ALGER HORATIO JR.

RALPH RAYMOND'S HEIR

Horatio Alger
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Ralph Raymond's Heir:

Содержание

Jr. Horatio Alger
Ralph Raymond's Heir

CHAPTER I.
THE MYSTERIOUS CUSTOMER

A man of middle age, muffled up in an overcoat, got out of a Third Avenue car, just opposite a small drug shop. Quickly glancing up and down the street with a furtive look, as if he wished to avoid recognition from any passerby who might know him, he entered the shop.

It was a small shop, not more than twelve feet wide by eighteen deep. The only person in attendance was a young man approaching thirty years of age, his eyes and hair very light, and his features small and insignificant. He was the druggist's clerk, working on a small salary of ten dollars a week, and his name was James Cromwell.

He came forward as the person first named entered the shop.

"How can I serve you, sir?" he inquired in a respectful voice.

The person addressed drew from his pocket a piece of paper on which a name was inscribed.

"I want that," he said; "do you happen to have it?"

The shopman's face was tinged with a slight color as he read

the name inscribed on the paper.

"You are aware, I suppose, that this is a subtle poison?" he said, interrogatively.

"Yes," said the other, in a tone of outward composure, "so I understand from the friend who desired me to procure it for him. Have you it, or shall I have to go elsewhere?"

"Yes; we happen to have it by the merest chance, although it is rather a rare drug in the materia medica. I will get it for you at once."

The customer's face assumed an air of satisfaction as the clerk spoke, and he sat down on a stool in front of the counter.

James Cromwell quickly placed a small parcel in his hands, and the customer, drawing out a pocketbook, which appeared to be well-filled, paid for his purchase.

He then walked out of the shop, and to the corner of the street, where he waited for an uptown car. As he left the shop, a ragged boy of ten, with a sharp, weazened face entered.

"I want an ounce of carmels," he said.

"Wait a minute; do you want to earn a quarter?" demanded the shopman, abruptly.

"I reckon I do," answered the urchin.

"Then you must follow the gentleman who just went out of the shop: find out where he lives, and what his name is. Come out, and I will point him out to you."

Just outside of the door, James Cromwell cast his eyes up the street and saw his late customer in the act of jumping on board

a Fourth Avenue car.

"There he is," he said, hastily pointing him out to the boy. "You will have to ride, too. Can you catch that car?"

"I've got no money," said the boy.

"Here's a quarter. Now run."

"But I'm to have a quarter besides?"

"Yes, yes. Make haste."

The boy ran forward, and succeeded in overtaking the car and clambering on board.

"Look here, young chap," said the conductor, suspiciously, "have you got any money to pay your fare?"

"Yes, I have," said the boy. "Don't you be afraid, old hoss."

"Show your money, then."

The boy produced the quarter which had just been given him.

"You're richer than I supposed," said the conductor. "Here's your change."

The boy put back the twenty-two cents remaining in the pocket of his ragged pants, and began to look about him for the passenger whom he was required to track. The latter was seated on the left hand side, four seats from the door.

"I wonder why I'm to foller him about," said the boy to himself. "Maybe he's run off without paying his bill. Anyway, it's nothing to me as long as I earn a quarter. It'll pay me into the Old Bowery to-night."

And the boy began to indulge in pleasing anticipations of the enjoyment he would receive from witnessing the great spectacle

of the "Avenger of Blood," which was having a successful run at the favorite theatre with boys of his class.

Before proceeding, I may mention that the boy referred to was known as Hake, a name whose derivation I have been unable to learn. He had been a street vagrant for half his life, and was precocious in his knowledge of metropolitan life in its lowest phases.

If the gentleman whom he was employed to watch noticed the ragged boy, he hadn't the remotest suspicion that there was the least connection between them, or that his being there had anything to do with his own presence in the car. He took out a paper from his pocket and began to read.

"I wonder how far I've got to go," thought Hake. "If it's far I'll have to ride back, and that'll take three cents more."

