

VARIOUS

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WICKED LEGISLATION

The patience with which mankind submits to the demands of tyrants has been the wonder of each succeeding age, and heroes are made of those who break one yoke only to bow with servility to a greater. The Roman soldier, returning from wars in which his valor had won wealth and empire for his rulers, was easily content to become first a tenant, and then a serf, upon the very lands he had tilled as owner before his voluntary exile as his country's defender, kissing the hand that oppressed, so long as it dispensed, as charity, a portion of his tithes and rentals in sports and food. And now, after ages of wonder and criticism, the soldiers of our nineteenth-century civilization outvie their Roman prototypes in submitting to exactions and injustice of which Nero was incapable either of imagining or executing, bowing subserviently to the more ingenious tyrant of an advanced civilization, if but his hand drop farthings of pensions in return for talents of extortion. It may not be that the soldiers and citizens of America shall become so thoroughly debauched and degraded, nor that the consequences of their revolt shall be a burning capitol and a terrified monopolist; but if these evils are to be averted, it will be only because fearless hands tear the mask from our modern Neros, and tireless arms hold up to popular view the naked picture of national disgrace.

Twenty-eight years ago the first step had been taken towards the final overthrow of the objective form of human slavery. There were, even in those days, cranks who were dreaming of new harmonies in the songs of liberty; and when tyranny opposed force to the righteous demands of constitutional government, ploughshares rusted in the neglected fields, workshops looked to alien lands for toilers, while patriots answered the bugle-call, and a nation was freed from an eating cancer. But what was the return for such sacrifices? Surely, if ever were soldiers entitled to fair and full reward, it was those who responded to the repeated call of Lincoln for aid in suppressing the most gigantic rebellion of history – not in the form of dribbles of charity, doled with cunning arts to secure their submission to extortions, not offered as a bribe to unblushing perjury and denied to honest suffering, but simple and exact justice, involving a full performance of national obligation in return for the stipulated discharge of the duty of citizenship. The simple statement of facts of history will serve to expose the methods of those who pose as *par excellence* the soldiers' friends and the defenders of national faith.

The soldiers who enlisted in the war of the rebellion were promised by the government, in addition to varying bounties, a stipulated sum of money per month. It requires no argument to prove that the faith of the government was as much pledged to the citizen who risked his life, as to him who merely risked a portion of his wealth in a secured loan to the government. But the record shows that the pay of the former was reduced by nearly sixty per cent, while the returns of the latter were doubled, trebled, and quadrupled; that in many cases government obligations were closed by the erection of a cheap cast-iron tablet over a dead hero, while the descendants of bondholders were guarded in an undisturbed enjoyment of the fruits of their ancestors' greed. For, after the armies were in the field, the same legislative enactment that reduced the value of the soldier's pay increased that of the creditor's bond, by providing that the money of the soldier should be rapidly depreciated in value, while the interest upon bonds should be payable in coin; and then, after the war was over, another and more valuable bond was prepared, that should relieve the favored creditor of all fear of losing his hold upon the treasury by the payment of his debt. That the purpose of the lawmakers was deliberate, was exposed in a speech by Senator Sherman, who was Chairman of the Finance Committee of the

Senate while the soldiers in the trenches were being robbed in the interest of the creditors at home. In reviewing the financial policy of his party during the war, Mr. Sherman said, in a speech in the Senate, July 14th, 1868 [Footnote: Congressional Record, page 4044]:

“It was, then, our policy during the war, to depreciate the value of United States notes, so that they would come into the Treasury more freely for our bonds. Why, sir, we did a very natural thing for us to do, we increased the amount to \$300,000,000, then to \$450,000,000, and we took away the important privilege of converting them into bonds on the ground that, while this privilege remained, the people would not subscribe for the bonds, and the notes would not be converted; that the right a man might exercise at any time, he would not exercise at all.”

No page of our national history contains a more damning record of injustice than this. Mr. Sherman recognizes and admits that the notes, as issued and paid to the soldiers and producers of the country, were fundable at the holder's option in a government interest-bearing bond. He confesses to the foreknowledge that in nullifying this right the value of the notes would be decreased and to that extent the soldiers' pay be diminished. No organ of public opinion raised the cry of breaking the plighted faith of the nation. The soldier had no organ then; but years after the wrong had been perpetrated, there appeared in Spaulding's "History of the Currency" the naïve statement, "It never seemed quite right to take away this important privilege while the notes were outstanding with this endorsement upon them." By a law, passed against the protests of the wisest and most patriotic members of the popular branch of Congress, it had been provided that these government notes, so soon to be further depreciated in value, should be a full legal tender to the nation's defenders, but only rags in the hands of the fortunate holder of interest-bearing obligations of the government, upon which they were based, and into which they were fundable at the option of the holder. In one of his reports while Secretary of the Treasury, Hon. Hugh McCulloch showed that fully thirty per cent of the cost of supplies furnished the government was due to the depreciation of the currency, the initial step in such depreciation being the placing of the words "Except duties on imports and interest on the public debt" in the law and upon the back of the notes. But, having provided that one class of the government creditors should be secured against the evil effects of a depreciated currency, those friends of the soldiers and defenders of the nation's honor proceeded to a systematic course of depreciation of the currency, while the soldiers were too busy fighting, and the citizens too earnest in their support of the government, to criticize its acts. During the war the sentiment was carefully inculcated, that opposition to the Republican party or its acts was disloyalty to the government, copperheadism, treason; and protests against any of its legislation were answered with an epithet. It so happened that very little contemporary criticism was indulged in, from a wholesome fear of social or business ostracism, or the frowning portals of Fort Lafayette.

But from the very commencement of the war there had been felt at Washington a strong controlling influence emanating from the money centres. The issue of the demand notes of the government during the first year had furnished a portion of the revenues required, and had served to recall the teachings of the earlier statesmen and the demonstrations of history – that paper money bottomed on taxes would prove a great blessing to the people, and a just exercise of governmental functions. This was only too evident to those controlling financial operations at the great money centres. The nation was alive to the necessities of the government; the people answered the calls for troops with such promptness as to block the channels of transportation, often drilling in camp, without arms, awaiting production from the constantly running armories. Those camps represented the people. From them all eyes were bound to the source of supply of the munitions of war; in them all hearts burned for the time for action, even though that meant danger and death. There were other camps from which gray-eyed greed looked with far different motives. The issue of their own promissory notes, based upon a possibility of substituting confidence for coin, had proven in the

past of vast profit to the note-issuers of the great money centres. The exercise of that power by the government would inevitably destroy one great source of their profits, and transfer it to the people. Sixty millions of the people's own notes, circulating among them as money, withstanding the effect of the suspension of specie payments by both the banks and the national Treasury, was a forceful object-lesson to all classes. To the people, it brought a strong ray of hope to brighten the darkness of the war cloud. To some among the metropolitan bankers who in after years prated so loudly of their patriotism and financial sagacity, it brought to view only the danger of curtailed profits. The government Treasury was empty; troops in the field were unpaid and uncomplaining; merchants furnishing supplies, seriously embarrassed for the lack of money in the channels of trade. The sixty millions of demand notes were absorbed by the nation's commerce like a summer storm on parched soil. Under such circumstances, at the urgent request of the Secretary of the Treasury, the Ways and Means Committee of the House of Representatives framed a bill authorizing the issue of one hundred and fifty millions of bonds, and the same amount of Treasury notes, the latter to be a full legal tender, and fundable in an interest-bearing bond at the option of the holder. The contest between the popular branch of the government and the Senate, upon this measure, forms one of the most interesting and instructive lessons of the financial legislation of the nation. In the Senate, a bitter and determined opposition to the legal-tender clause was developed. The associated banks of New York had adopted a resolution that the Treasury notes of the government should only be received by the different banks from their customers as "a special deposit to be paid in kind;" and it was one of the lessons of the war, that notices containing the announcement above quoted remained posted in the New York banks until a high premium on those very notes, over the dishonored greenbacks, caused a shrewd depositor to demand of the bank his deposits in kind. The demand was settled by a delivery of greenbacks, which were a full legal tender for the purpose, and the notices suddenly disappeared. The compromise effected between the two Houses resulted in the issue of the emasculated greenback, and it also led the way to the establishment of the National Banking system, and the issue of the promissory notes of the banks to be used as money.

Much of the force of all criticism of the system so devised has been weakened by the fact that the attack has been aimed at the banks themselves, and not against one special feature of the system. In explanation, though not in excuse for this, should be stated the fact that every issue of the annual finance report of the government contained the special pleadings of the comptrollers of the currency, concealing some facts, misstating others, and creating thereby the impression that they were endeavoring to win the favor of the banking institutions. Added to this were the efforts of those controlling the national bank in the great money centres to secure a permanency of the note-issuing feature of their system, after a very general public sentiment against it had been aroused, and even after its evil effects had been felt by smaller banks located among, and supported more directly by, the producing classes. But now, when the discussion is removed from the arena of politics, when the volume of the bank-note system is rapidly disappearing, and when many of the best and strongest banks are seeking to be relieved from the burden of note-issuance, it is opportune to discuss calmly and without prejudice the wisdom of the original acts and their effects upon the country.

It has been claimed that by the organization of the national banks the government was enabled to dispose of its bonds and aided in carrying on the war. Do the facts warrant the claim? All national bank notes have been redeemable solely in Treasury notes. They do not possess the legal-tender qualification equal to the Treasury note, and cannot therefore be considered any better than the currency in which they are alone redeemable, and in comparison with which they have less uses. These are truths that were just as palpable twenty-five years ago as to-day. It follows that the issue of the bank notes did not furnish any better form of currency than that which came directly from the government to the people. Every dollar of such notes issued contributed just as much towards an inflation of the currency as the issue of an equal amount of Treasury notes. With these facts in mind, a review of the organization of the banks and their issue of notes will reveal the effect of such acts.

In 1864 the notes of the government had been depreciated to such an extent that coin was quoted at a premium ranging from 80 per cent to 150 per cent. The record of a single bank organized and issuing notes under such circumstances is illustrative of the whole system.

Take a bank with one hundred thousand dollars to invest in government bonds as a basis for its issuance of currency. The bonds were bought with the depreciated Treasury notes. Deposited with the Comptroller of the Currency at Washington, the bank received ninety thousand dollars of notes to issue as money. It also received six thousand dollars in coin as one year's advance interest upon its deposited bonds, under the law of March 17, 1884. This coin, not being available for use as money, was sold or converted into Treasury notes at a ratio of from two to two and a half for one. The bank, therefore, had received, as a working cash capital, a sum in excess of the money invested in its bonds. The transaction stands as follows:

Invested in bonds	\$100,000
Received notes to issue	\$90,000
Received coin equal to, say	12,000-102,000
Bank gains by transaction	\$2,000

From this it will appear that the bank has the use, as currency, of more than the amount of its bonds, while the government is to pay, in addition, six per cent per annum on the full amount of bonds so long as the relations thus created continue. Surely no argument is needed to prove that, if the government had issued the \$90,000 in the form of Treasury notes, and had paid out the interest money for its current obligations, there would have been no greater inflation of the currency, a more uniform currency would have been maintained, and a saving effected of the entire amount of interest paid on bonds held for security of national bank notes, which at this date would amount to a sum nearly representing the total bonded debt of the country.

