shall bring you back. We will have to get acquainted some of these days, and there is nothing like making an early start." He was already heading for the sidewalk; his company was as sunlight and Morgan was tempted to stay in the sunlight.

"Then I shall go," he said. "You are very kind."

A four-seated vehicle stood outside and by it a little old negro, who laughed as Montjoy rapidly approached.

"Well, Isam," he said, tossing his bag in, "how are all at home?"

"Dey's all well."

"By the way, Mr. Morgan, we shall leave your trunks, but I can supply you with everything for a 'one-night stand.'"

"I have a valise that will answer, if there is room."

"Plenty. Let Isam have the check and he will get it." While Morgan was feeling for his bit of brass Isam continued:

"Miss Annie will be mighty glad to see you. Sent me in here now goin' on fo' times an' gettin' madder – "

"That's all right; here's the check; hurry up." The negro started off rapidly.

"Drive by the club, Isam," he said, when the negro had resumed the lines. "I reckon we'll be too late for supper at home; better get it in town."

"Miss Mary save supper for you, sho', Marse Norton."

"Save, the mischief! Go ahead!" The single horse moved forward in a dignified trot.

As they entered the club several young men were grouped near a center table. There was a vista of open doors, a glimmer of cards and the crash of billiards. Montjoy walked up and dropped his hat on the table. There followed a general handshaking. Edward Morgan noticed that they greeted him with cordiality. Then he saw his manner change and he turned with a show of formality.

"Gentlemen, this is my friend, Mr. Morgan, a nephew of Col. John Morgan." He rapidly pronounced the names of those present, and each shook the newcomer's hand. At the same time Morgan felt their sudden scrutiny, but it was brief. Montjoy rang the bell.

"What are you going to have, gentlemen? John," to the old waiter, "how are you, John?"

"First rate, Marse Norton; first rate." The old man bowed and smiled.

"Take these orders, John. Five toddies, one Rhine wine, and hurry, John! Oh, John!" The worthy came back. "There is only

one mistake you can make with mine; take care about the water!"

"All right, sah, all right! Dare won't be any!"

Montjoy ordered a tremendous supper, as he called it, and while waiting the half-hour for its preparation, several of the party repeated the order for refreshments, it appeared to the stranger, with something like anxiety. It was as though they feared an opportunity to return the courtesies they had accepted would not be given. None joined them at supper, but when the newcomers were seated one of the gentlemen lounged near and dropping into a seat renewed the conversation that had been interrupted. Champagne had been added to the supper and this gentleman yielded at length to Montjoy's demand and joined them.

The conversation ran upon local politics until Morgan began to feel the isolation. He took to studying the new man and presently felt the slight, inexplicable prejudice that he had formed upon the introduction, wearing away. The man was tall, dark and straightly built, probably thirty years of age, with fine eyes and unchanging countenance. He did but little talking, and when he spoke it was with great deliberation and positiveness. If there were an unpleasant shading of character written there it was in the mouth, which, while not ill-formed, seemed to promise a relentless disposition. But the high and noble forehead redeemed it all. This man was now addressing him:

"You will remain some time in Macon, Mr. Morgan?"

The voice possessed but few curves; it grated a trifle upon the

stranger.

"I cannot tell as yet," he said; "I do not know what will be required of me."

"Well, I shall be pleased to see you at my place of business whenever you find an opportunity of calling. Norton, bring Mr. Morgan down to see me."

He laid his card by Edward and bade them good-evening. Looking over his plate, the latter read H. R. Barksdale, president A. F. & C. railroad. He had not caught the name in the general introduction. "Good fellow," said Montjoy, between mouthfuls; "talked more to-night than I ever heard him, and never knew him to pull a card before."

The night was dark. The road ran over hills, but sometimes was sandy enough to reduce the horse to his slowest gait. "From this point," said Montjoy, looking back, "you can see the city five miles away, rather a good view in the daytime, but now only the scattered electric lights show up."

"It looks like the south of France," said Morgan. Montjoy revealed the direction of his thoughts.

"You will find things at home very different from what they once were," he put in. "With free labor the plantations have run down, and it is very hard for the old planters to make anything out of land now. The negroes won't work and it hardly pays to plant cotton. I wish often that father could do something else, but he can't change at his time of life."

"Could not the young men do better with the plantations?"

"Young men! My dear sir, the young men can't afford to work the plantations; it is as much as they can do to make a living in town – most of them."

"Is there room for all?"

"No, indeed! They are having a hard time of it, I reckon, and salaries are getting smaller every year."

"I have heard," said Morgan, slowly, "that labor is the wealth of a country. It seems to me that if they expect to make anything out of this, they must labor in the productive branches. Where does the support for all come from?"

"From the farms – from cotton, mostly."

"The negro is, then, after all, the productive agent."

Montjoy thought a moment, then replied:

"Yes, as a rule. Manufacturing is increasing and there is some development in mining, but as a matter of fact the negroes and the poor whites of the country keep the balance up. Somebody has got to sweat it out between the plow handles, but you can bet your bottom dollar that Montjoy is out. I couldn't make $100 a year on the best plantation in Georgia, but I can make $5,000 selling clothing."

The dignified horse had climbed his last hill for the night and was just turning into an avenue, when a dark form came plunging out of the shadow and collided with him violently. Morgan beheld a rider almost unhorsed and heard an oath. For an instant only he saw the man's face, white and malignant, and then it disappeared in the darkness. To Montjoy's greeting, good-

naturedly hurled into the night, there came no reply.

"My wife's cousin," he said, laughing. "I am glad it is not my horse he is riding to-night."

They came up in front of a large house with Corinthian columns and many lights. There was a sudden movement of chairs upon the long veranda and then a young woman came slowly down to the gate and lifted her face to Montjoy's kiss. A pretty boy of five climbed into his arms. Morgan stood silent, touched by the scene. He started violently as Norton Montjoy, remembering his presence, called his name. The woman extended her hand.

"I am very glad to see you," she said, accenting the adjective. Morgan, sensitive to fine impressions, did not like the voice, although the courtesy was perfect.

They advanced to the porch. An old gentleman was standing at the top of the steps. In the light streaming from the hallway Morgan saw that he was tall and soldierly and with gray hair pressed back in great waves from the temples. He put one arm around his son and the other around his grandson, but did not remove his eyes from the guest. While he addressed words of welcome and chiding to the former, he was slowly extending his right hand, seeing which the son said gayly:

"Mr. Morgan, father – a nephew of Col. John Morgan." The light fell upon the half-turned face of the old gentleman and showed it lighted by a mild and benevolent expression and dawning smile.

"Indeed! Come in, Mr. Morgan, come in; I am glad to see you."

The words were cordial and tone of voice perfect, but to Edward there seemed a shading of surprise in the prolonged gaze that rested upon him.

Norton had passed on to the end of the porch, where an elderly lady sat upright, prevented from rising by a little girl asleep in her lap. There were sounds of repeated kisses as she embraced her overgrown boy, and then her voice:

"The Duchess tried to keep her eyes open for you, but she could not. Why are you so late?" Her voice was as the winds in the pines, and the hand she gave to Morgan a moment later was as cool as chamois and as soft.

A young girl had come to the doorway. She was simply dressed in white and her abundant hair was twisted into the Grecian knot that makes some women appear more womanly. She put her arms about the big brother and gave her little hand to Morgan. For a moment their eyes met, and then, gently disengaging her hand, she went to lean against her father's chair, softly stroking his white hair, while the conversation went 'round.

"Mary," said the older woman, presently, "Mr. Morgan and Norton have had a long ride and must be hungry."

"No," said the latter, checking the girl's sudden movement, "we have had something to eat in town."

"You should have waited, my son; it was a needless expense," said the mother, gently. "But I am afraid you will never practice

economy." Norton laughed and did not dispute the proposition. The young mother and children disappeared, and Norton gave a spirited account of the quarantine incident without securing applause.

"I understand," said the colonel to his guest presently, when conversation had lulled, "that you are a nephew of John Morgan. I did not know that he had brothers or sisters – "

"I am not really a nephew," said Morgan, quietly, "but a distant relative and always taught to regard him as uncle." Something in his voice made the young girl lift her eyes. His figure in the half-light where he sat was immovable. Against the white column beyond, his head, graceful in its outlines, was sharply silhouetted. It was bent slightly forward; and while they remained upon the porch, ever at the sound of his voice she would turn her eyes slowly and let them rest upon the speaker. But she was silent.

CHAPTER III
A BREATH FROM THE OLD SOUTH

The room in which Edward Morgan opened his eyes next morning was large and the ceiling low. The posts of the bed ran up to within a foot of the latter and supported a canopy. There was no carpet, the curtains were of chintz and the lambrequins evidently home made. The few pictures on the wall were portraits, in frames made of pine cones, with clusters of young cones at the corners. There were home-made brackets, full of swamp grasses. The bureau had two miniature Tuscan columns, between which was hung a swivel glass. All was homely but clean and suggestive of a woman's presence. And through the open windows there floated a delicious atmosphere, fresh, cool and odorous, with the bloom-breath of tree and shrub.

He stepped out of bed and looked forth. For a mile ran the great fields of cotton and corn, with here and there a cabin and its curl of smoke. A flock of pigeons were walking about the barn doors, and a number of goats waited at the side gate, which led into a broad back yard. In the distance he could see negroes in the fields, hear their songs and the "clank" of a little grist-mill in the valley.

But sweeping all other sounds from mind, he heard also

another musical voice calling "Chick! chick! chickee, chickee!" and caught a glimpse of fowls hurrying from every direction toward the back yard. He plunged his head into a basin of cool water, and presently he was dressed.

The front door was open, as it had remained all night, the chairs on the porch, with here and there books and papers, when Edward Morgan walked out. The yard was spacious and full of plants. Sunflowers and poke-berries were growing along the front fence, and mocking birds, cardinals and jays, their animosities suspended, were breakfasting side by side. His walk carried him to the side of the house, and, looking across the low picket fence, he saw Mary. Her sleeves were rolled up above the elbows and her arms covered with dough from a great pan into which, from time to time, she thrust a hand. A multitude of ducks, chickens, turkeys and guineas scrambled about her, and a dozen white pigeons struggled for standing-room upon her shoulders.

"May I come in?" he called.

"If you can stand it, Mr. Morgan." There was not the slightest embarrassment; the brown eyes were frank and encouraging; he placed his hands upon the fence and leaped lightly over.

"What a family you have!" he said. She smiled, turning her face to him as she scattered dough and gently pushed away the troublesome birds.

"Many birds' mouths to fill; and they will have to fill some mouths too, one of these days, poor things."

"That is but fair."

"I suppose so; but what a mission in life – just to fill somebody's mouth."

"The mission of many poor men and women I have seen," he said, "is merely to fill mouths. And sometimes they get so poor they can't do that."

"And sometimes chickens get the same way," she said, sagely, at which both laughed outright. Her face resumed its placid expression almost instantly. "It must be sad to be very poor; how I wish they could arrange for all of the poor people to come out here and find homes; there seems to be so much land wasted."

"They would not stay long anywhere away from the city," he said; "but do you never sigh for city life?"

"I prefer it," she replied, simply, "but we cannot afford it. And there is no one to take care of this place. It is harder on Annie, brother's wife. She simply detests the country. When I graduated – "

"You graduated!" he exclaimed, almost incredulously. She looked at him surprised.

"Yes, I am young, seventeen this month, but that is not extraordinary. Mamma graduated at the same age, sixteen, forty years ago." A servant approached, spoon in hand.

"Want some more lard, missy." She took her bunch of keys, and selecting one that looked like the bastile memento at Mount Vernon, unlocked the smoke-house door and waited. "Half of that will do, Gincy," she said, not looking around as she talked with Morgan, and the woman returned half.

"Now," she continued to him, "I must go see about the milking."

"I will go, too, if you do not object! This is all new and enjoyable." They came to where the women were at work. As they stood looking on, a calf came up and stood by the girl's side, letting her rub its sensitive ears. A little kid approached, too, and bleated.

"Aunt Mollie," Mary asked, "has its mother come up yet?"

"No, ma'am. Spec' somep'n done cotch her!"

"See if he will drink some cow's milk – give me the cup." She offered him a little, and the hungry animal drank eagerly. "Let him stay in the yard until he gets large enough to feed himself." Then turning to Morgan, laughing, she said: "I expect you are hungry, too; I wonder why papa does not come."

"Is he up?"

"Oh, yes; he goes about early in the morning – there he comes now!" The soldierly form of the old man was seen out among the pines. "Bring in breakfast, Gincy," she called, and presently several negroes sped across the yard, carrying smoking dishes into the cool basement dining-room. Then the bell rang.

At the top of the stairway Morgan had an opportunity to better see his hostess. The lady was slender and moved with deliberation. Her gray hair was brightened by eyes that seemed to swim with light and sympathy. The dress was a black silk, old in fashion and texture, but there was real lace at the throat and wrists, and a little lace headdress. She smiled upon the young

man and gave him her plump hand as he offered to assist her.

"I hope you slept well," she said; "no ghosts! That part of the house you were in is said to be one hundred years old, and must be full of memories."

They stood for grace, and then Mary took her place behind the coffee pot and served the delicious beverage in thin cups of china. The meal consisted of broiled chicken, hot, light biscuits, bread of cornmeal, and eggs that Morgan thought delicious, corn cakes, bacon and fine butter. A little darky behind an enormous apron, but barefooted, stood by the coffee pot and with a great brush of the gorgeous peacock feathers kept the few flies off the tiny caster in the middle of the table, while his eyes followed the conversation around. Presently there was a clatter on the stairs and the little boy came down and climbed into his high chair. He was barefooted and evidently ready for breakfast, as he took a biscuit and bit it. The colonel looked severely at him.

"Put your biscuit down," he said, quietly but sternly, "and wait outside now until the others are through. You came in after grace and you have not said good-morning." The boy's countenance clouded and he began to pick at his knife handle; the grandmother said, gently:

"He'll not do it again, grandpa, and he is hungry, I know. Let him off this time." Grandpa assumed a very severe expression as he replied, promptly:

"Very well, madam; let him say grace and stay, under those circumstances." The company waited on him, he hesitated,

swelled up as if about to cry and said, earnestly: "Gimme somep'n to eat, for the Lord's sake, amen." Grandma smiled benignly, but Mary and grandpa were convulsed. Then other footfalls were heard on the stairs outside, as if some one were coming down by placing the same foot in front each time. Presently in walked a blue-eyed, golden-haired, barefooted girl of three, who went straight to the colonel and held up her arms. He lifted her and pressed the little cheek to his.

"Ah," he said, "here comes the Duchess." He gave her a plate next to his, and taking her fork she ate demurely, from time to time watching Morgan.

"Papa ain't up yet," volunteered the boy. "He told mamma to throw his clothes in the creek as he wouldn't have any more use for them – ain' going to get up any more."

"Mamma, does your eye hurt you?" said Mary, seeing the white hand for the second time raised to her face.

"A little. The same old pain."

"Mamma," she explained to Morgan, "has lost the sight of one eye by neuralgia, tho you would never suspect it. She still suffers dreadfully at times from the same trouble."

Presently the elder lady excused herself, the daughter watching her anxiously as she slowly disappeared.

It was nearly noon when Norton Montjoy and Edward Morgan reached the law office of Ellison Eldridge. As they entered Morgan saw a clean-shaven man of frank, open expression. Norton spoke:

"Judge, this is Mr. Edward Morgan – you have corresponded with him." Morgan felt the sudden penetrating look of the lawyer. Montjoy was already saying au revoir and hastening out, waving off Edward's thanks as he went.