He reflected, however, that nineteen cents would remain, and he would besides have the quarter which had been promised him.

"I can go to the theatre, and get a bully dinner, besides," he reflected, complacently.

The car rapidly proceeded uptown, passing Union Square and the Everett House at the corner of Seventeenth Street. Two blocks farther, and the passenger first introduced rose from his seat.

"Next corner," he said to the conductor.

The latter pulled the strap and the car stopped.

The gentleman got out, and turned westward up Twenty-ninth Street.

Hake scrambled out also, and followed him up the street. He crossed Madison Avenue, Fifth Avenue, and did not pause till he had reached a handsome house between Seventh and Eighth avenues. Before this time he had thrown open the coat in which he had been muffled, for the weather was not inclement, appearing to feel that there was now no further need of concealment.

He ascended the steps of the house, and rang the bell.

The door was opened directly by a servant, and he entered.

Scarcely had the door closed when Hake also ascended the steps and looked at the door-plate. The name was there, but unfortunately for Hake, he had not received even an elementary education, and could not read. This was rather inconvenient, as it stood in the way of his obtaining the information he desired.

Looking about him, he saw a schoolboy of his own age passing.

"Look here," he said, "what's that name up there on that door?"

"Can't you read?"

"I left my spectacles at home," said Hake, "and I can't read without 'em."

"It's Paul Morton, then, if you want to know," said the boy, curtly.

"Paul Morton," repeated Hake to himself. "All right!"

But he was not quite sure whether he had not been deceived. So he went to the basement door, and rang.

"What's wanted?" said the servant, curtly.

"Does Paul Morton live here?" asked Hake.

"You might say Mr. Paul Morton while you're about it," said the servant. "Yes, he lives here, and what do you want with him?"

"I was sent here," said Hake with no particular regard for truth, "by a man as said Mr. Morton was a good man, and would give me some clothes."

"Then you won't get them here," said the girl, and the door was slammed in the boy's face.

"I've found out his name now," said Hake, "sure," and he repeated it over to himself until he was certain he could remember it. He retraced his steps to Fourth Avenue, and jumped on board a returning car, and was ere long landed at the druggist's shop.

"Well," said James Cromwell, looking up, "did you do as I told you?"

"Yes," said Hake.

"What did you find out?"

"His name is Paul Morton."

"Where does he live?"

"At No. – West Twenty-ninth Street."

"What sort of house is it?"

"A nice one."

"Are you sure you made no mistake?"

"Yes, it's all right. I want my quarter."

"Here it is."

The boy took the money and scrambled off, well content with the results of his expedition; his mind intent upon the play he was to see in the evening.

"Paul Morton!" mused the clerk, thoughtfully. "I must put that name down. The knowledge may come in use some day. I hope some time or other I shall not be starving on ten dollars a week. It may be that my rise in the world will come through this same Paul Morton. Who can tell?"

CHAPTER II.
THE HOUSE IN TWENTY-NINTH STREET

The house in Twenty-ninth Street was a solid and substantial one which could only be occupied by a man of wealth. It was handsomely furnished, and all the appointments were such as to confirm the impression that its occupant was, to say the least, in easy circumstances financially. But it happens oftentimes that outward impressions are very far from correct. It was a fact that Paul Morton, who had lived here for ten years, was on the verge of ruin, and knew very well that unless some help should come he would be compelled to leave his fine residence and sink into poverty and obscurity.

He was a downtown merchant, but lured by the hope of large gains, had indulged in outside speculations which had sapped the springs of his prosperity and brought him face to face with ruin.

Just at this juncture, on reaching home one day, jaded and anxious, he found that a guest had arrived whom they had not seen for years. Ralph Raymond was his cousin, and of about the same age as himself. As boys they had been sworn friends and comrades, and each had promised the other that if he died first without family ties, he would leave to the survivor his entire property, whatever it might amount to.