But there remains a still more serious charge to be made against this system. Defended as a war measure by which the banks were to aid the government in conquering the rebellion, the fact remains that at the date of Lee's surrender only about \$100,000,000 of bonds had been accepted by the banks, even though they received a bonus for the act. But, after the war had closed, and the government was with one hand contracting the volume of its own circulating notes by funding them into interest-bearing bonds, the banks were allowed to inflate the currency by the further issue of over \$200,000,000 of their notes. Time may produce a sophist cunning enough to devise an adequate defence or apology for such legislation. His work will only be saved from public indignation and rebuke when a continued series of outrages shall have dulled the national intelligence and destroyed the national honor.

But there came a time when the policy of the government was radically changed. The soldiers had conquered a peace, – or thought they had, – and, as they marched in review before their commander-in-chief, had been paid off in crisp notes of the government – legal tender to the soldier, but not to the bondholder; the time for government to pay the soldiers had ceased; the national banks had been allowed to show their patriotism and their willingness to aid the government overthrow a rebellion already conquered, by the issuance of their notes to add to an inflated and depreciated currency; the soldiers had returned to the arts of peace, and had taken their places as producers of the nation's wealth and taxpayers to the national Treasury. Then Mr. Sherman, with his brother patriots and statesmen, discovered that the country (meaning, of course, the bondholders) was suffering under the evils of a depreciated currency. Their tender consciences had never suffered a twinge while the soldiers were receiving from the government a currency depreciated in value as the result of its own acts. But when the soldier became the taxpayer, and from his toil was to be obliged to pay the bondholder, then the patriotic hearts of Mr. Sherman and his co-conspirators in the dominant political party trembled at the thought of a soldier being allowed to discharge his obligations in the

same kind of money he had received for his services. As a recipient of the government dole, paper money, purposely depreciated, was quite sufficient. From the citizen by the product of whose toil a bonded interest-bearing debt was to be paid, "honest money" was to be demanded. It required no argument to convince the government creditor that this was a step in his interest, and public clamor was hushed with the catchwords of "honest money" and "national honor," while dribblets of pensions were allowed to trickle from rivers of revenue. The Nero of Rome had been excelled by his Christian successor, and the dumb submission of ancient slaves became manly independence in contrast with modern stupidity.

By the passage of the so-called "Credit-strengthening Act," in March, 1869, it was provided that all bonds of the government, except in cases where the law authorizing the issue of any such obligation has expressly provided that the same may be paid in lawful money, or other currency than gold and silver, should be payable in coin. This act was denounced by both Morton and Stevens, as a fraud upon the people, in that it made a new contract for the benefit of the bondholder. The injustice of the act could have been determined upon the plainest principles of equity: if the bonds were payable in coin, there was no need for its passage; if they were not so payable, there could be no excuse for it. If there existed a doubt sufficiently strong to require such an act, it was clearly an injustice to ignore the rights of the many in the interests of the few. But the men who had not scrupled to send rag-money to the soldiers in the trenches, and coin to the plotters in the rear, had no consciences to be troubled. They had dared to pay to the soldiers the money of the nation, and then rob them of two-thirds of it under color of law, and now needed only to search for methods, not for excuses. Political exigencies must be guarded against. The public must be hoodwinked, the soldier element placated with pension doles.

The first essential was to stifle public discussion. Some fool-friends of the money power had introduced and pressed the bill early in 1868. There were still a few Representatives in Congress who had not bowed the knee to Baal, and they raised a vigorous protest against the iniquitous proposal. Discussion then might be fatal to both the scheme and the party, and Simon Cameron supplemented an already inodorous career by warning the Senate that this bill would seriously injure the Republican party, and that it should be laid aside until the excitement of a political campaign had subsided, and it could be discussed with the calmness with which we should view all great financial questions.

Here was the art of the demagogue, blinding the eyes of the people with sophistry and false pretences in order to secure by indirection that which could not be obtained by fair discussion. A Presidential election was approaching. An honest Chief Executive had rebelled against the attempt to nullify the results of the war by converting the Southern States into conquered territories, in order that party supremacy should be secured, even at the expense of national unity and harmony. Any discussion of a proposition to burden the victorious soldier with greater debt, in the interest of a class of stay-at-homes, would have caused vigorous protests from the men whose aid was necessary for party success. Thaddeus Stevens had announced that if he thought "that the Republican party would vote to pay, in coin, bonds that were payable in greenbacks, thus making a new contract for the benefit of the bondholders, he would vote for Frank Blair, even if a worse man than Horatio Seymour was at the head of the ticket." Oliver P. Morton, the war-Governor of Indiana, had been equally vigorous in his language; and practical politicians foresaw that even Pennsylvania and Indiana might be lost to the Republican party with these men arrayed against it. Therefore the cunning proposal to postpone this discussion "until after the excitement of a Presidential election was over, and we could discuss this with the calmness with which we should view all great financial questions." The hint was taken, the contest of 1868 was fought under a seeming acquiescence in the views of Stevens and Morton; the dear people were hoodwinked with catch-phrases coined to deceive, and a new lease of power was secured by false pretence. But when the excitement of the election had passed, and there was no longer any danger of "injuring the Republican party," all discussion was stifled; and the first act

signed by the newly elected President was that which had been laid aside for that season of “calmness with which we should view all great financial questions.”

The next step in the conspiracy was a logical sequence to all that had preceded. Having secured coin payment of interest and principal of all bonds, it was now in order to still further increase the value of the one and to perpetuate the payment of the other. To this end, silver was demonetized by a trick in the revision of the Statutes, reducing the volume of coin one-half, and decreasing the probability of rapid bond payments. Then the volume of the paper currency was contracted by a systematic course of substituting interest-bearing bonds for non-interest-bearing currency, and the first chapter of financial blunders and crimes of the Wall Street servants ended in a panic, revealing, in its first wild terror, the disgraceful connection of high public officials with the worst elements of stock-jobbery.

It is possible that a direct proposition in 1865, to double the amount of the public debt as a free gift to the creditor-class, might have caused such a clamor as would have forever driven from power its authors, and have silenced the claims of modern Republicans that they were the sole friends of the soldier, and defenders of national honor. But the financial legislation of the Republican party has done more and worse than this. Its every act has been in the interest of a favored class, and a direct and flagrant robbery of the producing masses. It has won the support of corporate monopoly by blind submission to its demands, and, with brazen audacity, sought and obtained the co-operation of the survivors of the army by doling out pensions and promises. And yet, with a record that would have crimsoned the cheek of a Nero or Caligula, its leaders are posing as critics of honest statesmen, and the only friends and defenders of the soldier and laborer. The leaders of its earlier and better days have been ostracised and silenced in party councils, while audacious demagogues have used its places of trust as a means of casting anchors to windward for personal profit. Its party conventions are controlled by notorious lobbyists and railroad attorneys, and the agricultural population appealed to for support. Truly the world is governed more by prejudice than by reason, and American politics of the present day offer but slight rewards to manliness or patriotism.

Clinton Furbish.

THE HONOR OF AN ELECTION

(President Cleveland's Defeat, 1888.)

Whose is the honor? Once again

The million-drifted shower is spent
Of votes that into power have whirled two men: —

One man, defeated; one, made President.

Whose is the honor? His who wins

The people's wreath of favor, cast
At venture? – Lo, his thralldom just begins! —

Or is it his who, losing, yet stands fast?

The first takes power, in mockery grave

Of freedom – made, by writ unsigned,
The people's servant, whom a few enslave.

The other is master of an honest mind.

From venom'd spite that stung and ceased,

From slander's petty craft set free,
This man – the bonds of formal power released —

Moves higher, dowered with large integrity.

Though stabs of cynic hypocrites

And festering malice of false friends
Have won their noisome way, unmoved he fits

His patriot purpose still to lofty ends.

Whose is the honor? Freemen – yours,

Who found him faithful to the right,
Clean-handed, true, yet turned him from your doors

And bartered daybreak for corruption's night?

Weak-shouldered nation, that endures

So painfully an upright sway,
Four little years, then yields to lies and lures,

And slips back into greed's familiar way!

For now the light bank-note outweighs

The ballot of the unbought mind;
And all the air is filled with falsehood's praise —

Shams, for sham victory artfully designed.

Is theirs the honor, then, who roared

Against our leader's wise-laid plan,
Yet now have seized his plan, his flag, his sword,

And stolen all of him – except the man?

No! His the honor, for he keeps

His manhood firm, intact, unsoiled
By base deceit. – Not dead, the nation sleeps:

Pray Heaven it waken ere it be despoiled!

George Parsons Lathrop.
November, 1888.

ANDY'S GIFT

HOW HE GOT IN AND HOW HE WAS GOTTEN OUT

An Episode of Any Day

I

“Well, Age *is* beautiful!”

“Then *she* is a joy forever!”

“Wonderful staying power for a filly of her age, anyhow!”

From a typical, if not very remarkable, group of alleged men of the world, surrounding the quaint and capacious punch-bowl at a brilliant society event, came this small-shot of repartee. None of the speakers had been very long out of their teens; all of them were familiar ingredients of that cream-nougat compound, called society.

Mr. de Silva Street was of the harmless blonde and immaculate linen type. He was invited everywhere for his present boots, and well-received for his expectant bonds; his sole and responsible ancestor having “fought in his corner” with success, in more than one of the market battles for the belt.

Mr. Wetherly Gage had glory enough with very young belles and tenacious marriageable possibilities, in being society editor of *Our Planet*; while Mr. Trotter Upton had owned more horses and been more of a boon to sharp traders than any man of his years in the metropolis. A brief young man, with ruddy, if adolescent, moustache apparently essaying the ascent of a nose turned up in sympathetic hue, his red hair was cut in aggressive erectile fashion, which emphasized the *soubriquet* of “Indian Summer,” given him by the present unconscious subject of the critical trilogy.

“But remember, Trotter, she is my pet partner,” simpered Mr. Street at the shapely back disappearing down the hallway; and he caressed where his blond moustache was to be.

“And might have been of your – mother’s,” added Mr. Gage, with the lonesome titter that illustrated all of his acidulous jokelets.

“Remember she is a lady, and a guest of your host besides,” chimed in a tall, dark man, as he joined the group. The voice was perfectly quiet; but there seemed discomforting magnetism in the glance he rested on one after the other, as he filled a glass and raised it to handsome, but firm-set lips.

The three typical beaux of an abnormal civilization shifted position uneasily. Trotter Upton pulled down his cuffs, and laboriously admired the horse-shoe and snaffle ornamenting their buttons, as he answered:

“Sorry we shocked you, Van. Forgot it was your lecture season! But I’ll taut the curb on the boys, so socket your whip, old fel!”

“If your tact kept pace with your slang, Upton, what a success you’d be!” Van Morris answered, carelessly. “’Tis a real pity you let the stable monopolize so much of the time that would make you an ornament to society.” Then he set down his unfinished glass, sauntered into the hall, and approached the subject of discussion.

Miss Rose Wood was scarcely a beauty; nor was she the youngest belle of that ball by perhaps fifteen seasons of German cotillion. But she had tact to her manicured finger-tips, delicate acid on her tongue’s tip, and that dangerous erudition, a brief biography of every girl in the set, was handily

stored in her capacious memory. She had, moreover, a staunch following of gilt-plated youths who, being really afraid of her, made her a belle as a sort of social Peter's pence.