"Will see you later," he called back from the stairway, "and don't forget your promise to the old folks."

"You got my letter, Mr. Morgan? Please be seated."

"Yes; three days since, in New York, through Fuller & Fuller. You have, I believe, the will of the late John Morgan."

"A copy of it. The will is already probated." He went to his safe and returned with a document and a bunch of keys. "Shall I read it to you?"

"If you please."

The lawyer read, after the usual recitation that begins such documents, as follows: "Do create, name and declare Edward Morgan of the city of New York my lawful heir to all property, real and personal, of which I may die possessed. And I hereby name as executor of this my last will and testament, Ellison Eldridge of – state afore-said, relieving said Ellison Eldridge of bond as executor and giving him full power to wind up my estate, pay all debts and settle with the heir as named, without the order of or returns to any court, and for his services in this connection a lien of $10,000 in his favor is hereby created upon said estate, to be paid in full when the residue of property is transferred to the said Edward Morgan," etc.

"The property, aside from Ilexhurst, his late home," continued

Judge Eldridge, "consists of $630,000 in government bonds. These I have in a safety-deposit company. I see the amount surprises you."

"Yes," said the young man; "I am surprised by the amount." He gave himself up to thought for a few moments.

"The keys," said Eldridge, "he gave me a few days before his death, stating that they were for you only, and that the desk in his room at home, which they fitted, contained no property."

"You knew Mr. Morgan well, I presume?" said the young man.

"Yes, and no. I have seen him frequently for a great many years, but no man knew him intimately. He was eccentric, but a fine lawyer and a very able man. One day he came in here to execute this will and left it with me. He referred to it again but once and that was when he came to bring your address and photograph."

"Was there – anything marked – or strange – in his life?"

"Nothing beyond what I have outlined. He was a bachelor, and beyond an occasional party to gentlemen in his house, when he spared no expense, and regular attendance upon the theater, he had few amusements. He inherited some money; the balance he accumulated in his practice and by speculation, I suppose. The amount is several times larger than I suspected. His one great vice was drink. He would get on his sprees two or three times a year, but always at home. There he would shut himself up and drink until his housekeeper called in the doctors." Morgan waited in silence; there was nothing else and he rose abruptly.

"Judge, we will wind up this matter in a few days. Here are your letters, and John Morgan's to me, and letters from Fuller & Fuller, who have known me for many years and have acted as agents for both Col. Morgan and myself. If more proof is desired – "

"These are sufficient. Your photograph is accurate. May I ask how you are related to Col. Morgan?"

"Distantly only. The fact is I am almost as nearly alone in the world as he was. I must have your advice touching other matters. I shall return, very likely, in the morning."

Upon the street Edward Morgan walked as in a dream. Strange to say, the information imparted to him had been depressing. He called a carriage.

"Take me out to John Morgan's," he said, briefly.

"De colonel's done dead, sah!"

"I know, but the house is still there, is it not?"

The driver conveyed the rebuke to his bony horse, in the shape of a sharp lash, and secured a reasonably fair gait. Once or twice he ventured observations upon the character of the deceased.

"Col. Morgan's never asked nobody 'how much' when dey drive 'im; he des fling down half er doller an' go long 'bout es business. Look to me, young marster, like you sorter got de Morgan's eye. Is you kinned to 'im?"

"I employed you to drive, not to talk," said Edward, sharply.

"Dere now, dat's des what Col. Morgan say!"

The negro gave vent to a little pacifying laugh and was silent.

The shadow on the young man's face was almost black when he got out of the hack in front of the Morgan house and tossed the old negro a dollar.

"Oom-hoo!" said that worthy, significantly. "Oo-hoo! What I tole you?"

CHAPTER IV
THE MOTHER'S ROOM

The house before which Morgan stood overlooked the city two miles away and was the center of a vast estate now run to weeds. It was a fine example of the old style of southern architecture. The spacious roof, embattled, but unbroken by gable or tower, was supported in front by eight massive columns that were intended to be Ionic. The space between them and the house constituted the veranda, and opening from the center of the house upon this was a great doorway, flanked by windows. This arrangement was repeated in the story above, a balcony taking the place of the door. The veranda and columns were reproduced on both sides of the house, running back to two one-story wings. The house was of slight elevation and entered in front by six marble steps, flanked by carved newel posts and curved rails; the front grounds were a hundred yards wide and fifty deep, inclosed by a heavy railing of iron. These details came to him afterward; he did not even see at that time the magnolias and roses that grew in profusion, nor the once trim boxwood hedges and once active fountain. He sounded loudly upon the front door with the knocker.

At length a woman came around the wing room and approached him. She was middle-aged and wore a colored

turban, a white apron hiding her dress. The face was that of an octoroon; her figure tall and full of dignity. She did not betray the mixed blood in speech or manner, but her form of address proclaimed her at once a servant. The voice was low and musical as she said, "Good-morning, sir," and waited.

Morgan studied her in silence a moment; his steady glance seemed to alarm her, for she drew back a step and placed her hand on the rail.

"I want to see the people who have charge of this house," said the young man. She now approached nearer and looked anxiously into his face.

"I have the care of it," she answered.

"Well," said he, "I am Edward Morgan, the new owner. Let me have the keys."

"Edward Morgan!" She repeated the name unconsciously.

"Come, my good woman, what is it? Where are the keys?" She bowed her head. "I will get them for you, sir." She went to the rear again, and presently the great doors swung apart and he entered.

The hallway was wide and opened through massive folding doors into the dining-room in the rear, and this dining-room, by means of other folding doors, entering the wing-rooms, could be enlarged into a princely salon. The hall floor was of marble and a heavy frieze and centerpiece decorated walls and ceiling. A gilt chandelier hung from the center. Antique oak chairs flanked this hallway, which boasted also a hatrack, with looking-glass six feet

wide. A semicircular stairway, guarded by a carved oak rail, a newel post and a knight in armor, led to apartments above. A musty odor pervaded the place.

"Open the house," said Edward; "I must have better air."

And while this was being done he passed through the rooms into which now streamed light and fresh air. On the right was parlor and guest chamber, the hangings and carpets unchanged in nearly half a century. On the left was a more cheerful living-room, with piano and a rack of yellow sheet music, and the library, with an enormous collection of books. There were also cane furniture, floor matting and easy-chairs.

In all these rooms spacious effects were not lessened by bric-a-brac and collections. A few portraits and landscapes, a candelabra or two, a pair of brass fire dogs, one or two large and exquisitely painted vases made up the ornamental features. The dining-room proper differed in that its furnishings were newer and more elaborate. The wing-rooms were evidently intended for cards and billiards. Behind was the southern back porch closed in with large green blinds. Over all was the chill of isolation and disuse.

Edward made his way upstairs among the sleeping apartments, full of old and clumsy furniture, the bedding having been removed. Two rooms only were of interest; to the right and rear a small apartment connected with the larger one in front by a door then locked. This small room seemed to have been a boy's. There were bows and arrows, an old muzzle-loading gun, a boat paddle,

a dip net, stag horns, some stuffed birds and small animals, the latter sadly dilapidated, a few game pictures, boots, shoes and spurs – even toys. A small bed ready for occupancy stood in one corner and in another a little desk with drop lid. On the hearth were iron fire dogs and ashes, the latter holding fragments of charred paper.

For the first time since entering the house Edward felt a human presence; it was a bright sunny room opening to the western breeze and the berries of a friendly china tree tapped upon the window as he approached it. He placed his hand upon the knob of the door, leading forward, and tried to open it; it was locked.

"That," said the woman's low voice, "is Col. Morgan's mother's room, sir, and nobody ever goes in there. No one has entered that room but him since she died, I reckon more than forty years ago."

Edward had started violently; he turned to find the sad, changeless face of the octoroon at his side.

"And this room?"

"There is where he lived all his life – from the time he was a boy until he died."

Edward took from his pocket the bunch of keys and applied the largest to the lock of the unopened door; the bolt turned easily. As he crossed the threshold a thrill went through him; he seemed to trespass. Here had the boy grown up by his mother, here had been his retreat at all times. When she passed

away it was the one spot that kept fresh the heart of the great criminal lawyer, who fought the outside world so fiercely and well. Edward had never known a mother's room, but the scene appealed to him, and for the first time he felt kinship with the man who preceded him, who was never anything but a boy here in these two rooms. Even when he lay dead, back there in that simple bed, over which many a night his mother must have leaned to press her kisses upon his brow, he was a boy grown old and lonely.

One day she had died in this front room! What an agony of grief must have torn the boy left behind. In the dim light of the room he had opened, objects began to appear; almost reverently Edward raised a window and pushed open the shutters. Behind him stood ready for occupancy a snowy bed, with pillows and linen as fresh seemingly as if placed there at morn. By the bedside was a pair of small worn slippers, a rocking chair stood by the east window, and by the chair was a little sewing stand, with a boy's jacket lying near, and threaded needle thrust into its texture. On the little center table was a well-worn Bible by a small brass lamp, and a single painting hung upon the wall – that of a little farmhouse at the foot of a hill, with a girl in frock and poke bonnet swinging upon its gate.

There was no carpet on the floor; only two small rugs. It had been the home of a girl simply raised and grown to womanhood, and her simplicity had been repeated in her boy. The great house had been the design of her husband, but there in these two rooms

mother and son found the charm of a bygone life, delighting in those "vague feelings" which science cannot fathom, but which simpler minds accept as the whispering of heredity.

One article only remained unexamined. It was a small picture in a frame that rested upon the mantel and in front of which was draped a velvet cloth. Morgan as in a dream drew aside the screen and saw the face of a wondrously beautiful girl, whose eyes rested pensively upon him. A low cry escaped the octoroon, who had noiselessly followed him; she was nodding her head and muttering, all unconscious of his presence. When she saw at length his face turned in wonder upon her she glided noiselessly from the room. He replaced the cloth, closed the window again and tiptoed out, locking the door behind him.

He found the octoroon downstairs upon the back steps. She was now calm and answered his questions clearly. She had not belonged to John Morgan, she said, but had always been a free woman. Her husband had been free, too, but had died early. She had come to keep house at Ilexhurst many years ago, before the war, and had been there always since, caring for everything while Mr. Morgan was in the army, and afterward; when he was away from time to time. No, she did not know anything of the girl in the picture; she had heard it said that he was once to have married a lady, but she married somebody else and that was the end of it. John Morgan had kept the room as it was. No, he was never married. He had no cousins or kinfolks that she had heard of except a sister who died, and her two sons had been killed in

battle or lost at sea during the war. Neither of them was married; she was certain of that. She herself cooked and kept house, and Ben, a hired boy, attended to the rest and acted as butler.

Edward was recalled to the present by feeling her eyes fixed upon him. He caught but one fleeting glance at her face before it was averted; it had grown young, almost beautiful, and the eyes were moistened and tender and sad. He turned away abruptly.

"I will occupy an upper room to-night," he said, "and will send new furniture to-morrow." His baggage had come and he went back with the express to the city. He would return, he said, after supper.

Sometimes the mind, after a long strain imposed upon it, relieves itself by a refusal to consider. So with Edward Morgan's. That night he stood by his window and watched the lessening moon rise over the eastern hills. But he seemed to stand by a low picket fence beyond which a girl, with bare arms, was feeding poultry. He felt again the power of her frank, brown eyes as they rested upon him, and heard her voice, musical in the morning air, as it summoned her flock to breakfast.

In New York, Paris and Italy, and here there in other lands, were a few who called him friend; it would be better to wind up his affairs and go to them. It did not seem possible that he could endure this new life. Already the buoyancy of youth was gone! His ties were all abroad.

Thoughts of Paris connected him with a favorite air. He went to his baggage and unpacked an old violin, and sitting in the

window, he played as a master hand had taught him and an innate genius impelled. It was Schubert's serenade, and as he played the room was no longer lonely; sympathy had brought him friends. It seemed to him that among them came a woman who laid her hand on his shoulder and smiled on him. Her face was hidden, but her touch was there, living and vibrant. On his cheek above the mellow instrument he felt his own tears begin to creep and then – silence. But as he stood calmer, looking down into the night, a movement in the shrubbery attracted him back to earth; he called aloud:

"Who is there?" A pause and the tall figure of the octoroon crossed the white walk.

"Rita," was the answer. "The gate was left open."

CHAPTER V
THE STRANGER IN THE LIBRARY

Edward was up early and abroad for exercise. Despite his gloom he had slept fairly well and had awakened but once. But that once! He could not rid himself of the memory of the little picture and it had served him a queer trick. He had simply found himself lying with open eyes and staring at the woman herself; it was the same face, but now anxious and harassed. He was not superstitious and this was clearly an illusion; he rubbed his eyes deliberately and looked again. The figure had disappeared. But the mind that entertains such fancies needs something – ozone and exercise, he thought; and so he covered the hills with his rapid pace and found himself an hour later in the city and with an appetite.

The day passed in the arrangement of those minor requirements when large estates descend to new owners. There was an accounting, an examination of records. Judge Eldridge gave him assistance everywhere, but there was no time for private and past histories. In passing he dropped in at Barksdale's office and left a card.

One of the distinctly marked features of the day was his meeting with a lawyer, Amos Royson by name. This man held a druggist's claim of several hundred dollars against the estate of

John Morgan for articles purchased by Rita Morgan, the charges made upon verbal authority from the deceased. John Morgan had been absent many months just previous to his death and the account had not been presented.

Edward was surprised to find, upon entering this office, that the lawyer was the man who had collided with Montjoy's horse the night before. Royson saluted him coldly but politely and produced the account already sworn to and ready for filing. It had been withheld at Eldridge's request. As Edward ran his eye over the list he saw that chemicals had been bought at wholesale, and with them had been sent one or two expensive articles belonging to a chemical laboratory. Just what use Rita Morgan might have for such things he could not imagine. He was about to say that he would inquire into the account when he saw that Royson, with a sardonic smile upon his face, was watching him. He had a distinct impression that antipathy to the man was stirring within him; he was about to pay the account and rid himself of the necessity of any further dealings with the man, when, angered by the impudent, irritating manner, he decided otherwise.

"Have you ever shown this account to Rita Morgan?"

"Oh, yes!"

"And she pronounced it correct, I suppose?"

"She did not examine it; she said that you would pay it now that John Morgan is dead."

"If the account is a just charge upon the Morgan estate I certainly will," said Morgan, pocketing the written statement.

"I think after you examine into the matter it will be paid," said Royson, confidently. Edward thought long upon the man's manner and the circumstance, but could make nothing out of them. He would see Rita, and with that resolution he let the incident pass from his mind.

The shadows were falling when he returned to take his first meal in his new home. He descended to the dining-room to find it lighted by the fifty or more jets in the large gilt chandeliers. The apartment literally blazed with light. The sensation under the circumstances was agreeable, and in better spirits he took the single seat provided. Here, as afterward ascertained, had been the lawyer's one point of contact with the social world, and it was here that he had been accustomed, at intervals varying from weeks to years, to entertain his city acquaintances.

The room was not American but continental from its Louvre ceiling of white and gold to its niched half life-size statuary and pictures of fishing and hunting scenes in gilded frames. But the foreign effects ended in this room. Outside all else was American.

Edward was silently served by the butler and was pleased to find his dinner first class in every respect. Then came a box of choice cigars upon a silver tray.

Passing into the library, he seated himself by the reading light near the little side table where a leather chair had been placed, and sought diversion in the papers; but, alas, the European finds but little of home affairs in one parliament, a regatta, a horse race, a German-army review, a social sensation – these were all.