Miss Wood had just finished a rapid "glide," when she came under fire of the punch-room light-fighters; but, though Mr. Upton had once judged her "a trifle touched in the wind," her complexion and her tasteful drapery had come equally smooth out of that trying ordeal. Even that critic finished with a nod towards her as their mentor moved away:

"She *does* keep her pace well! Hasn't turned a hair." And he was right in the fact so peculiarly stated; for it was less the warmth of the dancing-room than of her partner's urgency, that brought Miss Rose Wood into the hall, for what Mr. Upton called "a breather."

The visible members of the Wood family were two, Miss Rose and her father, Colonel Westchester Wood. "The Colonel" was an equally familiar figure at the clubs and on the quarter-stretch; nor was he chary of acceptance of the cards to dinners, balls, and opera-boxes, which his daughter's facile management brought to the twain in showers. He had a certain military air, and a nebulous military history; boasted of his Virginia-Kentucky origin, and more than hinted at his Blue Grass stock-farm. Late at night, he would mistily mention "My regiment at Shiloh, sah!" But, as he was reputed even more expert with the pistol than most knew him to be with cards, geography and chronology were never insisted on in detail. But the Colonel was undisputed possessor of a thirst, marvellous in its depth and continuity; and he had also a cast-iron head that turned the flanks of the most direct assaults of alcohol, and scattered them to flaunt the red flag on his pendulous nose, or to skirmish over his scrupulously shaven cheeks.

Of the invisible members of "the Colonel's" household, fleecy rumors only pervaded society at intervals. The social Stanleys and Livingstons who had essayed the sources of the Wood family stream in its dark continent of brown-faced brick, on a quiet avenue, sent back vague stories of a lovely and patient invalid, and a more lovely and equally patient young girl, mother and sister to Miss Rose. There was a misty legend sometimes floating around the clubs, that "the Colonel," after the method of Cleopatra, had dissolved his wife's fortune in a posset, and swallowed it years before. But again the reputation of a dead shot cramped curiosity.

And a similar mist sometimes pervaded five o'clock teas and reunions *chez la modiste*, to the effect that the younger sister was but as a Midianite to the elder, while the mother was dying of neglect. But as neither subject of this gossip was in society, the mist never condensed into direction.

Society found Miss Rose Wood a peculiarly useful and pleasant person; and it took her – as "the Colonel" took many of his pleasures – on trust.

II

The ball was a crowded one; but was, perhaps, the most brilliant and select of that season, combining a Christmas-eve festivity with the *début* party of the acknowledged beauty and prize-heiress of the entire set.

Blanche Allmand had been finally finishing abroad for some years, after having won her blue-ribboned diploma from Mde. de Cancanière, on Murray Hill. Rumors of her perfections of face and form and character had come across the seas, in those thousand-and-one letters, for which a fostering government makes postal unions. And ever mingled with these rumors, came praises of those thousand-and-one accomplishments, which society is equally apt to admire as to envy, even while it does not appreciate.

But what most inspired with noble ambition the gilded youth of that particular *coterie*, was the universally accepted fact that old Jack Allmand was master of the warmest fortune that any papa thereabouts might add to the blessing he bestowed upon his son-in-law.

And, like Jephtha of old, he "had one fair daughter and no more." A widower – not only "warm," but very safe – he had weathered all the shoals and quicksands of "the street," and had brought his

golden argosy safe into the port of investment. Then he had retired from business, which theretofore had engrossed his whole heart and soul, and lavished both upon the fair young girl, to bring whom from final finishing at the *Sacre Cœur*, he had just made himself so hideously sea-sick.

It was very late in the season when the delayed return of the pair was announced, with numerous adjectives, in the society columns; but Mr. Allmand's impatience to expose his golden fleece to the expectant Jasons would brook no delay. Blanche was allowed scarcely time to unpack her many trunks; to exhibit her goodly share of the *chefs d'œuvres* of Pengat and Worth to the admiring elect; and to receive gushing embraces, only measured by their envy, when the *début* ball was announced for Christmas-eve.

His best Christmas gift had come to the doting father; and what more fitting season to show his joy and pride in it, and to have their little world share both?

When Blanche, backed by Miss Rose Wood, had hinted that it was rather an unusual occasion, he had promptly settled that by declaring that she was a peculiarly unusual sort of girl. So the invitations went forth; the Allmand mansion was first turned inside out, and then illuminated, and flower-hidden for the *début* ball.

That it would be *the* affair of the season none doubted. Already, many a paternal pocket had twinged responsive to extra appeals from marketable daughters; and as to beaux, they had responded *nem. con.*, when bidden to the event promising so much in present feast, and which might possibly so tend to prevent future famine. For already the clubs had discounted the chances of one favorite or another for winning the marital prize of the year.

Foremost among those who had hastened to welcome Blanche back to her new home was Miss Rose Wood. She had the mysterious knack of "coming out" gracefully with every fresh set; of perfectly adapting herself to its fads, and especially to its beaux. Set might come and set might go, but she came out forever; and some nameless tact implied to every *débutante*, what Micawber forced upon Copperfield with the brutality of words, that she was the "friend of her youth."

So, already, Miss Wood was prime favorite and prime minister at the home-court of the confiding Blanche, who, spite of brave heart and strong will of her own, fluttered not unnaturally in the unwonted buzz and glare of her new life. But most particularly had Rose Wood warned her against the flirts and "unsafe men" of their set; including, of course, Vanderbilt Morris and her present partner of the ball in the ranks of both.

That partner, Andrew Browne, was avowedly the best *parti* of the entire set. Handsome, fun-loving, and well-cultivated, he was that *rara avis* among society beaux, a thorough gentlemen by instinct; but he was lazily given to self-indulgence, and had the prime weakness of being utterly incapable of saying "no," to man or woman. The intimate friend and room-mate of Van Morris for many years, Browne had never lost a sort of reverence for the superior force and decision of the other's character; and, though but a few years his junior, in all serious social matters he literally sat at his feet.

And Morris had always grown restive when Miss Rose Wood made one of her "dead sets" at Andy's face and fortune; for a far-away experience of his own, in that quarter, had taught him how small an objection to that maiden would be a fortune with the man whom she blessed with her affection.

"And *that* brand of the wine of the heart," he had once cautioned Andy, "does not improve with age."

Doubtful of that young gentleman's confident response, that "*he* was not to be caught with chaff," Van still kept watch and ward. So, leaving the elegant book-room of the elegant avenue mansion – converted, for the nonce, into an elegant bar-room for Mr. Trotter Upton and his friends – Morris sauntered through knots of pretty women and of pretty vacuous-looking men, resting on seats half-hidden in potted plants, and approached the pair interesting him most.

Neither glowed with delight at his advent, although Andy seemed only to be rattling off common-places, in peculiarly voluble style. Morris asked for the next waltz; Miss Wood glanced shyly

up at her companion, dropped her eyes demurely, and believed she would rest until the *cotillon*. Then, after a few more small necessities of social life about the beauty of the girls, the heat of the rooms, and the elegance of the flowers, she permitted Andy to drift easily towards the door that opened on the dim-lit coolness of the conservatory.

As they turned away, Rose Wood sent one sharp glance of her gray eyes glinting into Morris's; then hers fell, and even he could find only bare common-place in her words:

“So many little dangers, you know, Mr. Morris – at a ball. One cannot be *too* prudent.”

He did not answer; but the look that followed her graceful figure had very little of flattery in it.

“Curse that *Chambertin*!” he muttered in his moustache. “I warned him against the second pint at dinner. Andy *couldn't* be fool enough, though,” he added, with a shrug, and moved slowly towards the dancing-room.

The critical group, still around the big punch-bowl, looked after him curiously.

“*He's* not soft on the old girl, is he?” queried Mr. de Silva Street.

“Never!” chuckled Mr. Wetherly Gage. “Morris is too well up in Bible lore to marry his grandmother!”

“And he don't have to,” put in Mr. Trotter Upton, with a sage wink. “I'd back Van against the field to win the Allmand purse, hands down, if he'd only enter. But he *won't*; so you're safe, Silvey, if you've got the go in you. But Lord! Van's too smart to carry weight for age! Why, you may land me over the tail-board, if the woman that hitches *him* double won't have to throw him down and sit on him, Rarey fashion!”

And the speaker, remarking *sotto voce*, that here was luck to the winner, drained his glass with a smack, set it down, and lounged into the smoking-room. There he lazily lit one of Mr. Allmand's full-flavored Havanas, and thoughtfully stored his breast pocket with several more.

III

Meanwhile, the horsey pundit's offered odds seemed not so wisely laid.

In the great room a crowded waltz was in progress; and Morris saw Blanche Allmand standing on the opposite edge of the whirling circle. Her head and her dainty slipper were keeping time to the softly accented music; while a comical expression – half anger, half mischief – emphasized the nothing she was saying to her companion.

Van caught her eye and, adept that he was in the social signal-service, took in the situation at a glance. He slightly raised his eyebrows and barely moved his lips; she assented with the smallest of nods and a happy flush; and, a moment later, he had edged around the masses of bumping humanity and offered his arm.

“My waltz, I believe,” he said, with the ease of the heir-apparent of Ananias. “I was unlucky enough, in losing the first turn, not to grudge Major Bouncey the rest.”

“You deserve to lose the whole for coming late,” the girl answered, drawing her arm from her partner's with that pretty reluctance which makes society's stage-business seem born in woman. “It was just too good of Major Bouncey to take your place and save my being a wall-flower.” And, not pausing for that gallant soldier's labored disclaimer, the graceful pair glided away to the graceful time of ‘La Gitana’ waltz.

“Horrid bore, that Bouncey,” Blanche panted in the first pause. “Don't stop near him! He does all his dancing on my insteps; and I dare not stop for fear of his still more dreadful spooning.”

“You would not have *me* blame him? A better balanced brain might well lose its poise, with *such* temptation!” And the man looked down on her with very eloquent eyes.

There was a pause. Then Van Morris bent his head, and the eyes still more strongly emphasized the words:

“Blanche, do you know how dangerously lovely you are?”

The girl's frank eyes dropped beneath the strong light in his; but there was not a shade of consciousness in the soft laugh that prefaced her reply:

"Ah! I've a cheval-glass and this is my first ball. So I suppose I know how 'dangerous' I am! Then, too, that awful Bouncey called me a lily of the valley!"

"It is the purest flower made by God's hand," were Morris's simple words; but the vibrant tone came from deeper than the lips, now close pressed together.

"But I *know* I'm not," Blanche retorted, merrily, "for *they* drink only dew, and I am quite wild for Regent's punch!"

They were at the refreshment room, now nearly deserted. Once more the man's eyes grew darker and deeper, as they met the girl's frank blue ones.

"And yet, not purer," he said, unheeding the interruption, "than the heart you, little girl, will soon give to some –"

He stopped abruptly; but the eyes added more than the words left unsaid.

Again Blanche dropped her eyes quickly; but her color never heightened, nor did the soft laces nestling over the graceful bust move at all quicker than the waltz might warrant. Van's face still bent over her with earnest expression, as she sipped the glass of punch he handed her; but neither spoke until they had crossed the corridor and passed another door into the conservatory.

IV

The soft, warm air, heavy with the breath of the "Grand Duke" and of orange blossoms; the tremulous half-light from colored lamps hung amid the leaves; the dead stillness of the place, broken only by the plash of the fountain falling back into its moss-covered basin, all contrasted deliciously with the hot, dusty atmosphere and giddy buzzing under the flaring gas-jets left behind.