He turned from the papers; the truth is the one great overwhelming fact at that moment was that he, a wanderer all of his life, without family or parents, or knowledge of them, had suddenly been transplanted among a strange people and made the master of a household and a vast fortune. On this occasion, as ever since entering the house, he could not rid himself of a suggestion so indefinite as to belong to the region of subconsciousness that he was an interloper, an inferior, and that jealous, unseen eyes were watching him. The room seemed haunted by an unutterable protest. He was not aware then that this is a peculiarity of all old houses.

Something like an oppression seized upon him and he was wondering if this should continue, would it be possible for him to endure the situation long? Upstairs was the little desk, the keys to which he held, and in it information that would lay bare the secret of his life and reveal the mystery of years ago; which would give him the same chance for happiness that other men have. All that was left now for him to do was to ascend the stairs, open the desk and read. He had put it off for a quiet and convenient moment, and that time had come.

But what was contained in that desk? He remembered Hamlet and understood his doubts for the first time. It was the gravity of this doubt, the weight of the revelation to come that caused him to smoke on, cigar after cigar, in silence. It flashed upon him that it might be wiser to take his fortune and return to Europe as he was. But as he smoked his mind rejected the suggestion as

cowardly.

It was at this stage in his reverie that Edward Morgan received the severest shock of his life. Without having noticed any sound or movement, he presently became conscious that some one besides himself was in the room, and instantly, almost, his eyes rested on a man standing before the open bookcase. It was a figure, slender and tall, clad in light, well-worn trousers, and short smoking jacket. The face turned from him was lifted toward the shelves, and long black hair fell in shining masses upon his shoulders. The right hand extended upward, touching first one, then another of the volumes as it searched along the line, was white as paraffine and slender as a girl's and a fold of linen, edged with lace, lay upon the wrists. All the other details of the figure were lost in the shadow. While thus Edward sat, his brain whirling and eyes riveted upon the strange figure, the visitor paused in his search as if in doubt, turned his profile and listened, then faced about suddenly and the two men gazed into each other's eyes.

Edward had gained his first full view of the visitor's face. Had it been withdrawn from him in an instant he could at any time thereafter have reproduced it in every line, so vividly was it impressed upon his memory. It was new, and yet strangely, dimly, vaguely familiar! It was oval, pale and lighted by eyes with enormously distended pupils. It seemed to him that they were not mirrors at that moment, but scintillating lights burning within their cavities.

But the first effect, startling though it was, passed away immediately; nothing could have withstood the gentle pleading entreaty that lurked in all the face lines; an expression childish and girlish. The stranger gazed for a moment only on the man sitting bolt upright now in his chair, his hands clutching the arms, and then went quickly forward.

"You are Edward Morgan?" he said, encouragingly. "My uncle told me you would come some day." The deep, indrawn breath that had made the new master's figure rigid for the moment escaped back slowly between the parted lips. He was ashamed that he should have been so startled.

"Yes," he said, presently, "I am Edward Morgan. And you are _ "

"Gerald Morgan. But I must say good-bye now. I have a matter of upmost importance to conclude." He smiled again, returned to the shelves and this time without hesitation selected a volume and passed out toward the dining-room.

A faint odor of burning material attracted Edward's attention. He looked for his cigar; it lay upon the matting, in a circle as large as his hat. He must have sat there watching the door for fifteen minutes after the singular visitor had passed through. He stamped out the creeping circle of fire and rang the bell. The octoroon entered and stood waiting, her eyes cast down.

"A young man came here a few minutes since and went out through that door," said he, with difficulty suppressing his excitement: "who is he?"

She looked to him astonished.

"Why, that was Mr. Gerald, sir. Don't you know of him? Mr. Gerald Morgan?"

"Absolutely nothing. I have never seen him before nor heard of him – no mention of him has been made in my presence." The woman was clearly amazed.

"Is it possible! Your uncle never wrote you about Gerald Morgan – the lawyers have never told you?"

"No one has told me, I say; the man is as new to me as if he had dropped from the clouds."

She thought a moment. "He must have left papers – "

"Oh!" exclaimed Edward, starting suddenly; "I have not read the papers! I see! I see!"

"You will find it there," she said, relieved. "I thought you knew already. It did not occur to me to tell you about him, sir! We have grown used to not speaking of him. He never goes out anywhere now." Edward was puzzled and then an explanation flashed upon him.

"He is insane!" he exclaimed.

"Oh, no, sir! But he has always been delicate – not like other children; and then the medicine they gave him when he had the pains and was a baby – he has been obliged to keep it up. It is the morphine and opium, sir, that has changed him." Edward nodded his head; the explanation was sufficient.

"He has lived here a long time, I presume?"

"Yes, sir. He smokes and reads and paints and does many

curious things, but he never goes out. Sometimes he walks about the place, but generally at night; and once or twice in the last ten years he has gone down-town, but it excites him too much and he is apt to die away."

"Die away?"

"Yes, sir; the attacks come on him at any time, and so we let him live on as he wants to and no one sees him. He cannot bear strangers, but he is not insane, sir. One trouble is, he knows more than his head can hold – he studies too much." She said this very tenderly and her voice trembled a little as she finished and turned her face to work nervously.

"You have not told me who he is."

"I do not know, sir," and then she added: "He was a baby when I came, and I have done my best by him." She did not meet his eyes. Her suffering and embarrassment touched Edward.

"I will read the papers," he said, gently; "they will tell me all." Taking this as a dismissal the woman withdrew.

CHAPTER VI
"WHO SAYS THERE CAN BE A 'TOO LATE' FOR THE IMMORTAL MIND?"

Something like fear, a superstitious fear, arose in Edwards' heart as he turned down the lid of the old-fashioned desk in the little room upstairs and saw the few papers pigeon-holed there with lawyer-like precision. On the top lay a long envelope sealed and bearing his name. His hand shook as he held it and studied the chirography. The moment was one to which he had looked forward for a lifetime and should contain the explanation of the singular mystery that had environed him from infancy.

As he held the letter, hesitating over the final act, his life passed in review as, it is said, do the lives of drowning persons. The thought that Edward Morgan was dying came in that connection. The orphan, the lonely college boy, the wandering youth, the bohemian of a dozen continental capitals, the musician and half-way metaphysicist and theosophist, the unformed man of an unformed age, new sphere, one of quick, earnest, feverish action, the new man, was to spring armed, or hampered by – what? At that moment, by a strange revulsion, the life that he had worn so hardly, so bitterly, even its sadness seemed dear and

beautiful. After all it had been a life of ease and many scenes. It had no responsibilities – now it would pass! He tore open the envelope impatiently and read:

> "Edward Morgan – Sir: When this letter comes to your knowledge you will have been acquainted with the fact that my will has made you heir to all my property, without legacy or restriction. That document was made brief and simple, partly to avoid complications, and partly to conceal facts with which the public has no reasonable interest. I now, assured of your character in every particular, desire that you retain during the lifetime of Gerald Morgan the residence which has always been his home, providing for his wants and pleasures freely as I have done and leaving him undisturbed in the manner of his life. I direct, further, that you extend the same care and kindness to Rita Morgan, my housekeeper, seeing that she is not disturbed in her home and the manner of her life. My object is to guard the welfare of the only people intimately connected with me by ties of friendship and association, whom I have not already provided for. Carrying out this intention, you will as soon as possible, after coming into possession, take precautions looking to the future of Gerald Morgan and Rita Morgan, my housekeeper, in the event of your own death; and the plan to be selected in this connection I leave to your own good sense and judgment, only suggesting as adviser for you Ellison Eldridge, one of the few lawyers living whose heart is outside of his pocketbook, and whose discretion is

perfect.
"John Morgan."

That was all.

The young man, dumfounded, turned over the single sheet of paper that contained the whole message, examined again the envelope, read and reread the communication, and finally laid it aside. Not one word of explanation of his own (Edward's) existence no claim of relationship, no message of sympathy, only the curt voice of an eccentric old man, echoing beyond the black wall of mystery and already sunk into eternal silence. The old life no longer seemed dear or beautiful. It returned upon him with the dull weight of oppression he had known so long. It was a bitter ending, a crushing, overwhelming disappointment.

He smiled at length and lighted another cigar. His mind reverted to the singular character whose final expression lay upon the desk. His last act had been to guard against the curious, and that had included the beneficiary. He had succeeded in living a mystery, in dying a mystery, and in covering up his past with a mystery.

"It was well done." Such was Edward's reflection spoken aloud. He recalled the lines: "I now, assured of your character in every particular." Every word in that laconic letter, as also every word in the few communications made to him in life by this man, meant something. What did these mean? "Assured" by whom? Who had spied upon his actions and kept watch over him to such an extent as would justify the sweeping confidences?

But he knew that the testator had read him right. A faint wave of pleasure flushed his cheek and warmed his heart when he realized the full significance of this tribute to his true character. He no longer felt like an intruder.

And yet, "assured" by whom? And who was Gerald Morgan? Not a relative or he would have said so; he would have said "my nephew, Gerald Morgan." The same argument shut him (Edward) out. Why this suspicious absence of relationship terms? – and they, both of them, Morgans and heirs to his wealth?

Again he dragged the papers from the desk and ran them over. Manuscripts all, they contained detached accounts of widely separated people and incidents, and moreover they were clearly briefed. "A Dramatic Trail," "The Storm," "A Midnight Struggle," etc. They had no bearing upon his life; they were the unpublished literary remains of John Morgan.

Every paper lay exposed; the mine was exhausted. He again read the letter slowly, idly lifted each paper and returned all to the desk.

The cigar was out again; he tossed it from the window, locked the desk and passed into the mother's room. The action was without forethought, but his new philosophy had taught him the value of instinctive human actions as index fingers. What cause then had drawn him into that long-deserted room? As he reflected, his eyes rested upon the picture of the girl in the little frame on the mantel. He started back, amazed and overwhelmed.

It was the face that had been turned to him in the library – the face of Gerald Morgan!

Edward was surprised to find himself standing by the open window when he had exhausted the train of thought that the recognition put in motion, and counting his heart-beats, ninety to the minute. By that curious power or weakness of certain minds his thoughts ran entirely from the matter in hand along the lines of a lecture his friend Virdow as Jean had delivered, the theory of which was that organic heart disease, unless fastened to its victim by inheritance, is always a mental result. If a mere thought or combination of thoughts could excite, a thought could depress. It was plain; he would write to Virdow confirming his theory.

Then he became conscious that the moon hung like a plate of silver in the vast sky space of the east and that her light was flashed back by many little points in the city beneath him – a gilt ball, a vane, a set of window glasses, and the dew-wet slates of a modern roof. One white spot was visible in the yard in front, white and pale as the moon when the vapor had dispersed but set immovably. As he idly sought to unravel its little secret, it simply became a part of the shadow and invisible, but he felt that some one was looking up at him; and suddenly he saw the slender figure of a man pass, cross the gravel walk and vanish in the shrubbery on the left.

Edward did not cry out; he stood musing upon the fact, and lo, there came a glitter of rosy light along the horizon; the moon had vanished overhead, and sound arose in confused murmurs

from the dull heaps of houses in the valley. He saw again at the moment, over the eastern hills, the face of a girl as she stood calling her pets, and felt her eyes upon him.

When he awoke that day he found the sun far beyond the zenith and he lay revolving in his mind the events of the night; to his surprise much of the weight was gone and in its place was interest, the like of which he had never before known. An object in life had suddenly been developed and instinctively he felt that the study of this new mystery would lead to a knowledge of himself and his past.

The first thing to be done was to again see the stranger who had invaded his library, and carry his investigation as far as this person would permit. This in mind, he dressed himself with care and descended into the dining-room. In a few moments his breakfast was served. Upon hearing his inquiry for Rita, Ben, the butler, retired and presently the woman, grave, and after a few words quiet, took his place. Before speaking Edward noticed her closely again. About fifty years of age, perhaps less, she stood as erect and rigid as an Indian, her black hair without a kink. There was an easy dignity in her attitude, hardly the pose of a slave, or one who had been. But in her face was the sadness of personal suffering, and in her voice a tone he had noticed at first, an echo of some depressing experience, it seemed to him.

Where was Gerald's room? There! He had not noticed the door; it led out from the dining-room. It was the wing intended for billiards, but now the retreat of her poor young master and

had been all his life. He did not like to be disturbed, but perhaps the circumstances would make a difference.

Edward knocked on the door. Receiving no answer, he opened it hesitatingly and looked in. Then he entered. Gerald greeted him with an encouraging smile and closing the door behind him, he viewed the interior with interest. The walls were hung with pictures, swords, guns, pistols and other weapons, and between them on every available spot were books, books, books and periodicals. A broad center table held writing materials and manuscripts, and upon a long table by two open windows were bottles of many colors and all the queer paraphernalia of a chemical laboratory. Against the opposite wall was a spacious divan, and seated upon it, wrapped in a singular-looking dressing-gown, fez upon his head and smoking a shibouk as he read, was the strange being for whom Edward searched.

"I was expecting you," the young man said; "where have you been?" The naturalness of the words confused the visitor for a moment. No seat had been offered him, but he drew one near the divan.

"I suppose I may smoke?" he said, smiling, ignoring the query, but the intent look of Gerald caused him to add: "I slept late; how did you rest?"

"Do you know," said Gerald, his expression changing, "strange as it may seem, I have seen you before, but where, where – " The long lashes dropped above the eyes; he shook his head sadly, "but where, no man may say."

"It hardly seems possible," said Edward, gravely. "I have never been here before, and you, I believe, have never been absent."

"So they say; so they say. Mere old-nurse talk! I have been to many places." Edward turned his head in sadness. Man or woman the person was crazy. He looked again; it was the face of the girl in the picture frame, grown older, with time and suffering.

"It is an odd room," he said, presently; "do you sleep here?"

Gerald nodded to the other door.

"Would you like to see? Enter."

To Edward's amazement he found himself in a conservatory, a glass house about forty by twenty feet, arranged for sliding curtains at sides and top. There was little to be seen besides a small bed and necessary furniture. But an easel stood near the center and on it a canvas ready for painting. In a corner was a large portfolio for drawings, closed.

"I cannot sleep unless I see the stars," said Gerald, joining him. "And there is an entrance to the grounds!" He threw open a glass door, exposing an oleander avenue. "This is my favorite walk." The scene seemed to strike him anew. He stood there lost in thought a moment and returned to his divan. Edward found him absorbed in a volume. He had studied him there long and keenly and reached a conclusion that would, he felt, be of value in his future associations with this eccentric mind; it was a mind reversed, living in abstract thought. Its visions of real life were only glimpses. Therefore, he reasoned, to keep company with such a mind, one must be prepared for its eccentricities and avoid

discord.

It was a keen diagnosis and he acted upon it. He went about noiselessly examining the furnishings of the room without further speech. The young man was writing as he passed him. Looking over his shoulder, Edward read a few lines of what was evidently a thesis;

> "The mind can therefore have no conscious memory. Memory being a function of the brain and physical structure, and mind being endowed with a capacity for wandering, it follows that it can bring back no record of its experience since no memory function went with it. It may, indeed, be true that the mind can itself be shaped and biased anew by its detached experiences, but who can ever read its history backwards? Unless somewhere arises a mind brilliant enough to find the alphabet, to connect the mind's hidden storehouse with consciousness, the mystery of mind – life (that is, higher dream life) – must remain forever unread."

"It has been found," said Edward, as though Gerald had stated a proposition aloud.

"How? Where?" Gerald did not look up, but merely ceased writing a moment.