They strolled slowly down the gravelled walk, between rows of huge tubs, moist and flower-laden with the products of almost every clime. Here gleamed the glossy leaves of the Southern *grandiflora*; the rare wax plant crept along the wall beyond, its pink, starry blooms gleaming delicately among the thick, artificial-seeming leaves; while, as though in honor of the happily-timed birthnight of the fair young mistress of all, a gorgeous century plant had opened its bud in a glory of form and color, magnificent as rare.

"Blanche, do you remember how long I have known you?" Morris asked, suddenly breaking the silence. "Ever since you were like *this*; a close, callow bud, giving but vague promise of the glorious flowering of your womanhood! I watched the opening of every petal of your mind and tried to peer through them into the heart of the flower. But they sent you away; and now your return dazzles me with the brilliance and beauty of the full bloom. This was the past —*this* is the present!"

And reaching up, the man suddenly snapped off the glowing blossom from the cactus and held it before the girl, close to the pale camellia bud he had plucked before.

She raised her beautiful face, crowned with its halo-like glory of hair, full to him; and the expression it took was graver and more womanly than before. But still no agitation reflected in the candid eyes that looked steadily into his, and the voice, more softly pitched, had no tremor in it, as she answered:

"*Please* think of me, then, as the child you used to know; never as the *débutante* who must be fed, *à la* Bouncey, on the sweets of sentiment."

"Take sentiment – I mean the higher sentiment, that lifts us sometimes above our baser worldly nature – out of life, and it is not worth the living," Morris said earnestly. "That man could not understand it any more than he could understand you!"

"Perhaps you are right," she answered, quietly. "*We* are too old friends to talk society at each other; and you are *so* different from him."

Perhaps Morris was luckier for not replying.

It may be that the Destiny, which, we are told, shapes our ends, did not leave his so rough-hewn as it might have.

He himself could scarcely have told what thoughts were framing themselves in his mind; what words had almost formed themselves on his tongue. There are moments in life, when we live at the rate of hours; and Van Morris was certainly going the pace, mentally, for those ten seconds of silence, before the echo of the girl's voice ceased vibrating on his ear. He was vaguely conscious, some ten seconds later still, that rarely had a calm, well-posed man of the world found himself quite so dizzy, from combined effects of a quick waltz, a flower-laden atmosphere, and a rounded arm pressing only restfully upon his own.

Suddenly that pressure grew sharp and decided. They stopped abruptly at a sharp turn of the walk.

On a somewhat too small rustic seat, under the fruit-laden boughs of an orange tree, and comfortably screened thereby from the gleam of the tinted lantern, sat Miss Rose Wood and Mr. Andrew Browne.

Their two heads were rather close together; their two hands were suspiciously distant, as though by sudden movement; and the lady's fan had fallen at her feet, most *à propos* to the crunch of the gravel, under approaching feet.

But only Blanche – less preoccupied with her thoughts than her companion – had caught the words, “Dismiss carriage – escort home,” before Miss Wood's fan had happened to drop at her feet.

What there might be in those words to drop the color out of rosy cheeks, or to clench white little teeth hard together, it might well puzzle one to guess. But the face that had not changed under the strong music of Van Morris's voice, now grew deadly white an instant; then flooded again with surging rush of color.

But very quickly, though with perfect self-possession, Miss Wood had risen and advanced one step, to arrange Blanche's lace, with the words:

“Your *berthé* is loose, darling!”

Then, as she inserted the harmless, unnecessary pin, she whispered in the shell-like ear:

“*Don't* scold me, loved one! Indeed, I was *not* flirting. I only came out here to keep him from the —*champagne punch!*”

Blanche made no reply to this whispered confidence; nor did she seem especially grateful for the grace done to her toilette. She never so much as glanced at Andy Browne. He, also, had risen, after picking up the dropped fan, with not effortless grace; and now stood smiling, with rather meaningless, if measureless, good nature upon the invaders.

And Van Morris was all pose and *savoir faire* once more. He might have been examining Blanche on her progress in algebra, for all the consciousness in his manner as he complimented Miss Wood on her peculiarly deft management of that dangerous weapon, the pin. But there was no little annoyance in the whispered aside to his friend:

“*Don't* drink any more to-night, Andy. *Don't!*”

“All right, Van; I promise,” responded the other, with the most beaming of smiles. “Tell you the truth, don't think I need it. Heat of the room, you know – ”

“And the second pint of *Chambertin* at dinner,” finished Morris, as Miss Wood – the toilette and *her* confidence both completed – slipped her perfectly gloved hand into Andy's arm again.

Precisely, then, three sharp notes of the cornet cut through the stillness under the flowers. It was followed by the indescribable sound, made only by the rush of many female trains towards one spot. Like the chronicled war-horse, Andy shook his mane at the first note; Miss Wood nodded beamingly over her shoulder at the second; and the pair were hastening off by the time the third died away.

Blanche showed no disposition to take the vacated seat.

“The German is forming,” she said, “and I am engaged to that colt-like Mr. Upton.”

Only at the door of the conservatory she paused.

“Does Mr. Browne ever drink too much wine?” she asked abruptly.

Van never hesitated one second. He lied loyally. “Why, *never*, of course,” he deprecated, in the most natural tone. “With rare exceptions. But what deucedly sharp eyes she has,” he added, mentally, as Mr. Upton informed them that “the bell had tapped,” and took Blanche off.

Almost at the same moment, a waiter rushed by with a wine-cooler and glasses; and he heard the pompous butler direct:

“Set it by Mr. Browne’s chair. He leads in *ler curtillyun!*”

Morris half started to countermand the order. Then he reconsidered and leaned against the doorway.

“He can’t mean to drink it, after his promise to me,” he thought. “Anyway, he might get something worse. Besides, I am not his guardian; and,” he added very slowly, a strange smile hovering about his lips, “I can scarcely keep my own head to-night.”

Somehow he, best dancer in town as he was, had no partner to-night. The sight before him had no novelty; and Mr. Trotter Upton’s vivacious prancing somewhat irritated him, in spite of the amusement at himself he felt at the sensation.

“Didn’t think I was so far gone as to be jealous of Trotter,” he muttered.

Then he slipped into the hat-room and was quickly capped and cloaked for that precious boon to the bored, the exit *sans adieu*.

V

It was a raw, searching Christmas morning into which Van Morris stepped, as he softly closed the door of the Allmand mansion and turned up his fur collar against “a nipping and an eager air.”

Even in that fashionable section the streets already showed somewhat of the bustle of the busy to-morrow. Belated caterers’ carts spun by; early butchers’ and milk-wagons rumbled along, making their best speed towards distant patrons. Here and there, gleams from gas-lit windows slanted athwart the frosty darkness, punctuated by ever-recurrent flaring of street lamps. Not infrequent groups of muffled men – some jovial with reminiscent scenes of pleasure left behind, and some hilarious from what they brought along with them – passed him, as he strode rapidly along the echoing flags, too intent on his own thoughts to notice any of them.

Suddenly, from beneath one of the gloom punctuators opposite, a woman’s voice cut the air sharply:

“*Please* let me pass!”

Morris, alert in a second, had crossed the street and joined the group of four intuitively, before he knew it himself. Three young men, whose evening dress told that they were of society, and whose unsteady hold of their own legs, that they had had just a little too much of it, barred the way of a young girl. Tall, slight, and with a mass of blonde hair escaping from the rough shawl she drew closer about her head as she shrank back, there was something showing through her womanly terror that spoke convincingly the gentlewoman. The trio chuckled inanely, making elaborate bows; and the girl shivered as she shrank further into the shadow, and repeated piteously:

“Do, *please*, let me pass! *won’t* you?”

“Certainly they will,” Van answered, stepping up on the pavement and taking her in at a glance. “Am I not right, gentlemen?” he added urbanely to the unsteady trio.

“Not by a damned sight!”

“Who the devil are you?” were the prompt and simultaneous rejoinders.

“That doesn’t matter,” Van answered quietly; “but you are obstructing the public streets and frightening this evident stranger.”

“We don’t know any stranger at two o’clock in the morning,” was the illogical rejoinder of the third youth, who clung to the lamp-post.

“What about it, anyway?” said the stoutest of the three, advancing towards Morris. “Do *you* know her?”

“*You* evidently do not,” Van replied; then he turned to the girl with the deference he would scarce have used to the leader of his set. “If you will take my arm, I will see you safely to the nearest policeman.”

The girl hesitated and shrunk back a second; then, with that instinctive trust which – fortunately, perhaps – is peculiarly feminine, slipped her red, ungloved little hand into his arm.

The leader of the trio staggered a step nearer. “You’re a nice masher,” he said thickly; “but if it’s a row you’re looking for, you can find one pretty quick!”

Morris glanced at the man with genuine pity.

“You look as though you might be a gentlemen when you are sober,” he said. “*I* am not looking for a row; and if you boys make one, you’ll only be more ashamed of yourselves on Christmas day than you should be already. And now I wish to pass.”

“I’ll give you a pass,” the other answered; and, with a lurch, he fronted Morris and put up his hands in most approved fighting form. At the same moment, the girl – with the inopportune logic of all girls in such cases – clung heavily to Morris’s arm and cried piteously:

“Oh, no! You mustn’t! Not for me!” and, as she did so the man lunged a vicious blow with his right hand, full at Morris’s face.

But, though like J. Fitz-James, “taught abroad his arms to wield,” Van Morris had likewise used his legs to wrestle in England, and had moreover seen *la savatte* in France. With a quick turn of his head, the blow passed heavily, but harmlessly, by his cheek. At the same instant his foot shot swiftly out, close to the ground, and with a sharp sweep from right to left, cut his opponent’s heels from under him, as a sickle cuts weeds, sprawling him backwards upon the pavement.

Drawing the girl swiftly through the breach thus made, Morris placed her behind him and turned to face the men again. They made no rush, as he had expected; so he spoke quickly:

“You’d better pick up your friend and be off. You don’t look like boys who would care to sleep in the station,” he said, “and here comes the patrol wagon.”

They needed no second warning, nor stood upon the order of their going. The downed man was on his feet; and it was devil take the hind-most to the first corner. For the rumbling of heavy wheels and the clang of heavy hoofs upon the Belgian blocks were drawing nearer.

To Van’s relief, for he hated a scene, it proved to be only a “night-liner” cab, though with rattle enough for a field battery; but to his tipsy antagonists it had more terror than a park of Parrot guns.

“Can I do anything more for you?” he asked the girl; then suddenly: “You’re not the sort to be out alone at this hour of the night. Are you in trouble?”

“Oh, indeed I am!” she answered, with a sob; again illogical, and breaking down when the danger was over. “What *must* you think of me? But mother was suddenly *so* ill, and father and sister were at a ball, and the servants slipped away, too. I dared not wait, so I ran out alone to fetch Doctor Mordant. *Please* believe me, for – ”

“Hello, Cab!” broke in Van. “Certainly I believe you,” he answered the girl, as the cab pulled up with that eager jerk of the driver’s elbows, eloquent of fare scented afar off. “I’ll go with you for Doctor Mordant, and then see you home.”

“Why, is that *you*, Mr. Morris?” cried Cabby, with a salute of his whip *à la militaire*; but he muttered to himself, “Well, I *never*!” as he jumped from the box and held the door wide.

“That’s enough, Murphy,” Van said shortly. “Now, jump in, Miss, and I’ll – ” But the girl shrank back, and drew the shawl closer round her face. “No, I won’t either. Pardon my thoughtlessness; for it isn’t exactly the hour to be driving alone with a fellow, I know. But you can trust Murphy perfectly. Dennis, drive this lady to Dr. Mordant’s and then home again, just as fast as your team can carry her!” And he half lifted the girl into the carriage.

“That I will, Mr. Van,” Murphy replied cheerily, as he clambered to his seat.

The girl stretched out two cold, red little hands, and clasped his fur-gloved one frankly.

“Oh! thank you a thousand times,” she said. “I *knew* you were a gentleman at the first word to those cowards; but I never dreamed you were Mr. Van Morris. I’ve heard sister speak of you *so* often!”

“*Your* sister?” Van stared at the cheaply-clad night wanderer, as though *he* had had too much Regent’s punch.

“Yes, sister Rose – Rose Wood,” she said, with the confidence of acquaintance. “I’m her sister, you know – Blanche.”

“Blanche? Your name is Blanche? I cannot tell you how happy I am to have chanced along just now, Miss Wood;” and Van bared his head in the cutting night wind to the blanket-shawled girl in the night-liner, as he would not have done at high noon to a duchess in her chariot. “But I’m wasting your time from your mother; so good-morning; and may your Christmas be happier than its eve.”

“Good-by! And oh, *how* I thank you!” the girl said, again extending her hand over the cab door. “I’ll tell Rose, and *she* shall thank you, better than I can!”

“Good-night! But don’t trouble *her*,” Van said, releasing the girl’s hand. “One minute, Murphy,” he added aside to the driver; “here’s your Christmas-gift!”

A bright gold piece glinted in the dirty fur glove, in which Dennis Murphy looked to find a shilling under the next gas-lamp.

“Blanche! and the same golden hair, too!” Van muttered to himself, as the cab rocked and ricketted down the street. “Well, I suppose that is what the poet means by ‘the magic of a name!’” and he suddenly recalled that he was still standing bareheaded in the blast. “And Rose Wood’s sister looks like that! Well, verily one half the world does *not* know how the other half lives!”

Then he turned and strode rapidly homeward; pulling hard, as he thought many strange thoughts, on the dead cigar between his lips.

Once in his own parlor, Van Morris walked straight to the mirror over the mantel, and looked long and steadily at himself. Then he tossed Mr. Allmand’s half-smoked cigar contemptuously into the grate, lit one he selected carefully from the carved stand near, and threw himself into a smoking-chair before the ruddy glow of coals.

“I must be getting old,” he soliloquized. “I didn’t use to get bored so easily by these things. Either balls are not what they were, or *I* am not. Now, ‘there’s no place like home!’ Not much of a box to call home, either!” And he glanced round the really elegant apartment in half-disgust. “There’s *something* lacking! Andy’s the best fellow in the world, but he’s so wanting in order. Poor old boy! Wonder if he *will* drink anything more? I surely must blow him up to-morrow morning. How deucedly sharp *she* is!” and he smiled to himself. “She saw through Rose Wood’s game at a glance. Wonder if she saw through *me*?”

He looked steadily into the glowing coals, as though castles were building there. Once or twice his lips moved soundlessly; and suddenly he reached over to the escritoire near by, and taking an oval case from it, opened it, and gazed long and earnestly at the picture in it. The face was the average one of a young girl, with stiff plaits of hair stiffly tossed over the shoulder, in futile chase after grace; but the wide blue eyes were a glory of purity and trust, and they were the eyes of Blanche Allmand.

Then he rose abruptly, walked to the sideboard, and filled a glass with water. Then he placed carefully in it the cactus flower and camelia bud, which had never left his hand since he plucked them in the conservatory. As he did so, Morris’ face grew serious, and looked down wistfully into the fire.

When he raised his eyes they were full of hopeful light, and they rested long and steadily upon the flowers.

“Yes! *It is* better!” he exclaimed aloud, as though continuing a train of thought. “Some of *that* family bloom only once in a century. I cannot look for miracles, and many a hand may reach for *my* flower. Yes, to-morrow shall settle it! The Italian was even more philosopher than poet when he said, ‘*Amare e no essere amato e tempo perduto*!’”

VI

When Mr. Andrew Browne tumbled into the cosy parlor of that bachelor's box at 4 A.M. on Christmas morning, he was by all odds the happiest man of his acquaintance, even if he knew himself, which was more than doubtful.

He slammed the door, slung his fur-lined overcoat across the sofa, turned up the gas until it whistled merrily, and poked the fire until it roared again. Then he hunted the boot-jack, and drew off one boot; changed his mind, and flung himself into the smoking-chair, and stretched booted and unbooted foot to the blaze. Thus posed, he trolled out, "*Il segreto per esser felice*," in a rich baritone; only interrupting his *tempo* to spit out superfluous ends, bitten from his cigar, in the effort to phrase neatly and smoke at the same time.

"Why the deuce don't you get to bed?" growled Van Morris from the next room. He was aroused from dreams of Blanche Allmand, music, diamond solitaires, and orange-blossoms, mixed into one sweet confusion. "Stop your row, can't you? and go to bed!"

"You go to bed yo'sef!" responded the illogical Andy, rising, not too steadily, on his one boot, and throwing wide the folding-door. "Who wants to go to bed? *I sha'n't*."

"You're an idiot!" muttered Mr. Morris; and he turned his face to the wall.

"Guess am an idiot," responded Andy, blandly. "But I ain't tight, – only happy! I'm the happiest idiot —*Il segreto per ess*— Say, Van! I'm so *devilish* happy, ol' boy!"

Morris turned over with a groan, and pulled the covering over his head. The strong, small word he uttered as he did so is not to be found in the church service. But Andy was not to be snubbed in that style. He stepped forward; attempted to sit on the bed's edge; miscalculated his momentum, and succeeded in landing plump on the centre of his friend's person.

"Confound you!" gasped the latter, breathless. "You're as drunk as – as a fool!"

"No, I ain't," chuckled Andy, imperturbably happy. Then he laughed till the bed shook; composing himself suddenly into gravity, with a fierce snort – "No, I ain't: you're sober!"

"And when *she* asked, I said you never drank," reproached the irate and still gasping Morris. "I *lied* for you!"

"Tha's nothing. I'll lie for you; lie for you to-morrow – see'f I don't! Say, Van, ol' boy, I ain't tight; only happy —*so* happy! Van! *Van!*" and he shook the pretended sleeper heavily. "I'm goin' to reform! I'm goin' to be married!"

"*What? Rose Wood?*"

Van Morris sat bolt upright in bed now. The tone of voice in which he invoked Miss Wood might have brought response from that wise virgin, disrobing for triumphant rest full ten blocks away.

But he found it vain to argue with Andy's mixed Burgundy and champagne punch. Contradiction but made him insist more strongly that he *was* engaged to the old campaigner, whom Morris had so manœuvred to outflank. Finally, in a miscellaneous outfit of evening pants, night-gown, and smoking-cap, he succeeded in getting the jubilant groom *in futuro* into bed, where he still hummed at the much-sought secret of happiness, until he collapsed with a sudden snore, and slept like the Swiss.

Then Morris walked the floor rapidly, wrapped in thought and a cloud of fragrant cigar-smoke. Then he threw himself once more into the smoking-chair, and gazed long and earnestly into the coals, a heavy frown resting on his face. Suddenly it cleared off; the sunshine of a broad smile took its place; and Van tossed the end of his cigar exultingly into the fire. Then he rose and stretched himself like a veritable son of Anak, when

"Stalwart they court the rapture of the fight."

"I have it, by George!" he cried. "I'll get the poor fellow out of this box, if the old girl did induce him to pop, and accepted him out of hand! Andy! I say, Andy, wake up!" and he ran into his chum's room, dragged him out of bed, and had him at the fire, before he was well awake.

Mr. Andrew Browne was no longer in a mood even approaching the jubilant. He had utterly forgotten the secret *per esser felice*, during his two hours' nap. He confessed to a consuming desire for Congress-water, and made use of improper words upon finding only empty bottles, aggravating in reminiscence of it, in the carved ebony sideboard.

Finally he sat down, with his head in his hands, and told his story dismally enough.

Miss Rose Wood's carriage had been dismissed, as per programme. Andy had led the German with her, and a bottle of champagne at his side. He had walked home with her; had told her – in what wild words he knew not – that he loved her; and had been, as Van had surmised, "accepted out of hand."

"And, Van, I'm bound, as a man of honor, to marry her!" finished the now thoroughly dejected *fiancé*. "Yes, I know what you'd say; it *is* a pretty rum thing to do; but then she mustn't suffer for my cursed folly!"

"Suffer? Rose Wood *suffer* for missing fire one time more?"

Surprise struggled with contempt in the exclamation Morris shot out by impulse.

"But, if she loves me well enough to engage – " Andy began, rather faintly; but his mentor cut him short.

"Love the d —*deuce!*" he retorted. "Why, she's a beggar and a husband-trap!"

"But her family? What will *they* think?" pleaded Andy, but with very little soul in the plea.

"Poor little Blanche!" muttered Morris, half to himself. "Bah! the girl *has* no heart!"

"Blanche?" echoed Van, in a dazed sort of way. "Why, you don't suppose Blanche will know it! I never thought of *her!*" and he rose feebly, and stood shivering in his ghostly attire.

"Why, of course, Rose Wood couldn't keep such great news. Why, man, you're the capital prize in the matrimonial lottery; but hang me if Miss Wood shan't draw another blank this time!"

There was a compound of deadly nausea and effortful dignity in the elbows Mr. Andrew Browne leaned upon the mantel, which hinted volumes for what his face might have said, had it been visible through the fingers latticed over it.

"I am a gentleman," he half gasped. "It *may* be a trap; but I'll keep my word, and —*marry* her, unless – unless, Van, you get me out of it!"

"Go to bed, you spoon!" laughed his friend. "I have the whole plan cut and dried. I'll teach you your lesson as soon as you sleep yourself sober."

Morris stood many minutes by the bedside of his quickly-sleeping friend; but, when he turned into the parlor again, his face was pale and stern.

"The way of the world, always," he said aloud. "One inanely eager, another stupidly backward. 'Fools rush in where angels fear to tread!' Poor boy! he'd give as much to-morrow to unsay his words as I would to have spoken those I nearly said last night!"

The chill gray dawn outside was wrestling at the windows for entrance with the sickly glaring gas-light within. Morris drew aside the heavy curtains and pressed his forehead against the frost-laced pane. Long he looked out into the gray haze with eyes that saw nothing beyond his own thoughts. Then he turned to the fire again. The gray ash was hiding the glow of the spent coals. Then he took up the glass once more and looked earnestly at the contrasted flowers it held. He replaced it almost tenderly, and walked slowly to his own room.

"Yes, I know *myself*," he said; "I think I know *her*. I'll hesitate no longer; some fool may 'rush in.' To-morrow shall settle it. The tough old Scotchman was right:

'He either fears his fate too much,

Or his deserts are small,
That dares not put it to the touch

To gain or lose it all!”

VII

That same afternoon, at two o'clock, Mr. Vanderbilt Morris's stylish dog-cart, drawn by his high-spirited bays, drew up at Miss Rose Wood's domicile. Holding the reins sat Mr. Andrew Browne, beaming as though *Chambertin* had never been pressed from the grape; seemingly as fresh as though headache had never slipped with the rest out of Pandora's box.