"Music is the connecting link. Music is the language of the mind. Vibration is the secret of creation and along its lines will all secrets be revealed." The book closed slowly in the reader's hands, his thesis slipped to the floor. He sat in deep thought. Then a light gleamed in his face and eyes.

"It is true," he said, with agitation, as he arose. "It is a great thought; a great discovery. I must learn once" and Rita stood waiting. "Bring me musical instruments – what?" He turned impatiently to Edward. The latter shook his head.

"'Tis a lifetime study," he said, sadly, "and then – failure. No man has yet reached the end."

"I will reach it."

"It calls for labor day and night – for talent – for teachers."

"I will have all."

"It calls for youth, for a mind young and fresh and responsive. You are old in mind. It is too late."

"Too late. Too late. Never, never, never too late. Who says there can be a 'too late' for the immortal mind? I will begin. I will labor! I will succeed! If not in this life, then in the next, or the next; aye, at the foot of Buddha, if need be, I will press to read all to the strains of music. Oh, blind! Blind! Blind!" He strode about the room in an ecstasy of excitement.

"Prove to me it is too late here," shrieked the unhappy being, "and I will end this existence; will go back a thousand cycles, if necessary, carrying with me the impression of this truth, and begin, an infant, to lisp in numbers."

He had snatched a poniard from the wall and was gesticulating frantically. Edward was about to speak when he saw the enthusiast's eyes lose their frenzy and fix upon the woman's. He dropped the weapon and plunged face downward in despair among the pillows. Like a statue the woman stood gazing upon

him.

"My violin," said Edward. She disappeared noiselessly.

CHAPTER VII
"BACK! WOULD YOU MURDER HER?"

When Edward Morgan went to Europe from Columbia college it was in obedience to a mandate of John Morgan through the New York lawyers. He went, began there the life of a bohemian. Introduced by a chance acquaintance, he fell in first with the art circles of Paris, and, having a fancy and decided talent for painting, he betook himself seriously to study. But the same shadow, the same need of an overpowering motive, pursued him. With hope and ambition he might have become known to fame. As it was, his mind drifted into subtleties and the demon change came again. He closed his easel. Rome, Athens, Constantinople, the occident, all knew him, gave him brief welcome and quick farewells.

The years were passing; as he had gone from idleness to art, from art to history, and from history to archaeology by easy steps, so he passed now, successively to religion, to philosophy, and to its last broad exponent, theosophy.

The severity of this last creed fitted the crucifixion of his spirit. Its contemplation showed him vacancies in his education and so he went to Jena for additional study. This decision was reached mainly through the suggestion of a chance acquaintance

named Abingdon, who had come into his life during his first summer on the continent. They met so often that the face of this man had became familiar, and one day, glad to hear his native tongue, he addressed him and was not repelled.

Abingdon gave to Edward Morgan his confidence; it was not important; a barrister in an English interior town, he crossed the channel annually for ramble in the by-ways of Europe. It had been his unbroken habit for many years.

From this time the two men met often and journeyed much together, the elder seeming to find a pleasure in the gravity and earnestness of the young man, and he in turn a relief in the nervous, jerky lawyer, looking always through small, half-closed eyes and full of keen conceptions. And when apart, occasionally he would get a characteristic note from Abingdon and send a letter in reply. He had so much spare time.

This man had once surprised him with the remark:

"If I were twenty years younger I would go to Jena and study vibration. It is the greatest force of the universe. It is the secret of creation." The more Edward dwelt upon this remark, in connection with modern results and invention, the more he was struck with it. Why go to Jena to study vibration was something that he could not fathom, nor in all probability could Abingdon. America was really the advanced line of discovery, but nevertheless he went, and with important results; and there in the old town, finding the new hobby so intimately connected with music, to which he was passionately devoted, he took up

with renewed energy his neglected violin. With feverish toil he struggled along the border land of study and speculation, until he felt that there was nothing more possible for him – in Jena.

In Jena his solitary friend had been the eminent Virdow and to him he became an almost inseparable companion.

The confidence and speculations of Virdow, extending far beyond the limits of a lecture stand, carried Edward into dazzling fields. The intercourse extended through the best part of several years. On leaving Jena he was armed with a knowledge of the possibilities of the vast field he had entered upon, with a knowledge of thorough bass and harmony, and with a technique that might have made him famous had he applied his knowledge. He did not apply it!

His final stand had been Paris. Abingdon was there. Abingdon had discovered a genius and carried Edward to see him. He had been passing through an obscure quarter when he was attracted by the singular pathos of a violin played in a garret. To use his expression, "the music glorified the miserable street." Everybody there knew Benoni, the blind violinist. And to this man, awed and silent, came Edward, a listener.

No words can express the meaning that lay in the blind man's improvisations; only music could contain them. And only one man in Paris could answer! When having heard the heart language, the heart history and cravings of the player expressed in the solitude of that half-lighted garret, Edward took the antique instrument and replied, the answer was overwhelming.

The blind man understood; he threw his arms about the player and embraced him.

"Grand!" he cried. "A master plays, but it is incomplete; the final note has not come; the harmony died where it should have become immortal!" And Edward knew it.

From that meeting sprang a warm friendship, the most complete that Morgan had ever known! It made the old man comfortable, gained him better quarters and broadened the horizon toward which his sun of life was setting. It would go down with some of the colors of its morning.

It became Edward's custom to take his old friend to hear the best operas and concerts, and one night they heard the immortal Cambia sing. It was a charity concert and her first appearance in many years.

When the idol of the older Paris came to the footlights for the sixth time to bow her thanks for the ovation given her, she smiled and sang in German a love song, indescribable in its passion and tenderness. It was a burst of melody from the heart of some man, great one moment in his life at least. Edward found himself standing when the tumult ceased. Benoni had sunk from his chair to his knees and was but half-conscious. The excitement had partially paralyzed him. The lithe fingers of the left hand were dead. They would never rest again upon the strings of his great violin – the Cremona to which in sickness and poverty, although its sale would have enriched him, he clung with the faith and instinct of the artist.

There came the day when Edward was ready to depart to America. He went to say good-bye, and this is what happened: The old man held Edward's hands long in silence, but his lips moved in prayer; then lifting the instrument, he placed it in the young man's arms.

"Take it," he said. "I may never meet you again. It is the one thing that I have been true to all my life. I will not leave it to the base and heartless." And so Edward, to please him, accepted the trust. He would return some day; many hours should the violin sing for the old man. As he stood he drew the bow and played one strain of Cambia's song and the blind man lifted his face in sudden excitement. As Edward paused he called the notes until it was complete. "Now again," he said, singing:

If thou couldst love me
As I do love thee,
Then wouldst thou come to me,
Come to me.
Never forsaking me,
Never, oh, never
Forsaking me.
Oceans may roll between,
Thine home and thee
Love, if thou lovest me
Lovest me,
What care we, you and I?
Through all eternity,
I love thee, darling one,

Love me; love me.

"You have found the secret," said Benoni; "the chords on the lower octaves made the song."

And so they had parted! The blind man to wait for the final summons; the young man to plunge into complications beyond his wildest dreams.

"A man," said Virdow once, "is a tribe made up of himself, his family and his friends." And this was the history in outline of the man to whom Rita Morgan handed the violin that fateful day when Gerald lay face down among the pillows of his divan.

Recognizing in the delicate and excitable organism before him the possibilities of emotion and imagination, Edward prepared to play. Without hesitation he drew the bow across the strings and began a solemn prelude to a choral. And as he played he noticed the heaving form below him grow still. Then Gerald lifted his face and gazed past the player, with an intensity of vision that deepened until he seemed in the grasp of some stupendous power or emotion. Edward played the recital; the story of Calvary, the crucifixion and the mourning women, and the march of soldiers. Finally there came the tumult of bursting storm and riven tombs. The climax of action occurred there; it was to die away into a movement fitted to the resurrection and the peaceful holiness of Christ's meeting with Mary. But before this latter movement began Gerald leaped upon the player with the quickness and fury of a tiger and by the suddenness of the onset nearly bore him

to the floor. This mad assault was accompanied by a shriek of mingled fear and horror.

"Back – would you murder her?" By a great effort Edward freed himself and the endangered violin, and forced the assailant to the divan. The octoroon was kneeling by his side weeping.

"Leave him to me," she said. Stunned and inexpressibly shocked Edward withdrew. The grasp on his throat had been like steel! The marks remained.

"I have," he wrote that night in a letter to Virdow, "heard you more than once express the hope that you would some day be able to visit America. Come now, at once! I have here entered upon a new life and need your help. Further, I believe I can help you."

After describing the circumstances already related, the letter continued: "The susceptibility of this mind to music I regard as one of the most startling experiences I have ever known, and it will afford you an opportunity for testing your theories under circumstances you can never hope for again. Let me say to you here that I am now convinced by some intuitive knowledge that the assault upon me was based upon a memory stirred by the sound of the violin; that vibration created anew in the delicate mind some picture that had been forgotten and brought back again painful emotions that were ungovernable. I cannot think but that it is to have a bearing upon the concealed facts of my life; the discovery of which is my greatest object now, as in the past. And I cannot but believe that your advice and discretion will guide me in the treatment and care of this poor being, perhaps to

the extent of affecting a radical change, and leave him a happier and a more rational being.

"Come to me, my friend, at once! I am troubled and perplexed. And do not be offended that I have inclosed exchange for an amount large enough to cover expenses. I am now rich beyond the comprehension of your economical German mind, and surely I may be allowed, in the interests of science, of my ward and myself to spend from the abundant store. I look for you early. In the meantime, I will be careful in my experiments. Come at once! *The mind has an independent memory and you can demonstrate it.*"

Edward knew that there was more on that concluding sentence than in the rest of the letter and exchange combined, and half-believing it, he stated it as a prophecy. He was preparing to retire, when it occurred to him that the strange occupant of the wing-room might need his attention. Something like affection had sprung up in his heart for the unfortunate being who, with chains heavier than his own, had missed the diversion of new scenes, the broadening, the soothing of great landscapes and boundless oceans. A pity moved him to descend and to knock at the door. There was no answer. He entered to find the apartment deserted, but the curtain was drawn from the doorway of the glass-room and he passed in. Upon the bed in the yellow light of the moon lay the slender figure of Gerald, one arm thrown around the disordered hair, the other hanging listless from his side.

He approached and bent above the bed. The face turned

upward there seemed like wax in the oft-broken gloom. The sleeper had not stirred. It was the vibration of chords in harmony, that had moved him. Would it have power again? He hesitated a moment, then returned quickly to the wing-room and secured his instrument. Concealing himself he waited. It was but a moment.

The wind brought the branches of the nearest oleanders against the frail walls, and the play of lightning had become continuous. Then began in earnest the tumult of the vast sound waves as they met in the vapory caverns of the sky. The sleeper tossed restlessly upon his bed; he was stirred by a vague but unknown power; yet something was wanting.

At this moment Edward lifted his violin and, catching the storm note, wove a solemn strain into the diapason of the mighty organ of the sky. And as he played, as if by one motion, the sleeper stood alone in the middle of the room. Again Edward saw that frenzied stare fixed upon vacancy, but there was no furious leap of the agile limbs; by a powerful effort the struggling mind seemed to throw off a weight and the sleeper awoke.

The bow was now suspended; the music had ceased. Gerald rushed to his easel and, standing in a sea of electric flame, outlined with swift strokes a woman's face and form. She was struggling in the grasp of a man and her face was the face of the artist who worked. But such expression! Agony, horror, despair!

The figure of the man was not complete from the waist down; his face was concealed. Between them, as they contended, was a child's coffin in the arms of the woman. Overhead were the bare

outlines of an arch.

The artist hesitated and added behind the group a tree, whose branches seemed to lash the ground. And there memory failed; the crayon fell from his fingers; he stood listless by the canvas. Then with a cry he buried his face in his hands and wept.

As he stood thus, the visitor, awed but triumphant, glided through the door and disappeared in the wing-room. He knew that he had touched a hidden chord; that the picture on the canvas was born under the flashlight of memory! Was it brain? Oh, for the wisdom of Virdow!

Sympathy moved him to return again to the glass-room. It was empty!

CHAPTER VIII
ON THE BACK TRAIL

Edward found himself next day feverish and mentally disturbed; but he felt new life in the morning air. There was a vehicle available; a roomy buggy, after the fashion of those chosen by physicians, with covered tops to keep out the sun, and rubber aprons for the rain. And there was a good reliable horse, that had traveled the city road almost daily for ten years.

He finished his meal and started out. In the yard he found Gerald pale and with the contracted pupils that betrayed his deadly habit. He was taking views with a camera and came forward with breathless interest.

"I am trying some experiments with photographs on the line of our conversation," he said. "If the mind pictures can be revived they must necessarily exist. Do they? The question with me now is, can any living substance retain a photographic impression? You understand, it seems that the brain can receive these impressions through certain senses, but the brain is transient; through a peculiar process of supply and waste it is always coming and going. If it is true that every atom of our physical bodies undergoes a change at least once in seven years, how can the impressions survive? I have here upon my plate the sensitized film of a fish's eyes; I caught it this morning. I must

establish, first, the proposition that a living substance can receive a photographic image; if I can make an impression remain upon this film I have gained a little point – a little one. But the fish should be alive. There are almost insuperable difficulties, you understand! The time will come when a new light will be made, so powerful, penetrating as to illumine solids. Then, perhaps, will the brain be seen at work through the skull; then may its tiny impressions even be found and enlarged; then will the past give up its secrets. And the eye is not the brain." He looked away in perplexity. "If I only had brain substance, brain substance – a living brain!" He hurried away and Edward resumed his journey to the city, sad and thoughtful.

"It was not wise," he said, "it was not wise to start Gerald upon that line of thought. And yet why not as well one fancy as another?" He had no conception of the power of an idea in such a mind as Gerald's.

"You did not mention to me," he said an hour later, sitting in Eldridge's office, "that I would have a ward in charge out at Ilexhurst. You naturally supposed I knew it, did you not?"

"And you did not know it?" Eldridge looked at him in unaffected astonishment.

"Positively not until the day after I reached the house! I had never heard of Gerald Morgan. You can imagine my surprise, when he walked in upon me one night."

"You really astound me; but it is just like old Morgan – pardon me if I smile. Of all eccentrics he was the most

consistent. Yes, you have a charge and a serious one. I am probably the only person in the city who knows something of Gerald, and my information is extremely limited. With an immense capacity for acquiring information, a remarkable memory and a keen analysis, the young man has never developed the slightest capacity for business. He received everything, but applied nothing. I was informed by his uncle, not long since, that there was no science exact or occult into which Gerald had not delved at some time, but his mind seemed content with simply finding out."

"Gerald has been a most prodigious reader, devouring everything," continued the judge, "ancient and modern, within reach, knows literature and politics equally well, and is master of most languages to the point of being able to read them. I suppose his unfortunate habit – of course you know of that – is the obstacle now. For many years now I believe, the young man has not been off the plantation, and only at long intervals was he ever absent from it. Ten or fifteen years ago he used to be seen occasionally in the city in search of a book, an instrument or something his impatience could not wait on."

"Ten or fifteen years ago! You knew him then before he was grown?"

"I have known him ever since his childhood!" An exclamation in spite of him escaped from Edward's lips, but he did not give Eldridge time to reflect upon it.

"Is his existence generally known?" asked he, in some

confusion.

"Oh, well, the public knows of his existence. He is the skeleton in Morgan's closet, that is all."

"And who is he?" asked Edward, looking the lawyer straight into the eyes.

"That," said Eldridge, gravely, "is what I would ask of you." Edward was silent. He shook his head; it was an admission of ignorance, confirmed by his next question.

"Have you no theory, Judge, to account for his existence under such circumstances?"

"Theory? Oh, no! The public and myself have always regarded him simply as a fact. His treatment by John Morgan was one of the few glimpses we got of the old man's rough, kind nature. But his own silence seemed to beg silence, and no one within my knowledge ever spoke with him upon the subject. It would have been very difficult," he added, with a smile, "for he was the most unapproachable man, in certain respects, that I ever met."

"You knew him well? May I ask if ever within your knowledge there was any romance or tragedy in his earlier life?"

"I do not know nor have I ever heard of any tragedy in the life of your relative," said the lawyer, slowly; and then, after a pause: "It is known to men of my age, at least remembered by some, that late in life, or when about forty years old, he conceived a violent attachment for the daughter of a planter in this county and was, it is said, at one time engaged to her. The match was sort of family arrangement and the girl very young. She was finishing

her education at the north and was to have been married upon her return; but she never returned. She ran away to Europe with one of her teachers. The war came on and with it the blockade. No one has ever heard of her since. Her disappearance, her existence, were soon forgotten. I remember her because I, then a young lawyer, had been called occasionally to her father's house, where I met and was greatly impressed by her. But I am probably one of the few who have carried in mind her features. She was a beautiful and lovable young woman, but, without a mother's training she had grown up self-willed and the result was as I have told you." Edward had risen and was walking the floor. He paused before the speaker.

"Judge Eldridge," he said, his voice a little unsteady, "I am going to ask you a question, which I trust you will be free to answer – will answer, and then forget." An expression of uneasiness dwelt on the lawyer's face, but he answered:

"Ask it; if I am free to answer, and can, I will."

"I will ask it straight," said Edward, resolutely: "Have you ever suspected that Gerald Morgan is the son of the young woman who went away?"

Eldridge's reply was simply a grave bow. He did not look up.

"You do not know that to be a fact?"

"I do not."

"What, then, is my duty?"

"To follow the directions left by your relative," said Eldridge, promptly.

Edward reflected a few moments over the lawyer's answer.

"I agree with you, but time may bring changes. May I ask what is your theory of this strange situation – as regards my ward?" He could not bring himself to betray the fact of his own mystery.

"I suppose," said Eldridge, slowly, "that if your guess is correct the adventure of the lady was an unfortunate one, and that, disowned at home, she made John Morgan the guardian of her boy. She, more than likely, is long since dead. It would have been entirely consistent with your uncle's character if, outraged in the beginning, he was forgiving and chivalrous in the end."

"But why was the silence never broken?"

"I do not know that it was never broken. I have nothing to go upon. I believe, however, that it never was. The explanations that suggest themselves to my mind are, first, a pledge of silence exacted from him, and he would have kept such a pledge under any circumstances. Second, a difficulty in proving the legitimacy of the boy. You will understand," he added, "that the matter is entirely suppositious. I would prefer to think that your uncle saw unhappiness for the boy in a change of guardianship, and unhappiness for the grandfather, and left the matter open. You know he died suddenly."

There was silence of a few moments and Eldridge added: "And yet it does seem that he would have left the old man something to settle the doubt which must have rested upon his mind; it is an awful thing to lose a daughter from sight and live out one's life in ignorance of her fate." And then, as Edward made

no reply, "you found nothing whatever to explain the matter?"

"Nothing! In the desk, to which his note directed me, I found only a short letter of directions; one of which was that I should arrange with you to provide for Gerald's future in case of my death. The desk contained nothing else except some manuscripts – fragmentary narratives and descriptions, they seemed." Eldridge smiled.

"His one weakness," he said. "Years ago John Morgan became impressed with the idea that he was fitted for literary work and began to write short stories for magazines, under *nom de plume*. I was the only person who shared his secret and together we told many a good story of bench, bar and practice. Neither of us had much invention and our career – you see I claim a share – our career was limited to actual occurrences. When our stock of ammunition was used up we were bankrupt. But it was a success while it lasted. Mr. Morgan had a rapid, vivid style of presenting scenes; his stories were full of action and dramatic situations and made quite a hit. I did not know he had any writings left over. He used to say, though, as I remember now, speaking in the serio-comic way he often affected, that the great American novel, so long expected, lay in his desk in fragments. You have probably gotten among these.

"And by the way," continued the judge, impressively, "he was not far wrong in his estimate of the literary possibilities of this section. The peculiar institutions of the south, its wealth, its princely planters, and through all the tangle of love, romance,

tragedy and family secrets. And what a background! The war, the freed slaves, the old regime – courtly, unchanged, impractical and helpless. Turgeneff wrote under such a situation in Russia, and called his powerful novel 'Fathers and Sons.' Mr. Morgan used to say that he was going to call his 'Sons and Fathers.' Hold to his fragments; he was a close observer, and if you have literary aspirations they will be suggestive." Edward shook his head.

"I have none, but I see the force of your outline. Now about Gerald; I trust you will think over the matter and let me know what your judgment suggests. I promised Mr. Montjoy to drop in at the club. I will say good-morning."

"No," said Eldridge, "it is my lunch hour and I will go with you."

Together they went to a business club and Edward was presented to a group of elderly men who were discussing politics over their glasses. Among them was Col. Montjoy, in town for a day, several capitalists, a planter or two, lawyers and physicians. They regarded the newcomer with interest and received him with perfect courtesy. "A grand man your relative was, Mr. Morgan, a grand man; perfect type, sir, of the southern gentleman! The community, sir, has met with an irreparable loss. I trust you will make your home here, sir. We need good men, sir; strong, brainy, energetic men, sir."

So said the central figure, Gen. Albert Evan.

"Montjoy, you remember cousin Sam Pope of the Fire-Eaters – died in the ditch at Marye's Heights near Cobb? Perfect

likeness of Mr. Morgan here; same face same figure – pardon the personal allusion, Mr. Morgan, but your prototype was the bravest of the brave. You do each other honor in the resemblance, sir! Waiter, fill these glasses! Gentlemen," cried the general, "we will drink to the health of our young friend and the memory of Sam Pope. God bless them both."

Such was Edward's novel reception, and he would not have been human had he not flushed with pleasure. The conversation ran back gradually to its original channel.

"We have been congratulating Col. Montjoy, Mr. Morgan," said one of the party in explanation to Morgan, "upon the announcement of his candidacy for congress."

"Ah," said the latter, promptly bowing to the old gentleman, "let me express the hope that the result will be such as will enable me to congratulate the country. I stand ready, colonel, to lend my aid as far as possible, but I am hampered somewhat by not knowing my own politics yet. Are you on the Democratic or Republican ticket, colonel?"

This astonishing question silenced the conversation instantly and drew every eye upon him. But recovering from his shock, Col. Montjoy smiled amiably, and said:

"There is but one party in this state, sir – the Democratic. I am a candidate for nomination, but nomination is election always with us." Then to the others present he added: "Mr. Morgan has lived abroad since he came of age – I am right, am I not, Mr. Morgan?"

"Quite so. And I may add," continued Edward, who was painfully conscious of having made a serious blunder, "that I have never lived in the south and know nothing of state politics." This would have been sufficient, but unfortunately Edward did not realize it. "I know, however, that you have here a great problem and that the world is watching to see how you will handle the race question. I wish you success; the negro has my sympathy and I think that much can be safely allowed him in the settlement."

He remembered always thereafter the silence that followed this earnest remark, and he had cause to remember it. He had touched the old south in its rawest point and he was too new a citizen. Eldridge joined him in the walk back, but Edward let him talk for both. The direction of his thoughts was indicated in the question he asked at parting.

"Judge Eldridge, did you purposely withhold the girl's name – my uncle's fiancee? If so, I will not ask it, but – "

"No, not purposely, but we handle names reluctantly in this country. She was Marion Evan, and you but recently met her father."

CHAPTER IX
THE TRAGEDY IN THE STORM

Edward returned to Ilexhurst that evening conscious of a mental uneasiness. He could not account for it except upon the hypothesis of unusual excitement. His mind had simply failed to react. And yet to his sensitive nature there was something more. Was it the conversation with Eldridge and the sudden dissipation of his error concerning Gerald, or did it date to the meeting in the club? There was a discord somewhere. He became conscious after awhile that he had failed to harmonize with his new acquaintances and that among these was Col. Montjoy. He seemed to feel an ache as though a cold wind blew upon his heart. If he had not made that unfortunate remark about the negro! He acquitted himself very readily, but he could not forget that terrible silence. "I have great sympathy for the negro," he had said. What he meant was that, secure in her power and intelligence, her courage and advancement, the south could safely concede much to the lower class. That is what he felt and believed, but he had not said it that way. He would say it to-morrow to Col. Montjoy and explain. Relief followed the resolution.

And then, sitting in the little room, which began to exert a strange power over him, he reviewed in mind the strange history

of the people whose lives had begun to touch his. The man downstairs, sleeping off the effects of the drug, taken to dull a feverish brain that had all day struggled with new problems; what a life his was! Educated beyond the scope of any single university, Eldridge had said, and yet a child, less than a child! What romance, what tragedies behind those restless eyes! And sleeping down yonder by the river in that eternal silence of the city of the dead, the old lawyer, a mystery living, a mystery dead! What a depth of love must have stirred the bosom of the man to endure in silence for so many years for the sake of a fickle girl! What forgiveness! Or was it revenge? This idea flashed upon Edward with the suddenness of an inspiration. Revenge! What a revenge! And the woman, was she living or dead? And if living, were her eyes to watch him, Edward Morgan, and his conduct? Where was the father and why was the grandfather ignorant or silent? Then he turned to his own problem. That was an old story. As he sat dreaming over these things his eyes fell upon the fragmentary manuscripts, and almost idly he began to read the briefs upon them.

One was inscribed, "The Storm," and it seemed to be the bulkiest. Opening it he began to read; before he knew it he was interested. The chapter read:

"Not a zephyr stirred the expectant elms. They lifted their arms against the starlit sky in shadowy tracery, and motionless as a forest of coral in the tideless depths of a southern sea.

"The cloud still rose.

"It was a cloud indeed. It stretched across the west, far into north and south, its base lost in the shadow, its upper line defined and advancing swiftly, surely, flanking the city and shutting out the stars with its mighty wings. Far down the west the lightning began to tear the mass, but still the spell of silence remained. When this strange hush is combined with terrific action, when the vast forces are so swift as to outrun sound, then, indeed, does the chill of fear leap forth.

"So came on the cloud. Now the city was half surrounded, its walls scaled. Half the stars were gone. Some of the flying battalions had even rushed past!

"But the elms stood changeless, immovable, asleep!

"Suddenly one vivid, crackling, tearing, defending flash of intensest light split the gloom and the thunder leaped into the city! It awoke then! Every foundation trembled! Every tree dipped furiously. The winds burst in. What a tumult! They rushed down the parallel streets and alleys, these barbarians; they came by the intersecting ways! They fought each other frantically for the spoils of the city, struggling upward in equal conflict, carrying dust and leaves and debris. They were sucked down by the hollow squares, they wept and mourned, they sobbed about doorways, they sung and cheered among the chimneys and the trembling vanes. They twisted away great tree limbs and hurled them far out into the spaces which the lightning hollowed in the night! They drove every inhabitant indoors and tugged frantically at the city's defenses! They tore off shutters and lashed the

housetops with the poor trees!

"The focus of the battle was the cathedral! It was the citadel! Here was wrath and frenzy and despair! The winds swept around and upward, with measureless force, and at times seemed to lift the great pile from its foundations. But it was the lashing trees that deceived the eye; it stood immovable, proud, strong, while the evil ones hurled their maledictions and screamed defiance at the very door of God's own heart.

"In vain. In a far up niche stood a weather-beaten saint – the warden. The hand of God upheld him and kept the citadel while unseen forces swung the great bell to voice his faith and trust amid the gloom!

"Then came the deluge, huge drops, bullets almost, in fierceness, shivering each other until the street-lamps seemed set in driving fog through which the silvered missiles flashed horizontally – a storm traveling within a storm.

"But when the tempest weeps, its heart is gone. Hark! 'Tis the voice of the great organ; how grand, how noble, how triumphant! One burst of melody louder than the rest breaks through the storm and mingles with the thunder's roar.

"Look! A woman! She has come, whence God alone may know! She totters toward the cathedral; a step more and she is safe, but it is never taken! One other frightened life has sought the sanctuary. In the grasp of the tempest it has traveled with wide-spread wings; a great white sea bird, like a soul astray in the depths of passion. It falls into the eddy, struggles wearily toward

the lights, whirls about the woman's head and sinks, gasping, dying at her feet. The God-pity rises within her, triumphing over fear and mortal anguish. She stands motionless a moment; she does not take the wanderer to her bosom, she cannot! The winds have stripped the cover from the burden in her arms! It is a child's coffin, pressed against her bosom. The moment of safety is gone! In the next a man, the seeming incarnation of the storm itself, springs upon her, tears the burden from her and disappears like a shadow within a shadow!

"Within the cathedral they are celebrating the birth of Christ, without, the elements repeat the scene when the veil of the temple was rended.

"The storm had passed. The lightning still blazed vividly, but silently now, and at each flash the scene stood forth an instant as though some mighty artist was making pictures with magnesium. A tall woman, who had crouched, as one under the influence of an overpowering terror near the inner door, now crept to the outer, beneath the arch, and looked fearfully about. She went down the few steps to the pavement. Suddenly in the transient light a face looked up into hers, from her feet; a face that seemed not human. The features were convulsed, the eyes set. With a low cry the woman slipped her arms under the figure on the pavement, lifted it as though it were that of a child and disappeared in the night. The face that had looked up was as white as the lily at noon; the face bent in pity above it was dark as the leaves of that lily scattered upon the sod."

Edward read this and smiled, as he laid it aside, and continued with the other papers. They were brief sketches and memoranda of chapters; sometimes a single sentence upon a page, just as his friend De Maupassant used to jot them down one memorable summer when they had lingered together along the Riviera, but they had no connection with "The Storm" and the characters therein suggested. If they belonged to the same narrative the connections were gone.

Wearied at last he took up his violin and began to play. It is said that improvisers cannot but run back to the music they have written. "Calvary" was his masterpiece and soon he found himself lost in its harmonies. Then by easy steps there rose in memory, as he played, the storm and Gerald's sketch. He paused abruptly and sat with his bow idle upon the strings, for in his mind a link had formed between that sketch and the chapter he had just read. He had felt the story was true when he read it. The lawyer had said John Morgan wrote from life. Here was the first act of a drama in the life of a child, and the last, perhaps, in the life of a woman.

And that child under the influence of music had felt the storm scene flash upon his memory and had drawn it. The child was Gerald Morgan.

Edward laid aside the violin for a moment, went into the front room, threw open the shutters and loosened his cravat. Something seemed to suffocate him, as he struggled against the admission of this irresistible conclusion. Overwhelmed with the

significance of the discovery, he exclaimed aloud: "It was an inherited memory."

But if the boy had been born under the circumstances set forth in the sketch, who was the man, and why should he have assaulted the woman who bore the child's coffin? And what was she doing abroad under such circumstances? The man and the woman's object was hidden perhaps forever. But not so the woman; the artist had given her features, and as for the other woman, the author had said she was dark. There was in Gerald's mind picture no dark woman; only the girl with the coffin, the arch above and the faint outlines of bending trees!

CHAPTER X
"GOD PITY ME! GOD PITY ME!"

Edward was sitting thus lost in the contemplation of the circumstances surrounding him, when by that subtle sense as yet not analyzed he felt the presence of another person in the room, and looked over his shoulder. Gerald was advancing toward him smiling mysteriously. Edward noticed his burning eyes and saw intense mental excitement gleaming beyond. The man's mood was different from any he had before revealed.