But it may have been only seemingly; for, faultlessly attired from scarf-pin to glove tips, Andy was still a trifle more uneasy than the dancing of his restless team might warrant in so noted a whip as he. A queer expression swept over his handsome face from time to time; and, as he came to a halt, he glanced furtively over his shoulder, as though fearing something in pursuit.

“Ask Miss Rose if she will drive with me,” he said hurriedly to the servant. “Say I can't get down to come in; the horses are too fresh.”

Then the off-horse danced a polka in space, responsive to deft tickling with the whip.

Miss Wood did not stand upon ceremony, nor upon the order of her going, but went at once to get her wraps.

“Better late than never,” she said to herself, as she dived into a drawer and upset her mouchoir case in search for a particular handkerchief. “I really couldn't comprehend his absence and silence all day – but, poor boy! he's *so* young!” And then Miss Rose, as she tied a becoming cardinal bow under her chin, hummed two bars of “The Wedding March” through the pins in her mouth.

Two minutes later saw her seated on the high box beside her future lord *in posse*; the bays plunging like mad and Andy swinging to the reins as if for life. For, before she could speak one word – and for no reason to her apparent – he had let the limber lash drop stingingly across their backs.

Very keen was the winter wind that swept by her tingling ears; and Miss Wood raised her seal-skin muff and hid her modest blushes from it. For that gentle virgin had ever a familiar demon at her elbow. His name was Experience; and now he whispered to her: “A red nose never reflects sentiment!”

“And *he* is so particular how one looks,” Miss Rose whispered back to the familiar; and her tip-tilted feature sought deeper protection in the furs.

At length, when well off the paved streets, the mad rush of the brutes cooled down to a swinging trot – ten miles an hour; Browne's tense arms relaxed a trifle; and he drew a long, deep breath – whether of relief, or anxiety, no listener could have guessed. But he kept his eyes still rooted to that off-horse's right ear as though destiny herself sat upon its tip.

Then, for the first time, he spoke; and he spoke with unpunctuated rapidity, in a hard, mechanical tone, as though he were a bad model of Edison's latest triumph, and some tyro hand was grinding at the cylinder.

“Miss Rose,” he began, “we are old friends – never so old; but I can never sufficiently regret – last night!”

He felt, rather than saw, the muff come sharply down and the face turn full to him; regardless now of the biting wind.

“No! don't interrupt me,” he went on, straight at the off-horse's right ear. “I *know* your goodness of heart; *know* how it pained you; but you could have done nothing else but —*refuse me!*”

Miss Rose Wood's mouth opened quickly; but a providential gutter jolted her nearly from the seat; and the wind drove her first word back into her throat like a sob.

The inexorable machine beside her ground on relentless.

“Yes, I understand what you would say: that you refused me *firmly* and *finally* because I —*deserved it!*” Had Andy Browne’s soul really been the tin-foil of the phonograph, it could not have shown more utter disregard of moral responsibility. “You knew I was under the influence of wine; that I would never have dared to address you had I been myself! I repeat, I deserve my —*decisive rejection!* It was proper and just in you to say ‘*No!*’”

Woman’s will conquered for one brief second. Spite of wind and spite of him, Miss Wood began:

“*No?* I – ”

“Yes, *no!*” broke in the relentless machinery. It ground on implacable, though great beads stood on Andy’s brow from sheer terror lest he run down before the end. “*No!* as firmly, as emphatically as you said it to me last night. Indeed, I honor you the more for flatly refusing the man who, in forgetting his self-respect, forgot his respect —*for you!* But, Miss Rose, while I pledge you my honor never, *never* to speak to you again *of love*, I may still be —*your friend!*”

The bays were bowling down the street again by this time; when another *kismet*, in small and ugly canine form, flew at their heads with yelp and snarl. Rearing with one impulse, the spirited pair lunged forward and flew past the now twinkling lamps in a wild gallop. Andy pulled them down at last; their swinging trot replacing the dangerous rush. The Wood mansion was almost in sight; but the Ancient Mariner was a tyro to Andy Browne in the way he fixed that off-horse’s right ear with stony stare.

He might have looked round in perfect safety. The lithe figure by him sat gracefully erect. The face a trifle pale; the lips set tight against each other, with the blood pressed out of them, were not unnatural in that cutting wind. The eyes, fixed straight ahead, as his own, gleamed gray and cold; only a half-closing of the lids, once or twice, hiding an ugly light reflecting through them from the busy brain behind. But Andy never turned once until he brought up the bays stock still and leaped down to offer his hand to the lady at her own door.

She took it, naturally; springing to the ground as lightly as any *débutante* of the season. Not one trace of annoyance, even, showed on that best educated face.

“Andy, we *are* old friends,” she said, offering her hand frankly.

He took it mechanically, with a dazed soft of feeling that he must be even a bigger fool than he felt himself.

“Real friends,” Miss Wood went on, pleasantly, “and I’ll prove it to you now. *You* have acted like a man of honor to me; *I* will betray one little confidence, and make two people happy!”

The man still stood dumb; and his eye furtively wandered to the pawing off-horse, as if to take *his* confidence as to what it meant. The woman’s next words came slowly, and she smiled; a strange smile the lips alone made, but in which the glinting gray eyes took no share.

“For Van Morris is your best friend, after all. He will remember that I told him, last night, ‘One cannot be too careful!’”

She rose on tiptoe, whispered three words, and was gone before he could frame one in reply.

Once more those ill-used bays got the whip fiercely; and they turned the corner so short that Mr. Trotter Upton looked over his shoulder with a grin, and remarked to the blaze-faced companion in his sulky shafts:

“Nine hundred dollars’ worth of horse risked with nine dollars’ worth of man! Van Morris better drive his own stock. G’long!”

VIII

It was two o’clock when Mr. Andrew Browne had ridden forth to recapture his plighted troth.

The shades of Christmas evening had now wrapped the city completely, and the gilt clock upon his parlor mantel now pointed to six. Still he had not returned; and still Van Morris’s eagerness to

test the issue of his own tactics was too keen to let him leave their rooms. He had even resisted the temptations of a gossip at the club, and was smoking his fifth cigar – a thought-amused smile wreathing his lips – when the chime of six startled him suddenly to his feet.

“How time flies!” he exclaimed. “And we are to dine at the Allmand’s at seven.”

He tossed away his cigar, turned into his own apartment, and made an unusually careful toilet. Then he looked into Browne’s still vacant room once more.

“Where *can* he be?” he muttered. “By George! he must have bungled fearfully if he did not pull through. He certainly had his lesson by heart! But *she* must not be kept waiting,” and his face softened greatly, and the deep, strong light came back into his eyes. “How ceaselessly that old verse comes back to me! And now ‘to put it to the test’ myself.”

He turned to his *escritoire*, and took a small Russia case from the drawer; then to the mantel, and carefully shook the dampness from the two flowers he had placed there that morning. Putting case and flowers carefully in his vest pocket, Van paused at the door, gave a long, sweeping glance – with a sort of farewell in it – to the rooms; then shut himself outside, still repeating *sotto voce*,

“He either fears his fate too much,

Or his deserts are small.”

Metropolitan Christmas was abroad in the streets. Young and old, grandsire and maiden, beggar and parvenu jostled one another on the pavements. Rough men, laden with loosely-wrapped, brown-papered packages, strode happily homeward; wan women skurried along leading eager children from unwonted shopping for dainties; carriages rolled by, with the gas-light glimpsing on occupants in evening dress, driven Christmas dinnerward.

Van Morris recked little of all this, as he strode rapidly over the very spot where his coolness had saved an ugly misadventure twelve hours before. His brain was going faster than his body; one goal only had he in view; one refrain ever sounded in his memory: “To gain, or lose, it all!”

A quick turn of the corner, and he stood at the door he had quietly escaped from during the ball. The servant replied to his inquiry that Miss Blanche was in the library; and thither he turned, with the freedom of long intimacy.

Only the warm glow of fire-light filled the room; there was a rustle, as of a retreating silk dress. There was also a man’s figure, backed by the fire, with that not infrequent expression all over it that tells he would really be at his ease if he only knew how.

“Why, Andy! And in your driving suit!”

“Van, dearest old boy,” cried the other, irrelevantly, “congratulate me! I’m the luckiest dog alive!”

“With all my heart,” Van answered, shaking the proffered hand heartily. “I was sure it would come out all right.”

“You were?” Andy fairly beamed. “She said so!”

“What? *she* said so? Did Rose Wood expect you to break off, then?”

“No, no! Not *that*. She said she knew you’d be glad of the match.”

“Glad of – the match!” Van stared at his friend, with growing suspicion in his mind.

“Yes, you dear old Van! I’m engaged, and just the happiest of – ”

“*Engaged?*” and Van seized Andy by the shoulders with both hands.

“Yes, all fixed! And Rose Wood is just the dearest, best girl after all! I’d never have known happiness but for her!”

Van Morris turned the speaker full to the firelight, and stared hard in his face.

“I wouldn’t have believed it, Andy,” he said, contemptuously. “You have come *here* drunk again!”

“No, indeed! I have pledged my word to *her* never to touch a drop!” protested Andy, with imperturbable good nature. “And, Van, *she has accepted me.*”

“*She?*”

“Yes. Rose said, ‘Morris has his heart set on the match;’ I went straight on that hint, and Blanche Allmand will be Mrs. Andrew Browne next Easter.”

Morris answered no word.

With a deep, hard breath, he turned abruptly, strode to the alcove window, and peered through the curtains into the black night beyond. A great surge of regret swept over him that shook the strong man with pain pitiful to see. He pressed his forehead against the cold glass; and the contrast, so strong, to the hope with which he had looked out thus at the gray dawn, sickened him with its weight. There was a boom in his ears, as of the distant surf; and his brain mechanically groped after a lost refrain, finding only the fragment: “To lose it all! *lose it all!*”

But heart-sickness, like sea-sickness, is never mortal, and it has the inestimable call over the latter of being far less tenacious. And Van Morris was mentally as healthy as he was physically sound. He made a strong effort of a strong will; and turned to face his friend and his – fate. In his hand he held a wilted camellia bud and a crushed cactus flower.

Moving quickly to the fire, he tossed them on the glowing coals; watching as they curled, shrivelled, and disappeared in the heat’s maw. Then he moved quietly to the window and looked into the night once more.

Wholly wrapped up in his new-found joy, Andy Browne saw nothing odd in his friend’s manner or actions. He moved softly about the room, and once more hummed, “*Il segreto per esser felice;*” very low and very tenderly this time.

Suddenly the rustle of silk again sounded on Morris’s ear.

He turned quickly, and looked long, but steadily, into the beautiful face. It was very quiet and gentle; glorified by the deeper content in the eyes and the modest flush upon the cheek. His face, too, was very quiet; but it was pale and grave. His manner was gentle; but he retained the little hand Blanche held out to him, in fingers that were steadier than her own.

“I reminded you last night,” he said, very gravely, “how long we had been friends, Blanche. It is meet, then, that I should be the first to wish you that perfect happiness which only a pure girl’s heart may know.”

Then, without a pause, he turned to Andy, and placed the little Russia case in his hand. As it opened, the eye of a dazzling solitaire flashed from its satin pillow.