"So you have been out among the friends of your family," he said, with his queer smile. "How did you like them?" Edward was distinctly offended by the supercilious manner and impertinent question, but he remembered his ward's condition and resentment passed from him.

"Pleasant people, Gerald, but I am not gifted with the faculty of making friends easily. How come on your experiments?"

The visitor's expression changed. He looked about him guardedly. "They advance," he replied, in a whisper; "they advance!"

Whatever his motive for entering that room – a room unfamiliar to him, for his restless eyes had searched it over and over in the few minutes he had been in it – was forgotten in the enthusiasm of the scientist. "I have mapped out a course and am

working toward it," he said; and then presently: "You remember that pictures can now be transmitted by electricity across great stretches of space and flashed upon a disc? So goes the scene from the convex surface of the eye along a thread-like nerve, so flashed the picture in the brain. But somewhere there it remains. How to prove it, to prove it, that is the question! Oh, for a brain, a brain to dissect!" He glared at Edward, who shuddered under the wildness of the eyes bent upon him. "But time enough for that; I must first ascertain if a picture can be imprinted upon any living substance by light, and remain. This I can do in another way."

"How?" Edward was fascinated.

"It is a great idea. The fish's eye will not do; it is itself a camera and the protecting film is impression-proof. It lacks the gelatine surface, but over some fish is spread the real gelatine – in fact, the very stuff that sensitive plates rely upon. In our lake is a great bass, that swims deep. I have caught them weighing ten and twelve pounds. They are pale, greenish white until exposed to the light, when they darken. If the combined action of the light and air did not actually destroy this gelatine, they would turn black. The back, which daily receives the downward ray direct, is as are the backs of most fishes, dark; it is a spoiled plate. But not so the sides. It is upon this fish I am preparing to make pictures."

"But how?" Gerald smiled and shook his head.

"Wait. It is too important to talk about in advance."

Edward regarded him long and thoughtfully and felt rising within him a greater sympathy. It was pitiful that such a mind

should die in the embrace of a mere drug, dragged down to destruction by a habit. "Beyond the scope of any single university," but not beyond the slavery of a weed.

"I have been thinking, Gerald," he said, finally, fixing a steady gaze upon the restless eyes of his visitor, "that the day is near at hand when you must bring to your rescue the power of a great will."

Gerald listened, grew pale and remained silent. Presently he turned to the speaker.

"You know, then. Tell me what to do."

"You must cease the use of morphine and opium."

Gerald drew a deep breath and smiled good-naturedly.

"Oh, that is it," he said; "some one has told you that I am a victim of morphine and opium. Well, what would you think if I should tell you he is simply mistaken?"

His face was frank and unclouded. Edward gazed upon him, incredulous. After a moment's pause, during which Gerald enjoyed his astonishment, he continued:

"I was once a victim; there is no doubt of that; but now I am cured. It was a frightful struggle. A man who has not experienced it or witnessed it can form no conception of what it means to break away from habitual use of opium. Some day you may need it and my experience will help you. I began by cutting my customary allowance for a day in half, and day after day, week after week, I kept cutting it in half until the time came when I could not divide it with a razor. Would you believe it, the habit

was as strong in the end as the beginning? I lay awake and thought of that little speck by the hours; I tossed and cried myself to sleep over it! I slept and wept myself awake. The only remedy for this and all habits is a mental victory. I made the fight – I won!

"I can never forget that day," and he smiled as he said it; "the day I found it impossible to divide the speck of opium; a breath would have blown it away, but I would have murdered the man who breathed upon it. I swallowed it; the touch of that atom is yet upon my tongue; I swallowed it and slept like a child; and then came the waking! For days I was a maniac – but it passed.

"I grew into a new life – a beautiful, peaceful world. It had been around me all the time but I had forgotten how it looked; a blissful world! I was cured.

"Years have passed since that day, and no taste of the hateful drug has ever been upon my tongue. Not for all the gold in the universe, not for any secrets of science, not for a look back into the face of my mother," he cried, hoarsely, rising to his feet; "not for a smile from heaven would I lay hands upon that fiend again!"

He closed abruptly, his hand trembling, the perspiration beading his brow. His eyes fell and the woman Rita stood before them, a look of ineffable sadness and tenderness upon her face.

"Will you retire now, Master Gerald?" she said, gently. Without a word he turned and left the room. She was about to follow when Edward, excited and touched by the scene he had witnessed and full of discoveries, stopped her with an imperious gesture.

For a moment he paced the room. Rita was motionless, awaiting with evident nervousness his pleasure. He came and stood before her, and, looking her steadily in the face, said, abruptly:

"Woman, what is the name of that young man, and what is mine?"

She drew back quickly and her lips parted in a gasp.

"My God!" he heard her whisper.

"I demand an answer! You carry the secret of one of us – probably both. Which is the son of Marion Evans?"

She sank upon her knees and hid her face in her apron.

It was all true, then. Edward felt as though he himself would sink down beside her if the silence continued.

"Say it," he said, hoarsely; "say it!"

"As God is my judge," she answered, faintly, "I do not know."

"One is?"

"One is."

"And the other – who is he?"

"Mine." The answer was like a whisper from the pines wafted in through the open window. It was loud enough. Edward caught the chair for support. The world reeled about him. He suffocated.

Rita still knelt with covered head, but her trembling form betrayed the presence of the long-restrained emotions. He walked unsteadily to the mantel, and, drawing the cover from the little picture, went to the mirror and placed it again by his face. At length he said in despair:

"God pity me! God pity me!"

The woman arose then and took the picture and gazed long and earnestly upon it. A sob burst from her lips. Lifting it again to the level of the man's face, she looked from one to the other.

"Enough!" he said, reading it aright.

Despair had settled over his own face. She handed back the little likeness, and, clasping her hands, stood in simple dignity awaiting his will. He noticed then, as he studied her countenance closely, the lines of suffering there; the infallible record that some faces carry, which, whether it stands for remorse, for patience, for pure, unbroken sorrow, is always a consecration.

"Master, it must have come some time," she said, at length, "but I have hoped it would not be through me." Her voice was just audible.

"Be seated," said Morgan. "If your story is true, and it may be so, you should not stand." He turned away from her and walked to the window; she was seeking for an opening to begin her story. He began for her:

"You crouched in a church door to avoid the storm; a woman seeking shelter there appeared just outside. She was attacked by a man and fell to the ground unconscious; you carried her off in your arms; her child was born soon after, and what then?"

Amazed she stared at him a moment in silence.

"And mine was born! The fright, the horror, the sickness! It was a terrible dream; a terrible dream! But a month afterward, I was here alone with two babies at my breast and the mother was

gone. God help me, and help her! But in that time Master John says I lost the memory of my child! Master Gerald I claimed, but his face was the face of Miss Marion, and he was white and delicate like her. And you, sir, were dark. And then I had never been a slave; John Morgan's father gave me my liberty when I was born. I lived with him until my marriage, then after my husband's death, which was just before this storm, they brought me here and I waited. She never came back. Master Gerald was sickly always and we kept him, but they sent you away. Master John thought it was best. And the years have passed quickly."

"And General Evan – did he never know?"

"No, sir; I would not let them take Master Gerald, because I believed he was my child; and Master John, I suppose, would not believe in you. The families are proud; we let things rest as they were, thinking Miss Marion would come back some day. But she will not come now; she will not come!"

The miserable secret was out. After a long silence Edward lifted his head and said with deep emotion: "Then, in your opinion, I am your son?" She looked at him sadly and nodded.

"And in the opinion of John Morgan, Gerald is the son of Marion Evans?" She bowed.

"We have let it stand that way. But you should never have known! I do not think you were ever to have known." The painful silence that followed was broken by his question:

"Gerald's real name?"

"I do not know! I do not know! All that I do know I have told

you!"

"And the child's coffin?" She pressed her hand to her forehead.

"It was a dream; I do not know!"

He gazed upon her with profound emotion and pity.

"You must be tired," he said, gently. "Think no more of these troubles to-night."

She turned and went away. He followed to the head of the stairs and waited until he heard her step in the hall below.

"Good-night," he had said, gravely. And from the shadowy depths below came back a faint, mournful echo of the word.

When Edward returned to the room he sat by the window and buried his face upon his arm. Hour after hour passed; the outer world slept. Had he been of the south, reared there and a sharer in its traditions, the secret would have died with him that night and its passing would have been signaled by a single pistol shot. But he was not of the south, in experience, association or education.

It was in the hush of midnight that he rose from his seat, took the picture and descended the steps. The wing-room was never locked; he entered. Through the drawn curtains of the glass-room he saw the form of Gerald lying in the moonlight upon his narrow bed. Placing the picture beside the still, white face of the sleeper, he was shocked by the likeness. One glance was enough. He went back to his window again.

One, two, three, four o'clock from the distant church steeple.

How the solemn numbers have tolled above the sorrow-folds

of the human heart and echoed in the dewless valleys of the mind, the depths to which we sink when hope is gone!

But with the dawn what shadows flee!

So came the dawn at last; the pale, tremulous glimmer on the eastern hills, the white light, the rosy flush and then in the splendor of fading mists the giant sun rolled up the sky.

A man stood pale and weary before the open window at Ilexhurst. "The odds are against me," he said, grimly, "but I feel a power within me stronger than evidence. I will match it against the word of this woman, though every circumstance strengthened that word. The voice of the Caucasian, not the voice of Ethiopia, speaks within me! The woman does not believe herself; the mother's instinct has been baffled, but not destroyed!"

And yet again, the patrician bearing, the aristocrat! Such was Gerald.

"We shall see," he said, between his teeth. "Wait until Virdow comes!"

Nevertheless, when, not having slept, he arose late in the day, he was almost overwhelmed with the memory of the revelation made to him, and the effect it must have upon his future.

At that moment there came into his mind the face of Mary.

CHAPTER XI
IN THE CRIMSON OF SUNSET

Edward left the house without any definite idea of how he would carry on the search for the truth of his own history, but his determination was complete. He did not enter the dining-room, but called for his buggy and drove direct to the city. He wished to see neither Rita nor Gerald until the tumult within him had been stilled. His mind was yet in a whirl when without previous resolution he turned his horse in the direction of "The Hall" and let it choose its gait. The sun was low when he drew up before the white-columned house and entered the yard. Mary stood in the doorway and smiled a welcome, but as he approached she looked into his face in alarm.

"You have been ill?" she said, with quick sympathy.

"Do I look it?" he asked; "I have not slept well. Perhaps that shows upon me. It is rather dreary work this getting acquainted." He tried to deceive her with a smile.

"How ungallant!" she exclaimed, "to say that to me, and so soon after we have become acquainted."

"We are old acquaintances, Miss Montjoy," he replied with more earnestness than the occasion justified. "I knew you in Paris, in Rome, even in India – I have known you always." She blushed slightly and turned her face away as a lady appeared

leading a little girl.

"Here is Mr. Morgan, Annie; you met him for a moment only, I believe."

The newcomer extended her hand languidly.

"Any one whom Norton is so enthusiastic about," she said, without warmth, "must be worth meeting a second time."

Her small eyes rested upon the visitor an instant. Stunned as he had been by large misfortunes, he felt again the unpleasant impression of their first meeting. Whether it was the manner, the tone of voice, the glance or languid hand that slipped limply from his own, or all combined, he did not know; he did not care much at that time. The young woman placed the freed hand over the mouth of the child begging for a biscuit, and without looking down said:

"Mary, get this brat a biscuit, please. She will drive me distracted." Mary stooped and the Duchess leaped into her arms, happy at once. Edward followed them with his eyes until they reached the end of the porch and Mary turned a moment to receive additional directions from the young mother. He knew, then, where he had first seen her. She was a little madonna in a roadside shrine in Sicily, distinct and different from all the madonnas of his acquaintance, in that she seemed to have stepped up direct from among the people who knelt there; a motherly little woman in touch with every home nestling in those hills. The young mother by him was watching him with curiosity.

"I have to thank you for a beautiful picture," he said.

"You are an artist, I suppose?"

"Yes; a dilletante. But the picture of a woman with her child in her arms appeals to most men; to none more than those who never knew a mother nor had a home." He stopped suddenly, the blood rushed to his face and brain, and he came near staggering. He had forgotten for the moment.

He recovered, to find the keen eyes of the woman studying him intently. Did she know, did she suspect? How this question would recur to him in all the years! He turned from her, pale and angry. Fortunately, Mary returned at this moment, the little one contentedly munching upon its biscuit. The elder Mrs. Montjoy welcomed him with her motherly way, inquiring closely into his arrangements for comfort out at Ilexhurst. Who was caring for him? Rita! Well, that was fortunate; Rita was a good cook and good housekeeper, and a good nurse. He affected a careless interest and she continued:

"Yes, Rita lived for years near here. She was a free woman and as a professional nurse accumulated quite a sum of money, and then her husband dying, John Morgan had taken her to his house to look after a young relative who had been left to his care. What has become of this young person?" she asked. "I have not heard of him for many years."

"He is still there," said Edward, briefly.

And then, as they were silent, he continued: "This woman Rita had a husband; how did they manage in old times? Was he free also? You see, since I have become a citizen your institutions

have a deal of interest for me. It must have been inconvenient to be free and have someone else owning the husband."

He was not satisfied with the effort; he could not restrain an inclination to look toward the younger Mrs. Montjoy. She was leaning back in her chair, with eyes half-closed, and smiling upon him. He could have strangled her cheerfully. The elder lady's voice recalled him.

"Her husband was free also; that is, it was thought that she had bought him," and she smiled over the idea.

A slanting sunbeam came through the window; they were now in the sitting-room and Mary quickly adjusted the shade to shield her mother's face.

"Mamma is still having trouble with her eyes," she said; "we cannot afford to let her strain the sound one."

"My eyes do pain me a great deal," the elder Mrs. Montjoy said. "Did you ever have neuralgia, Mr. Morgan? Sometimes I think it is neuralgia. I must have Dr. Campbell down to look at my eyes. I am afraid – " she did not complete the sentence, but the quick sympathy of the man helped him to read her silence aright. Mary caught her breath nervously.

"Mary, take me to my room; I think I will lie down until tea. Mr. Morgan will be glad to walk some, I am sure; take him down to the mill." She gave that gentleman her hand again; a hand that seemed to him eloquent with gentleness. "Good-night, if I do not see you again," she said. "I do not go to the table now on account of the lamp." He felt a lump in his throat and an

almost irresistible desire to throw himself upon her sympathy. She would understand. But the next instant the idea of such a thing filled him with horror. It would banish him forever from the portals of that proud home.

And ought he not to banish himself? He trembled over the mental question. No! His courage returned. There had been some horrible mistake! Not until the light of day shone on the indisputable fact, not until proof irresistible had said: "You are base-born! Depart!" When that hour came he would depart! He saw Mary waiting for him at the door; the young mother was still watching him, he thought. He bowed and strode from the room.

"What is it?" said the girl, quickly; "you seem excited." She was already learning to read him.

"Do I? Well, let me see; I am not accustomed to ladies' society," he said, lightly; "so much beauty and graciousness have overwhelmed me." He was outside now and the fresh breeze steadied him instantly.

There was a sun-setting before them that lent a glow to the girl's face and a new light to her eyes. He saw it there first and then in the skies. Across a gentle slope of land that came down from a mile away on the opposite side into their valley the sun had gone behind a shower. Out on one side a fiery cloud floated like a ship afire, and behind it were the lilac highlands of the sky. The scene brought with it a strange solemnity. It held the last breath of the dying day.

The man and girl stood silent for a moment, contemplating

the wonderful vision. She looked into his face presently to find him sadly and intently watching her. Wondering, she led the way downhill to where a little boat lay with its bow upon the grassy sward which ran into the water. Taking one seat, she motioned him to the other.

"We have given you a Venetian water-color sunset," she said, smiling away her embarrassment, "and now for a gondola ride." Lightly and skillfully plying the paddle the little craft glided out upon the lake, and presently, poising the blade she said, gayly:

"Look down into the reflection, and then look up! Tell me, do you float upon the lake or in the cloudy regions of heaven?" He followed her directions. Then, looking steadily at her, he said, gently:

"In heaven!" She bent over the boat side until her face was concealed, letting her hand cool in the crimson water.

"Mr. Morgan," she said after awhile, looking up from under her lashes, "are you a very earnest man? I do not think I know just how to take you. I am afraid I am too matter-of-fact."

He was feverish and still weighed down by his terrible memory. "I am earnest now, whatever I may have been," he said, softly, "and believe me, Miss Montjoy, something tells me that I will never be less than earnest with you."

She did not reply at once, but looked off into the cloudlands.

"You have traveled much?" she said at length, to break the awkward silence.

"I suppose so. I have never had what I could call a home and

I have moved about a great deal. Men of my acquaintance," he continued, musingly, "have been ambitious in every line; I have watched them in wonder. Most of them sacrifice what would have been my greatest pleasure to possess – mother and sister and home. I cannot understand that phase of life; I suppose I never will."

"Then you have never known a mother?"

"Never." There was something in his voice that touched her deeply.

"To miss a mother's affection," she said, with a holy light in her brown eyes, "is to miss the greatest gift heaven can bestow here. I suppose a wife somehow takes a mother's place, finally, with every man, but she cannot fill it. No woman that ever lived can fill my mother's place."

Loyal little Mary! He fancied that as she thought upon her own remark her sensitive lips curved slightly. His mind reverted to the sinister face that they had left in the parlor.

"Your mother!" he exclaimed, fervently; "would to heaven I had such a mother!" He paused, overcome with emotion. She looked upon him with swimming eyes.

"You must come often, then," she said, softly, "and be much with us. I will share her with you. Poor mamma! I am afraid – I am afraid for her!" She covered her face with her hands suddenly and bowed her head.

"Is she ill, so ill as all that?" he asked, greatly concerned.

"Oh, no! That is, her eyesight is failing; she does not realize

it, but Dr. Campbell has warned us to be careful."

"What is the trouble?" He was now deeply distressed.

"Glaucoma. The little nerve that leads from the cornea to the brain finally dies away; there is no connection, and then – " she could not conclude the sentence.

Edward had never before been brought within the influence of such a circle. Her words thrilled him beyond expression. He waited a little while and said:

"I cannot tell you how much my short experience here has been to me. The little touch of motherly interest, of home, has brought me more genuine pleasure than I thought the world held for me. You said just now that you would share the dear little mamma with me. I accept the generous offer. And now you must share the care of the little mamma with me. Do not be offended, but I know that the war has upset your revenues here in the south, and that the new order of business has not reached a paying basis. By no act of mine I am independent; I have few responsibilities. Why may not I, why may not you and I take the little mamma to Paris and let the best skill in the world be invoked to save her from sorrow?" He, too, would not, after her failure, say "blindness."

She looked at him through tears that threatened to get beyond control, afraid to trust her voice.

"You have not answered me," he said, gently. She shook her head.

"I cannot. I can never answer you as I would. But it cannot be,

it cannot be! If that course were necessary, we would have gone long ago, for, while we are poor, Norton could have arranged it – he can can arrange anything. But Dr. Campbell, you know, is famous for his skill. He has even been called to Europe in consultation. He says there is no cure, but care of the general health may avert the blow all her life. And so we watch and wait."

"Still," he urged, "there may be a mistake. And the sea voyage – "

She shook her head. "You are very, very kind, but it cannot be."

It flashed over Edward then what that journey would have been. He, with that sweet-faced girl, the little madonna of his memory, and the patient mother! In his mind came back all the old familiar places; by his side stood this girl, her hand upon his arm, her eyes upturned to his.

And why not! A thrill ran through his heart: he could take his wife and her mother to Paris! He started violently and leaned forward in the boat, his glowing face turned full upon her, with an expression in it that startled her.

Then from it the color died away; a ghastly look overspread it. He murmured aloud:

"God be merciful! It cannot be." She smiled pitifully.

"No," she said, "it cannot be. But God is merciful. We trust Him. He will order all things for the best!" Seeing his agitation she continued: "Don't let it distress you so, Mr. Morgan. It may all come out happily. See, the skies are quite clear now; the clouds

all gone! I take it as a happy augury!"

Ashamed to profit by her reading of his feelings, he made a desperate effort to respond to her new mood. She saw the struggle and aided him. But in that hour the heart of Mary Montjoy went out for all eternity to the man before her. Change, disaster, calumny, misfortune, would never shake her faith and belief in him. He had lost in the struggle of the preceding night, but here he had won that which death only could end, and perhaps not death.

Slowly they ascended the hill together, both silent and thoughtful. He took her little hand to help her up the terraces, and, forgetting, held it until, at the gate, she suddenly withdrew it in confusion and gazed at him with startled eyes.

The tall, soldierly form of the colonel, her father, stood at the top of the steps.

"See," said Edward, to relieve her confusion, "one of the old knights guarding the castle!"

And then she called out, gayly:

"Sir knight, I bring you a prisoner." The old gentleman laughed and entered into the pleasantry.

"Well, he might have surrendered to a less fair captor! Enter, prisoner, and proclaim your colors," Edward started, but recovered, and, looking up boldly, said:

"An honorable knight errant, but unknown until his vow is fulfilled." They both applauded and the supper bell rang.

CHAPTER XII
THE OLD SOUTH VERSUS THE NEW

Edward had intended returning to Ilexhurst after tea, but every one inveighed against the announcement. Nonsense! The roads were bad, a storm was possible, the way unfamiliar to him! John, the stable boy, had reported a shoe lost from the horse! And besides, Norton would come out and be disappointed at having missed him!

And why go? Was the room upstairs not comfortable? He should have another! Was the breakfast hour too early? His breakfast should be sent to his room!

Edward was in confusion. It was his first collision with the genuine, unanswerable southern hospitality that survives the wreck of all things. He hesitated and explained and explaining yielded.

Supper over, the two gentlemen sat upon the veranda, a cool breeze wandering in from the western rain area and rendering the evening comfortable. Mary brought a great jar of delicious tobacco, home raised, and a dozen corn-cob pipes, and was soon happy in their evident comfort. As she held the lighter over Edward's pipe he ventured one glance upward into her face, and was rewarded with a rare, mysterious smile. It was a picture that

clung to him for many years; the girlish face and tender brown eyes in the yellow glare of the flame, the little hand lifted in his service. It was the last view of her that night, for the southern girl, out of the cities, is an early retirer.

"The situation is somewhat strained," said the colonel; they had reached politics; "there is a younger set coming on who seem to desire only to destroy the old order of things. They have had the 'new south' dinged into their ears until they had come to believe that the old south holds nothing worth retaining. They are full of railroad schemes to rob the people and make highways for tramps; of new towns and booms, of colonization schemes, to bring paupers into the state and inject the socialistic element of which the north and west are heartily tired. They want to do away with cotton and plant the land in peaches, plums, grapes," here he laughed softly, "and they want to give the nigger a wheeled plow to ride on. It looks as if the whole newspaper fraternity have gone crazy upon what they call intensive and diversified farming. Not one of them has ever told me what there is besides cotton that can be planted and will sell at all times upon the market and pay labor and store accounts in the fall.

"And now they have started in this country the 'no-fence' idea and are about to destroy our cattle ranges," continued the colonel, excitedly. "In addition to these, the farmers have some of them been led off into a 'populist' scheme, which in its last analysis means that the government shall destroy corporations and pension farmers. In national politics we have, besides, the

silver question and the tariff, and a large element in the state is ready for republicanism!"

"That is the party of the north, I believe," said Edward.

"Yes, the party that freed the negro and placed the ballot in his hands. We are so situated here that practically our whole issue is 'white against black.' We cannot afford to split on any question. We are obliged to keep the south solid even at the expense of development and prosperity. The south holds the Saxon blood in trust. Regardless of law, of constitution, of both combined, we say it is her duty to keep the blood of the race pure and uncontaminated. I am not prepared to say that it has been done with entire success; two races cannot exist side by side distinct. But the Spaniards kept their blue blood through centuries!

"The southern families will always be pure in this respect; they are tenderly guarded," the colonel went on. "Other sections are in danger. The white negro goes away or is sent away; he is unknown; he is changed and finds a foothold somewhere. Then some day a family finds in its folds a child with a dark streak down its spine – have you dropped your pipe? The cobs really furnish our best smokers, but they are hard to manage. Try another – and it was known that somewhere back in the past an African taint has crept in."

"You astound me," said Edward, huskily; "is that an infallible sign?"

"Infallible, or, rather, indisputable if it exists. But its existence under all circumstances is not assured."

"And what, Mr. Montjoy, is the issue between you and Mr. Swearingen – I understand that is his name – your opponent in the campaign for nomination?"

"Well, it is hard to say. He has been in congress several terms and thinks now he sees a change of sentiment. He has made bids for the younger and dissatisfied vote. I think you may call it the old south versus the new – and I stand for the old south."

"Where does your campaign open? I was in England once during a political campaign, about my only experience, if you except one or two incipient riots in Paris, and I would be glad to see a campaign, in Georgia."

"We open in Bingham. I am to speak there day after to-morrow and will be pleased to have you go with us. A little party will proceed by private conveyance from here – and Norton is probably detained in town to-night by this matter. The county convention meets that day and it has been agreed that Swearingen and I shall speak in the morning. The convention will assemble at noon and make a nomination. In most counties primary elections are held."

"I shall probably not be able to go, but this county will afford me the opportunity I desire. By the way, colonel, your friends will have many expenses in this campaign, will they not? I trust you will number me among them and not hesitate to call upon me for my share of the necessary fund. I am a stranger, so to speak, but I represent John Morgan until I can get my political bearings accurately adjusted." The colonel was charmed.

"Spoken like John himself!" he said. "We are proud, sir, to claim you as one of us. As to the expenses, unfortunately, we have to rely on our friends. But for the war, I could have borne it all; now my circumstances are such that I doubt sometimes if I should in perfect honor have accepted a nomination. It was forced on me, however. My friends named me, published the announcement and adjourned. Before heaven, I have no pleasure in it! I have lived here since childhood, barring a term or two in congress before the war and four years with Lee and Johnston, and my people were here before me. I would be glad to end my days here and live out the intervening ones in sight of this porch. But a man owes everything to his country."

Edward did not comment upon the information; at that moment there was heard the rumble of wheels. Norton, accompanied by a stranger, alighted from a buggy and came rapidly up the walk. The colonel welcomed his son with the usual affection and the stranger was introduced as Mr. Robley of an adjoining county. The men fell to talking with suppressed excitement over the political situation and the climax of it was that Robley, a keen manager, revealed that he had come for $1,000 to secure the county. He had but finished his information, when Norton broke in hurriedly:

"We know, father, that this is all outside your style of politics, and I have told Mr. Robley that we cannot go into any bargain and sale schemes, or anything that looks that way. We will pay our share of legitimate expenses, printing, bands, refreshments

and carriage hire, and will not inquire too closely into rates, but that is as far – "

"You are right, my son! If I am nominated it must be upon the ballots of my friends. I shall not turn a hand except to lessen their necessary expenses and to put our announcements before the public. I am sure that this is all that Mr. Robley would consent to."

"Why, of course," said that gentleman. And then he looked helpless. Edward had risen and was pacing the veranda, ready to withdraw from hearing if the conversation became confidential. Norton was excitedly explaining the condition of affairs in Robley's county, and that gentleman found himself at leisure. Passing him Edward attracted his attention.

"You smoke, Mr. Robley?" He offered a cigar and nodded toward the far end of the veranda. "I think you had better let Mr. Montjoy explain matters to his father," he said. Robley joined him.

"How much do you need?" said Edward; "the outside figure, I mean. In other words, if we wanted to buy the county and be certain of getting it, how much would it take?"

"Twenty-five hundred – well, $3,000."

"Let the matter drop here, you understand? Col. Montjoy is not in the trade. I am acting upon my own responsibility. Call on me in town to-morrow; I will put up the money. Now, not a word. We will go back." They strolled forward and the discussion of the situation went on. Robley grew hopeful and as they parted for

the night whispered a few words to Norton. As the latter carried the lamp to Edward's room, he said:

"What does this all mean; you and Robley – "

"Simply," said Edward, "that I am in my first political campaign and to win at any cost."

Norton looked at him in amazement and then laughed aloud.

"You roll high! We shall win if you don't fail us."

"Then you shall win." They shook hands and parted. Norton passing his sister's room, paused in thought, knocked lightly, and getting no reply, went to bed. Edward turned in, not to sleep. His mind in the silent hours rehearsed its horrors. He arose at the sound of the first bell and left for the city, not waiting for breakfast.

CHAPTER XIII
FEELING THE ENEMY

Edward Morgan plunged into the campaign with an energy and earnestness that charmed the younger Montjoy and astonished the elder. Headquarters were opened, typewriters engaged, lists of prominent men and party leaders obtained and letters written. Col. Montjoy was averse to writing to his many personal friends in the district anything more than a formal announcement of his candidacy over his own signature.

"That is all right, father, but if you intend to stick to that idea the way to avoid defeat is to come down now." But the old gentleman continued to use his own form of letter. It read:

> "My Dear Sir: I beg leave to call your attention to my announcement in the Journal of this city, under date of July 13, wherein, in response to the demands of friends, I consented to the use of my name in the nomination for congressman to represent this district. With great respect, I am, sir, your obedient servant,
> *"Norton L. Montjoy."*

He dictated this letter, gave the list to the typewriter, and announced that when the letters were ready he would sign them. The son looked at him quizzically:

"Don't trouble about that, father. You must leave this office

work to us. I can sign your name better than you can. If you will get out and see the gentlemen about the cotton warehouses you can help us wonderfully. You can handle them better than anybody in the world." The colonel smiled indulgently on his son and went off. He was proud of the success and genius of his one boy, when not grieved at his departure from the old-school dignity. And then Norton sat down and began to dictate the correspondence, with the list to guide him.

"Dear Jim," he began, selecting a well-known friend of his father, and a companion in arms. "You have probably noticed in the Journal the announcement of my candidacy for the congressional nomination. The boys of the old 'Fire-Eaters' did eat. I am counting on you; you stood by me at Seven Pines, Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville and a dozen other tight places, and I have no fear but that your old colonel will find you with him in this issue. It is the old south against the riffraff combination of carpetbaggers, scalawags and jaybirds who are trying to betray us into the hands of the enemy! My opponent, Swearingen, is a good man in his way, but in devilish bad company. See Lamar of Company C, Sims, Ellis, Smith and all the old guard. Tell them I am making the stand of my life! My best respects to the madam and the grandchildren! God bless you. Do the best you can. Yours fraternally,

"N. L. Montjoy."

"P. S. Arrange for me to speak at your court house some day soon. Get an early convention called. We fight better on

a charge – old Stonewall's way.
"N. L. M."

This letter brought down the house; the house in this instance standing for a small army of committeemen gathered at headquarters. Norton was encouraged to try again.