“Andy, old friend,” he added, “Rose Wood told you only the truth. I *had* set my heart on Blanche’s happiness; and only this morning I got that for her engagement ring. Put it on her finger with the feeling that Van Morris loves you both – better than a nature like Rose Wood’s can ever comprehend.”

T. C. De Leon.

FROM THE WINDOWS OF A GREAT LIBRARY

“The dead alive and busy.” – Henry Vaughan.

Without, wind-lifted, lo! a little rose
(From the great Summer's heart its life-blood flows),
For some fond spirit to reach and kiss and bless,

Climbs to the casement, brings the joyous wraith
Of the sun's quick world, without, of joyousness

Into this still world of enchanted breath.
And, far away, behold the dust arise,
From streets white-hot, into the sunny skies!
The city murmurs: in the sunshine beats,
Through all its giant veins of throbbing streets,
The heart of Business, on whose sweltering brow
The dew shall sleep to-night (forgotten now).
There rush the many, toiling as but one;
There swarm the living myriads in the sun;
There all the mighty troubled day is loud
(Business, the god whose voice is of the crowd).
And, far above the sea-horizon blue,
Like sea-birds, sails are hovering into view.
There move the living; here the dead that move:

Within the book-world rests the noiseless lever

That moves the noisy, throngèd world forever.
Below the living move, the dead above.

John James Piatt.

“GOING, GOING, GONE.”

I

“Take it to Rumble. He will give you twice as much on it as any other pawnbroker.”

The speaker was a seedy actor, and the person he addressed was also a follower of the histrionic muses. The latter held before him an ulster which he surveyed with a rueful countenance.

It was not the thought of having to go to the pawnbroker's that made him rueful, for he would have parted with a watch, if he had possessed one, with indifference; but the wind that whistled without and the snow that beat against the window-pane made him shiver at the thought of surrendering his ulster. However, he had to do it. Both he and his friend were without money, and it was New Year's eve, which they did not mean to let pass without a little jollification. Therefore they had drawn lots to determine which should hypothecate his overcoat in order to raise funds. The victim was preparing to go to the sacrifice.

“Yes,” continued his friend, “take it to Rumble. He is the Prince of Pawnbrokers. Last week I took a set of gold shirt studs to him. He asked me at what I valued them. I named a slightly larger sum than I paid for them, and the old man gave me fully what they cost me.”

“Let us go at once to Rumble's,” said the other, seizing his hat, and the two sallied forth into the night and the storm.

Down the street they went before the wind-driven snow. Fortunately they did not have far to go.

When they opened the door of Rumble's shop, the old pawnbroker looked up in surprise. The tempest seemed to have blown his visitors in. The windows rattled; the lights flared; fantastic garments, made in the style of by-gone centuries, swayed to and fro where they hung, as though the shapes that might have worn them haunted the place; a set of armor, that stood in one corner, clanked as though the spirit of some dead paladin had entered it and was striving to stalk forth and do battle with the demons of the storm; while the gust that had occasioned all this commotion in the little shop went careering through the rooms at the rear, causing papers to fly, doors to slam, and a sweet voice to exclaim:

“Why, father, what is the matter?”

“Nothing, my dear, it is only the wind,” answered the old man, as he advanced to receive his visitors.

The one with whom he was acquainted nodded familiarly to the pawnbroker, while he of the rueful countenance pulled off his ulster and threw it on the counter, saying:

“How much will you give me on that?”

Rumble, who was a large man, rather fleshy and slow of movement, started toward the back of the shop with a lazy roll, like a ship under half sail. He made a tack around the end of the counter and hove to behind it, opposite the men who had just come in. He pulled his spectacles down from the top of his bald head, where they had been resting, drew the coat toward him, looked at it for an instant, then raised his eyes till they met those of his customer.

“How much do you think it is worth?” he said, uttering the words slowly and casting a commiserating glance at the thinly-clad form of the man before him.

“I paid twenty dollars for it,” said the young man. “It is worth ten dollars, isn't it?”

“Oh, yes!” returned the pawnbroker. “Shall I loan you ten dollars on it?”

“If you please,” answered his customer, whose face brightened when he heard the pawnbroker's words. He had thought he might get five dollars on the ulster. The prospect of getting ten made him feel like a man of affluence.

The pawnbroker opened a book and began to fill the blanks in one of the many printed slips it contained. One of the blanks he filled with his customer's name, James Teague. That was his real name, not the one by which he was known to the stage and to fame. That was far more aristocratical.

As Rumble handed Teague the ticket and the ten dollars, he took a stealthy survey of his slender and poorly-clad form, then glanced toward the window on which great flakes of snow were constantly beating, driven against it by the wind that howled fiendishly as it went through the street, playing havoc with shutters and making the swinging sign-boards creak uncannily.

"Mr. Dixon," said the pawnbroker, turning to Teague's companion, "will not you and your friend wait awhile until the storm slackens? It is pleasanter here by the fire than it is outside."

His visitors agreed with him and accepted his invitation. They seated themselves beside the stove which stood in the center of the room, and from which, through little plates of isinglass, shone cheerful light from a bed of fiery coals. Both leaned back in their chairs; both turned the palms of their hands toward the stove, to receive the grateful heat; and when the old pawnbroker joined them, smiling genially as he sank into his great arm-chair, which seemed to have been made expressly for his capacious form, the same thought came to both of his guests. To this thought Dixon gave expression.

"Mr. Rumble," he asked, "how happened it that you became a pawnbroker?"

"Well, I might say that it was by chance," replied Rumble. "I was not bred to the business."

"I thought not," answered Dixon, as he and his friend exchanged knowing glances.

"I was a weaver by trade," continued Rumble, "and until two years ago worked at that calling in England, where I was born. But I made little money at it, and when an aunt, at her death, left me five hundred pounds, I decided to come to this country and go into a new business."

"But what put it into your head to choose that of a pawnbroker?" asked Dixon.

"Because everybody told me that larger profits were made in it than in any other. You see I am getting on in years, and I have a daughter for whom I must provide. When I die I want to leave her enough to make her comfortable."

The street door was opened and for a moment the room was made decidedly uncomfortable by a cold blast accompanied by driving snow. Again the windows rattled, the armor clanked, and the hanging suits swung and shook their armless sleeves in the air.

A tall, slight young man, clad in well-worn black clothes, stood by the door. Although his beardless pale face was the face of youth, it was not free from the marks of care, and in his large lustrous dark eyes there was a yearning look that spoke, as plainly as words, of desires unfulfilled.

Dixon and Teague exchanged glances which as much as said, "here's another customer for the pawnbroker."

"Is Miss Rumble in?" said the newcomer in a hesitating manner, as he turned toward the old pawnbroker.

"You wouldn't have her out on such a night, would you, Mr. Maxwell?" said Rumble, laughing. "She is in the sitting-room," he added, pointing to the rear; "go right in."

But Maxwell did not go right in. He knocked lightly at the door, which in a moment was opened by a young woman, whose girlish face and willowy figure presented a vision of loveliness to those in the outer room.

As Maxwell disappeared in the sitting-room, Dixon and his friend again exchanged glances which showed that they had changed their opinion in regard to the newcomer's relations with the pawnbroker.

"Well," asked Teague, "have the profits in this business met your expectations?"

"I have not been in it long enough to tell, for I have not had an auction," replied Rumble. "In one respect, however, I have been disappointed. Very few articles on which I have loaned money have been redeemed. I don't understand it."

"Perhaps you are too liberal with your customers," said Dixon.

“You would not have me be mean with them, would you?” answered Rumble. “Why, you know they must be in very straitened circumstances to come to me. If I took advantage of people’s poverty, I would expect that after their death all the old women who have pawned their shawls with me would send their ghosts back to haunt me.”

“Well, I never thought of that,” murmured Dixon. “If their ghosts do come back what very lively times some pawnbrokers must have!”

“But if your customers do not redeem their goods, how do you expect to get your money back?” asked Teague.

“From auctions,” replied the pawnbroker.

“Oh!” was Teague’s response.

“You should have a good auctioneer,” said Dixon.

“The goods will bring a fair return,” replied Rumble quietly.

Although it was apparent that the pawnbroker had begun to mistrust his methods of doing business, it was also evident that he had great faith in auctions. He had attended auctions in his time and had bid on articles, only to see them go beyond the length of his modest purse. Now, he said to himself, the auctioneer would be on his side. The bidding would go up and up and up, and every bid would bring just so much more money into his pocket. Altogether he was well satisfied.

The faces of his guests showed that they at once admired and pitied the old man. They admired his generosity and his faith in human nature, and wished that other pawnbrokers with whom they had dealt had been like him; they pitied him, for they knew that he would have a rude awakening from his dream when the hammer of the auctioneer knocked down his goods and his hopes of getting back the money he had loaned on them.

“It is time we were going,” said Dixon, at last, as his eyes fell on a tall hall clock that stood in a corner, quietly marking the flight of time.

“Well, then let us go,” answered Teague, as he cast a dismal look at the windows, against which the snow was still driven in volleys by the wind that howled as loudly as ever.

It was the pawnbroker’s turn to pity his visitors.

“I am afraid you will take cold going from this warm room out into the storm,” he said to Teague. “Let me lend you an overcoat. You see I have more here than I have any use for,” he added jocosely.

“Oh, I could not think of letting you lend me one!” exclaimed Teague, blushing probably for the first time in his life.

Dixon laughed quietly as he enjoyed his friend’s confusion, while the pawnbroker looked among his stock for a coat that would fit Teague. Presently he advanced with one which he held out with both hands, as he said:

“Let me help you put it on.”

Teague protested.

“Why, you can bring it back to-morrow when you come this way,” added Rumble.

“But how do you know I will bring it back?” said Teague. “I am a stranger to you.”

“Oh, your friend is good surety for you,” replied the pawnbroker. “He is one of my few customers who have redeemed their pledges.”

A thundering blast struck the house. The wind beat at the windows as though it meant to smash them.

The sound of the tempest persuaded Teague to accept the pawnbroker’s offer. Without another word he caught the edge of either sleeve with his fingers and put his arms out behind, while Rumble put the overcoat on him. His arms, however, never found the ends of its capacious sleeves. It was almost large enough for a man of twice Teague’s size. Dixon had a fit of laughter at his friend’s expense, and even the pawnbroker could not forbear a smile.

“It is rather large for you, isn’t it?” said Rumble. “Let us try another.” And then he added: “Why, your own fits you best, of course.”

Then seizing Teague’s ulster, which still lay on his counter, he threw it over its owner’s shoulders, and bade the two men a hearty good-night as they went forth into the storm.

When he had succeeded in closing the door in the face of the tempest, he turned the key in the lock, and then, with a shiver, returned to the fire. As he stood before the stove he smiled and seemed to be chuckling over the thought that he had made Teague wear his own coat. His face wore a happy look. He had a clear conscience. He knew that he was a philanthropist in a small way, and had helped many a poor soul when the light of hope was burning dimly. But he took no credit to himself for this. The opportunity of doing a little good had come in his way, and he had not let it pass; that was all. Besides, as he often said, he expected to make money in his business. He simply conducted it on more liberal principles than most pawnbrokers. When he went into it he was told that a large proportion of pawnbrokers’ customers never redeemed their pledges, and that by advancing on goods pawned only a small percentage of their value, a great deal of money was made in the sale of unredeemed articles. He thought, therefore, that it was only just to loan on whatever was brought to him nearly as much money as he deemed it would bring at auction. To do anything less would, in his opinion, have been to cheat his customers. Besides, if he loaned more money on goods, in proportion to their value, than other pawnbrokers, his return in interest was also greater when the goods were redeemed. This was the peculiar principle on which he did business, and it is needless to say that he did a very large business, much to the disgust of all other pawnbrokers having shops in his neighborhood.