"The Rev. Andrew Paton, D. D. – Dear Andrew: I am out for congress and need you. Of course we can't permit you to take your sacred robes into the mire of politics, but, Andrew, we were boys together, before you were so famous, and I know that nothing I can bring myself to ask of you can be refused. A word from you in many quarters will help. The madam joins me in regards to you and yours. Sincerely.
"N. L. Montjoy."

"P. S. Excuse this typewritten letter, but my hand is old, and I cannot wield the pen as I did when we put together that first sermon of yours.
"M."

This was an addendum in "the colonel's own handwriting" and it closed with "pray for me." The letter was vociferously applauded and passers-by looked up in the headquarters windows curiously. These addenda in the colonel's own handwriting tickled Norton's fancy. He played upon every string in the human heart. When he got among the masons he staggered a little, but managed to work in something about "upright, square and level." "If I could only have got a few signals from the old gentleman," he said, gayly, "I would get the lodges out in a body."

Norton was everywhere during the next ten days. He kept four typewriters busy getting out "personal" letters, addressing circulars and marking special articles that had appeared in the papers. One of his sayings that afterward became a political maxim was: "If you want the people to help you, let them hear from you before election." And in this instance they heard.

Within a few days a great banner was stretched across the street from the headquarters window, and a band wagon, drawn by four white horses, carried a brass band and flags bearing the legend:

> "Montjoy at the Court House
> Saturday Night."

Little boys distributed dodgers.

Edward, taking the cue, entered with equal enthusiasm into the comedy. He wanted to do the right thing, and he had formed an exaggerated idea of the influence of money in political campaigns. He hung a placard at the front door of the Montjoy headquarters that read:

"One thousand dollars to five hundred that Montjoy is nominated."

He placed a check to back it in the secretary's hands. This announcement drew a crowd and soon afterward a quiet-appearing man came in and said:

"I have the money to cover that bet. Name a stake-holder."

One was named. Edward was flushed with wine and enthused by the friendly comments his bold wager had drawn out.

"Make it $2,000 to $1,000?" he asked the stranger.

"Well," was the reply, "it goes."

"Make it $10,000 to $5,000?" said Edward.

"No!"

"Ten thousand to four thousand?"

"No!"

"Ten thousand to three thousand?"

"No!" The stranger smiled nervously and, saluting, withdrew. The crowd cheered until the sidewalk was blockaded. The news went abroad: "Odds of 300 to 100 have been offered on Montjoy, and no takers."

Edward's bet had the effect of precipitating the campaign in the home county; it had been opening slowly, despite the rush at the Montjoy headquarters. The Swearingen men were experienced campaigners and worked more by quiet organization than display. Such men know when to make the great stroke in a campaign. The man who had attempted to call young Morgan's hand had little to do with the management of the Swearingen campaign, but was engaged in a speculation of his own, acting upon a hint.

But the show of strength at the Montjoy headquarters was at once used by the Swearingen men to stir their friends to action, lest they be bluffed out of the fight. Rival bands were got out, rival placards appeared and handbills were thrown into every

yard.

And then came the first personalities, but directed at Edward only. An evening paper said that "A late citizen, after half a century of honorable service, and although but recently deceased, seemed to have fallen into betting upon mundane elections by proxy." And elsewhere: "A certain class of people and their uncle's money are soon divorced." Many others followed upon the same line, clearly indicating Edward Morgan, and with street-corner talk soon made him a central figure among the Montjoy forces. Edward saw none of these paragraphs, nor did he hear the gossip of the city.

This continued for days; in the meantime Edward took Norton home with him at night and generally one or two others accompanied them. Finally it came to be settled that Norton and Edward were old friends, and the friends of Montjoy senior looked on and smiled.

The other side simply sneered, swore and waited.

Information of these things reached Mary Montjoy. Annie, the sister-in-law, came into the city and met her cousin, Amos Royson, the wild horseman who collided with the Montjoy team upon the night of Edward's first appearance. This man was one of the Swearingen managers. His relationship to Annie Montjoy gave him entrance to the family circle, and he had been for two years a suitor for Mary's hand.

Royson took a seat in the vehicle beside his cousin and turned the horse's head toward the park. Annie Montjoy saw that he

was in an ugly mood, and divined the reason. She possessed to a remarkable degree the power of mind-reading and she knew Amos Royson better than he knew himself.

"Tell me about this Edward Morgan, who is making such a fool of himself," he said abruptly. "He is injuring Col. Montjoy's chances more than we could ever hope to, and is really the best ally we have!"

She smiled as she looked upon him from under the sleepy lids, "Why, then, are you not pleased?"

"Oh, well, you know, Annie, the unfortunate fact remains that you are one of the family. I hate to see you mixed up in this matter and a sharer in the family's downfall."

"You do not think enough of me to keep out of the way."

"I cannot control the election, Annie. Swearingen will be elected with or without my help. But you know my whole future depends upon Swearingen. Who is Edward Morgan?"

"Oh, Edward Morgan! Well, you know, he is old John Morgan's heir, and that is all I know; but," and she laughed maliciously, "he is what Norton calls 'a rusher,' not only in politics, but elsewhere. He has seen Mary, and – now you know why he is so much interested in this election." Amos turned fiercely upon her and involuntarily drew the reins until the horse stopped. He felt the innuendo and forgot the thrust.

"You cannot mean – " he began, and then paused, for in her eyes was a triumph so devilish, so malicious, that even he, knowing her well, could not bring himself to gratify it. He knew

that she had never forgiven him for his devotion to Mary.

"Yes, I mean it! If ever two people were suddenly, hopelessly, foolishly infatuated with each other that same little hypocritical chit and this stranger are the two. He is simply trying to put his intended father-in-law into congress. Do you understand?"

The man's face was white and only with difficulty could he guide the animal he was driving. She continued, with a sudden exhibition of passion: "And Mary! Oh, you should just hear her say 'Ilexhurst'! She will queen it out there with old Morgan's money and heir, and we – " she laughed bitterly, "we will stay out yonder, keep a mule boarding house and nurse sick niggers – that is all it amounts to; they raise corn half the year and hire hands to feed it out the other half; and the warehouses get the cotton. In the meantime, I am stuck away out of sight with my children!" Royson thought over this outburst and then said gravely:

"You have not yet answered my question. Who is Edward Morgan – where did he come from?"

"Go ask John Morgan," she said, scornfully and maliciously. He studied long the painted dashboard in front of him, and then, in a sort of awe, looked into her face:

"What do you mean, Annie?" She would not turn back; she met his gaze with determination.

"Old Morgan has educated and maintained him abroad all his life. He has never spoken of him to anybody. You know what stories they used to tell of John Morgan. Can't you see? Challenged to prove his legal right to his name he couldn't do it."

The words were out. The jealous woman took the lines from his hands and said, sneeringly: "You are making a fool of yourself, Amos, by your driving, and attracting attention. Where do you want to get out? I am going back uptown." He did not reply. Dazed by the fearful hint he sat looking ahead. When she drew rein at a convenient corner he alighted. There was a cruel light in his gray eyes.

"Annie," he said, "the defeat of Col. Montjoy lies in your information."

"Let it," she exclaimed, recklessly. "He has no more business in congress than a child. And for the other matter, I have myself and my children's name to protect."

And yet she was not entirely without caution. She continued:

"What I have told you is a mere hint. It must not come back to me nor get in print." She drove away. With eyes upon the ground Royson walked to his office.

Amos Royson was of the new south entirely, but not its best representative. His ambition was boundless; there was nothing he would have left undone to advance himself politically. His thought as he walked back to his office was upon the words of his cousin. In what manner could this frightful hint be made effective without danger of reaction? At this moment he met the man he was plotting to destroy, walking rapidly toward the postoffice with Norton Montjoy. The latter saluted him, gayly, as he passed:

"Hello, Amos! We have you on the run, my boy!" Amos made no reply to Norton, nor to Edward's conventional bow. As

they passed he noted the latter's form and poetical face, then somewhat flushed with excitement, and seemed to form a mental estimate of him.

"Cold-blooded devil, that fellow Royson," said Norton, as he ran over his letters before mailing them; "stick a knife in you in a minute."

But Royson walked on. Once he turned, looked back and smiled sardonically. "They are both in a bad fix," he said, half-aloud. "The man who has to look out for Annie is to be pitied."

At home Annie gave a highly colored account of all she had heard in town about Edward, made up chiefly of boasts of friends who supposed that her interest in Col. Montjoy's nomination was genuine, of Norton's report and the sneers of enemies, including Royson. These lost nothing in the way of color at her hands. Mary sought her room and after efforts sealed for Edward this letter:

> "You can never know how grateful we all are for your interest and help, but our gratitude would be incomplete if I failed to tell you that there is danger of injuring yourself in your generous enthusiasm. You must not forget that papa has enemies who will become yours. This we would much regret, for you have so much need of friends. Do not put faith in too many people, and come out here when you feel the need of rest. I cannot write much that I would like to tell you. Your friend,
> *"Mary Montjoy."*
>
> "P. S. Amos Royson is your enemy and he is a dangerous

man."

When Edward received this, as he did next day by the hand of Col. Montjoy, he was thrilled with pleasure and then depressed with a sudden memory. That day he was so reckless that even Norton felt compelled, using his expression, "to call him down."

CHAPTER XIV
THE OLD SOUTH DRAWS THE SWORD

When Royson reached his office he quietly locked himself in, and, lighting a cigar, threw himself into his easy-chair. He recalled with carefulness the minutest facts of his interview with Annie Montjoy, from the moment he seated himself beside her, until his departure. Having established these in mind he began the course of reasoning he always pursued in making an estimate of testimony. The basis of his cousin's action did not call for much attention; he knew her well. She was as ambitious as Lucifer and possessed that peculiar defect which would explain so many women if given proper recognition – lack of ability to concede equal merit to others. They can admit no uninvited one to their plane; not even an adviser. They demand flattery as a plant demands nitrogen, and cannot survive the loss of attention.

And, reading deeper, Royson saw that the steadfast, womanly soul of the sister-in-law had, even in the knowledge of his cousin, over-shadowed hers until she resented even the old colonel's punctilious courtesy; that in her heart she raged at his lack of informality and accused him of resting upon the young girl. If she had been made much of, set up as a divinity, appealed to and suffered to rule, all would have been fair and beautiful. And then

the lawyer smiled and said aloud to that other self, with whom he communed: "For a while." Such was the woman.

Long he sat, studying the situation. Once he arose and paced the floor, beating his fist into his hand and grinding his teeth.

"Both or none!" he cried, at last. "If Montjoy is nominated I am shelved; and as for Mary, there have been Sabine women in all ages."

That night the leaders of the opposition met in secret caucus, called together by Royson. When, curious and attentive, they assembled in his private office, he addressed them:

"I have, gentlemen, to-day found myself in a very embarrassing position; a very painful one. You all know my devotion to our friend; I need not say, therefore, that here to-night the one overpowering cause of the action which I am about to take is my loyalty to him. To-day, from a source I am not at liberty to state here, I was placed in possession of a fact which, if used, practically ends this campaign. You must none of you express a doubt, nor must any one question me upon the subject. The only question to be discussed is, shall we make use of the fact – and how?" He waited a moment until the faces of the committee betrayed their deep interest.

"Whom do you consider in this city the most powerful single man behind the movement to nominate Montjoy?"

"Morgan," said one, promptly. It was their unanimous judgment.

"Correct! This man, with his money and zeal, has made our

chances uncertain if not desperate, and this man," he continued, excitedly, "who is posing before the public and offering odds of three to one against us with old Morgan's money, is not a white man!"

He had leaned over the table and concluded his remarks in almost a whisper. A painful silence followed, during which the excited lawyer glared inquiringly into the faces turned in horror upon him. "Do you understand?" he shouted at last. They understood.

A southern man readily takes a hint upon such a matter. These men sat silent, weighing in their minds the final effect of this announcement. Royson did not give them long to consider.

"I am certain of this, so certain that if you think best I will publish the fact to-morrow and assume the whole responsibility." There was but little doubt remaining then. But the committee seemed weighed upon rather than stirred by the revelation; they spoke in low tones to each other. There was no note of triumph in any voice. They were men.

Presently the matter took definite shape. An old man arose and addressed his associates:

"I need not say, gentlemen, that I am astonished by this information, and you will pardon me if I do say I regret that it seems true. As far as I am concerned I am opposed to its use. It is a very difficult matter to prove. Mr. Royson's informant may be mistaken, and if proof was not forthcoming a reaction would ruin our friend." No one replied, although several nodded their

heads. At length Royson spoke:

"The best way to reach the heart of this matter is to follow out in your minds a line of action. Suppose in a speech I should make the charge – what would be the result?"

"You would be at once challenged!" Royson smiled.

"Who would bear the challenge?"

"One of the Montjoys would be morally compelled to."

"Suppose I convince the bearer that a member of his family was my authority?" Then they began to get a glimpse of the depth of the plot. One answered:

"He would be obliged to withdraw!"

"Exactly! And who else after that would take Montjoy's place? Or how could Montjoy permit the duel to go on? And if he did find a fool to bring his challenge, I could not, for the reason given in the charge, meet his principal!"

"A court of honor might compel you to prove your charge, and then you would be in a hole. That is, unless you could furnish proof."

"And still," said Royson, "there would be no duel, because there would be no second. And you understand, gentlemen," he continued, smiling, "that all this would not postpone the campaign. Before the court of honor could settle the matter the election would have been held. You can imagine how that election would go when it is known that Montjoy's campaign manager and right-hand man is not white. This man is hail-fellow-well-met with young Montjoy; a visitor in his home and

is spending money like water. What do you suppose the country will say when these facts are handled on the stump? Col. Montjoy is ignorant of it, we know, but he will be on the defensive from the day the revelation is made.

"I have said my action is compelled by my loyalty to Swearingen, and I reiterate it, but we owe something to the community, to the white race, to good morals and posterity. And if I am mistaken in my proofs, gentlemen, why, then, I can withdraw my charge. It will not affect the campaign already over. But I will not have to withdraw."

"As far as I am concerned," said another gentleman, rising and speaking emphatically, "this is a matter upon which, under the circumstances, I do not feel called to vote! I cannot act without full information! The fact is, I am not fond of such politics! If Mr. Royson has proofs that he cannot use publicly or here, the best plan would be to submit them to Col. Montjoy and let him withdraw, or pull off his lieutenant." He passed out and several with him. Royson argued with the others, but one by one they left him. He was bursting with rage.

"I will determine for myself!" he said, "the victory shall rest in me!"

Then came the speech of the campaign at the court house. The relations of Col. Montjoy, his family friends, people connected with him in the remotest degree by marriage, army friends, members of the bar, merchants, warehousemen and farmers generally, and a large sprinkling of personal and political enemies

of Swearingen made up the vast crowd.

In the rear of the hall, a smile upon his face, was Amos Royson. And yet the secret glee in his heart, the knowledge that he, one man in all that throng, by a single sentence could check the splendid demonstration and sweep the field, was clouded. It came to him that no other member of the Montjoy clan was a traitor. Nowhere is the family tie so strong as in the south, and only the power of his ambition could have held him aloof. Swearingen had several times represented the district in Congress; it was his turn when the leader moved on. This had been understood for years by the political public. In the meantime he had been state's attorney and there were a senatorship, a judgeship and possibly the governorship to be grasped. He could not be expected to sacrifice his career upon the altar of kinship remote. Indeed, was it not the duty of Montjoy to stand aside for the sake of a younger man? Was it not true that a large force in his nomination had been the belief that Swearingen's right-hand man would probably be silenced thereby? It had been a conspiracy.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.