It was not strange, therefore, that, as he stood before the fire on that New Year’s eve, the face of old John Rumble wore a contented smile. The knowledge of having done good brings content, if it brings nothing else; and the pawnbroker knew that he had done well by his customers, and he thought, also, that his customers had done well by him, as he surveyed his full shelves.

While he stood there musing, the door of the sitting-room was opened and his daughter appeared.

“Come, father,” said the girl. “If you don’t hurry you will not have the punch ready by midnight.”

The old man’s face assumed an anxious expression, and he started with a roll for the sitting-room.

Not to have the punch ready to drink in the New Year at the stroke of midnight, would indeed be a calamity. He had never failed to welcome the New Year with a brimming cup. His father had done so before him, his daughter had done so with him, and he hoped his grandchildren would do so after him.

“Bring the punch-bowl, Fanny,” he said, as he went to a cupboard and took out a big black bottle.

His daughter brought him an old-fashioned blue china bowl and hot water, and while he made the punch, Maxwell told him of his plans for the coming year, about which he had been talking with Fanny.

Arthur Maxwell, who was a civil-engineer, had been followed by ill-fortune for some time. Indeed, he made Rumble’s acquaintance in a purely business way; but he called it good fortune that had led him to the pawnbroker’s door, for otherwise he would not have known Fanny. And now fortune seemed really to smile on him. He had secured a position with a railroad company, and was going to Colorado as an assistant of its chief engineer, who had charge of the construction of a railway there.

And then, hesitating, he told the old man that Fanny had promised to be his wife as soon as he could provide a home for her.

The pleasure which Rumble had expressed, as Maxwell told of his good fortune, was a little dashed by this last bit of information. Of course he had expected that his daughter would leave him sometime, and he had not been blind to the fact that Maxwell had gained a place in her affections; nevertheless, he was not quite prepared for this news, and it left a shadow on his kindly face.

“But, father,” said Fanny, advancing quickly, and placing her arm about his neck and her head on his shoulder, “Arthur and I hope that we shall all be together. He may return to New York; but if we have a home in the West you might live with us there.”

It was a loving, tender look which Rumble gave his daughter as she uttered these words.

At that moment the clock began to strike, horns were heard in the street, bells were rung, and in a lull in the storm the musical notes of a chime fell on their ears.

Rumble filled the cups, and then, raising his, he said:

“Here’s to the New Year, and here’s to your success, Arthur, and to Fanny’s happiness.”

And while the clock was still striking, the three drank in the New Year.

II

That year, however, was not a fortunate one for Rumble. His little fund had dwindled. He had, as he thought, barely enough to conduct his business to the time when he could legally have an auction. But how was he to do this and pay his rent? That problem troubled him. It was finally solved by the consent of his landlord, in consideration of a high rate of interest, to wait for his rent until Rumble had his auction. When this arrangement was made, the pawnbroker, who had been gloomy for some time, again wore a cheerful look. His daughter had advised him to pay his rent and curtail his business for the time being; but that, he said, would never do; and when he had tided over the crisis in his affairs, he went on distributing his money among the people who brought him their old clothes and their all but worthless jewellery.

From time to time pawnbrokers called on him and tried to persuade him that his method of doing business was a mistake; that it was not only hurting their business, but was ruining himself. Rumble was not convinced. If his way of doing business took from the profits of other pawnbrokers, they were only meeting with justice, he said; they had made money enough out of the poor; he meant to treat his customers better. He admitted that he might not get his money back from some of his investments, but then the auction would make it all right; what he lost in one way he would get back in another. He looked to the auction as to a sort of Day of Judgment, when there would be a grand evening of accounts.

At last the great day came – the day of the auction. Rumble was full of the importance of the event, and had donned his best clothes in honor of the occasion. He had advertised the auction in several newspapers, and he expected a large attendance. He was somewhat disappointed when, a little while before the time set for the sale, it began to rain; but he hoped for the best.

When the auctioneer rapped on his desk and announced that he was about to open the sale, there were not more than a dozen people in the room. Among them Rumble recognized several pawnbrokers, and the others looked as though they might belong to the same guild. He wondered why they were there. Had they come to bid – to bid at his auction, on goods on which he had loaned more money than they would have loaned? He did not understand it.

When the sale began Rumble took a seat near the auctioneer and watched the proceedings. He soon understood why the pawnbrokers were there. The prices obtained were absurdly small. There was very little competition, and the sale had not gone far before it dawned on Rumble’s mind that the pawnbrokers had a tacit understanding that they would not bid against one another, but would divide the stock among them.

The poor old man’s heart sank, and great beads of perspiration appeared on his brow, as lot after lot went for almost nothing. All his worldly possessions were melting away before his eyes, and he had not the power to put out his hand and save them. Was he dreaming? No, for he could hear the auctioneer’s voice, loud and clear, crying:

“Going – going – gone!”

He turned his head and saw his daughter standing in the sitting-room, near the open doorway, with her eyes fixed upon him. Her face was white, white as the 'kerchief about her neck. She understood it all. Yes, it was all too real.

“Going – going – gone!”

Again those terrible words rang like a knell in his ears, and every time he heard them he knew that he was a poorer man; he knew that more of his little stock had gone at a sacrifice.

At last he scarcely heeded the words of the auctioneer, but sat staring before him like one spell-bound. The buzz of conversation about him seemed like a sound coming from afar, like the roll of waves on the seashore; and through it all, at intervals, like the faint note of a bell warning seamen of danger, came those words telling of his own wreck:

“Going – going – gone!”

When the auction was over Fanny went to her father's side. He was apparently dazed. She helped him to rise. He leaned heavily upon her as she led him into the sitting-room, where he sank back into a chair, and did not utter a word for a long time. At last, when he found voice, he said:

“Going – going – gone! It's all gone, Fanny, all gone! We are ruined!”

The sale on which Rumble had built so many hopes, realized but little more than enough to pay the rent he owed. He did not have money enough to continue his business, and a few days after the auction his pawnshop was closed.

In the meantime, to add to their distress, Fanny had received a letter from Arthur Maxwell, informing her that the railroad company with which he had found employment had failed, owing him several hundred dollars – all his savings. He wrote that there was a prospect that a labor-saving invention of his would be put in use in one of the mines. This was the only gleam of hope in the letter. Fanny answered it, giving Arthur an account of the misfortune which had befallen her father. Although she gave him the number of the new lodging into which they moved when her father's shop was closed, she received no reply. She had hoped soon to have some cheering word from him, but none came. She could not understand his silence. This, in addition to her other troubles, seemed more than she could bear.

Since the auction Rumble had not been a well man. His nerves at that time had received a shock from which he had not recovered.

Between nursing her father, and earning what little she could by sewing, Fanny had a hard time. The pittance she got for her work did not go far toward meeting their expenses. Rumble had given up his shop in the early autumn, and the little money he had saved from the wreck had disappeared when winter set in. At last it became necessary to pawn some of their household goods. Fanny would not let her father go the pawnbroker's, but went herself. When she returned, and showed him the little money she had obtained on the articles she had pledged, he said:

“Why, I would have given twice as much.”

“Yes, father,” answered Fanny, “but all pawnbrokers are not like you.”

“No, no,” muttered the old man. “If they were they would be poor like me.”

Although Rumble was not able to work, he was always talking of what he would do when he felt a little stronger. He worried continually because he was dependent upon his daughter, and every time she went to the pawnbroker's he had a fit of melancholy.

At last, just before Christmas, he became seriously ill. The doctor, whom Fanny called in, said he had brain fever, and gave her little hope of his recovery. His mind wandered, and seemed to go back to the auction, of which he spoke almost constantly. Many times he repeated the words of the auctioneer, that had made such a deep impression on him: “Going – going – gone!”

It was a gloomy Christmas for Fanny, and when New Year's eve came she was still watching by the bedside of her father, whose fever had reached its crisis.

Her thoughts went back to another New Year's eve, when Arthur Maxwell had told her of his plans for the future. And it had been so long since she had heard from him!

She had to get some medicine which the doctor had ordered, and while her father slept, asking an acquaintance who lodged on the same floor to watch over him, she went out, taking with her a gold locket which she meant to pawn.

Although she knew that a pawnbroker had opened a shop where her father had kept his, she had never gone to it. But something seemed to lead her there that evening. When she reached the place her heart almost failed her; but, summoning courage, she entered the shop, and presented the locket to the pawnbroker. While he was examining it two men entered. The pawnbroker's clerk waited on them. She seemed to feel their eyes on her.

When she gave the pawnbroker her name, he said:

“Rumble? Frances Rumble? Why, a young man was here to-day inquiring for Mr. Rumble, and some time ago the carrier brought two letters here for you. I could not tell him where you lived, and he took them away.”

Fanny's heart beat wildly. She was sure that the letters were from Arthur, and that it was he who had inquired for her father.

“Is this Miss Rumble?” said one of the men who had followed her into the shop.

She turned and recognized Dixon. The person with him was Teague. Dixon had just pawned a watch, and had remarked that he wished Rumble still kept the shop.

When Fanny told them of her father's illness and of his misfortune, Dixon and Teague insisted on going home with her, meaning to lend assistance in some way.

When they reached Fanny's humble lodging, and followed her into her father's room, they found Maxwell at Rumble's bedside.

A cry of joy escaped Fanny as her lover folded her in his arms. She soon learned from him that he had never received the letter in which she wrote him about her father's trouble and their removal from the old shop. It had missed him while he was moving about in the West. And then he told her of the success of his invention.

Rumble, whose mind was lucid for the moment, said:

“You will be happy at last, Fanny. Arthur has come for you.”

“And you, too, will be happy with us, father,” replied Fanny, taking his hands in hers.

The old man smiled faintly, and rolled his head to and fro on his pillow, as if he thought differently.

The clock began to strike; it was midnight, and the New Year was at hand. The sound of bells came to their ears, and a distant chime was heard.

Rumble's mind once more began to wander; again he talked about the auction; again he muttered the words that had troubled him so much:

“Going – going – gone!”

They were his last words. The old man's life went out with the old year.

Albert Roland Haven.

THE ROOT OF THE SPOILS SYSTEM

What is known as the spoils system of politics, in a measure common to all times and all forms of government, seems to have reached its highest development in our Republic. This fact justifies the suspicion that something in our form of administration is favorable to such development; and whether we regard the spoils system as praiseworthy or reprehensible, it will be instructive to inquire why it has prevailed in this country as among no other free people.

Most persons who deplore the spoils system urge as one of its greatest evils that it substitutes for the discussion of principles a mere scramble for office; that it teaches men to value the material prizes incident to government above political truth. Such reasoners have strangely mistaken cause for effect. The rarity of ideas in our political discussions is not an effect, but the immediate cause of the spoils system; and behind both, as the direct cause of the latter and the remote cause of the former, lies the difficulty of expressing the popular will in legislative enactment. In other words, we have substituted the pursuit of place for the discussion of principles, because the relations of the people to the law-making body are not sufficiently close.

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