When they became young men, Paul Morton remained in New York, but Ralph went, after a few years, to China, where he had spent his subsequent life with brief intervals, as a successful merchant. Paul Morton heard from time to time of his success, and that he had accumulated a fortune, and the thought occurred to him, for earlier generous feelings had been swallowed up in the greed of gain, "If he only dies first, I shall be greatly the gainer."

When he met his friend, he found him greatly changed. He was thin, sallow, and to outward appearance hadn't long to live.

"You find me greatly changed, Paul, do you not?" said Ralph Raymond.

"Yes, you are changed, of course, for I have not seen you for twenty years," was the reply.

"But I am looking very ill, am I not?"

"You are not looking well; but perhaps it is the change of climate."

"It is something more than that," said Ralph, shaking his head. "Old friend, I feel that I have not many months to live. I have within my frame the seeds of a fatal disease, which I cannot much longer stave off. I feel its insidious approaches, and I know that my weakened vital powers cannot much longer resist them. I have one favor to ask."

"What is it?"

"May I spend the short remainder of my life in your house? I shrink from going among strangers. It will be a great relief to me if I can feel that I am in the house of my old friend when the

solemn messenger arrives."

"Surely," said Paul Morton, "I hope you are mistaken in your gloomy prognostications; but, however that may be, you shall be welcome here so long as it pleases you to stay."

"Thank you; I was sure you would consent. As to my being mistaken, that is hardly possible. This time next year I shall not be numbered among the living."

Looking at his thin face and attenuated frame, Paul Morton felt that his words were probably correct, and his heart glowed with exultation as he felt that Ralph Raymond was without family ties, and that at his death, which would soon happen, in all probability his large fortune, one hundred thousand dollars at least, would become his. This would relieve him of all his embarrassments, give him a firm financial standing.

Shortly after Ralph Raymond was confined to his bed by sickness. The physician who was called spoke ambiguously. He might die suddenly, or he might linger for a year. Days and weeks passed, and still he remained in about the same condition, so that the last seemed likely to be the correct prediction.

In the meanwhile, Paul Morton's affairs had become more and more embarrassed. He had plunged into speculations from which he did not see the way out. He perceived his mistake, but too late. Nothing was left but for him to float with the tide, and be borne where it might carry him.

He did not doubt that at the death of his guest, his large property would be his. Indeed, a casual remark of Ralph

Raymond's had confirmed him in the impression. As time wore on, and his pecuniary difficulties increased, he began to long for his friend's death.

"A few months more or less of life would be of little importance to him," he thought, "while to me it is of incalculable importance to come into his estate as soon as possible."

The more he thought of it the more frequently the suggestion was forced upon him that his friend's early death was most desirable. At length, as he was in a book store on Nassau Street one day, he picked up an old medical work, in which there was one division which treated of poisons. One was mentioned, of a subtle character, whose agency was difficult of detection. It did not accomplish its purpose at once, but required some days.

Paul Morton bought this book, and when he reached home he locked it up securely in a drawer accessible only to himself.

We have now brought up the story to the point where the first chapter commences.

The poison which he sought in the small shop on the Bowery was the same whose effects he had seen described in the volume he had purchased in Nassau Street. He had an object in going to an obscure shop, as he would be less likely to be known, and such a purchase would be very apt to attract notice. But it was only by chance that he succeeded. In most shops of such humble pretensions such an article would not be found, but it so happened that some had been ordered by a chemist a year before, and the druggist, thinking it possible he might have a call for it, had

ordered some to keep in his stock.

When Paul Morton reached home, he went up to his friend's chamber.

Ralph Raymond was lying stretched out upon the bed, looking quite sick; but not so sick as at times during his illness.

"How do you feel, Ralph?" said his false friend, bending over him.

"I am feeling more comfortable to-day, Paul," he said.

"Perhaps you will recover yet."

"No, I have no expectation of that; but I may be spared longer than I supposed possible."

"I certainly hope so," said Paul Morton; but there was a false ring in his voice, though the sick man, who had no doubt of his sincere friendship, was far enough from detecting this.

"I know you do," said Ralph.

"What medicines are you taking now?" inquired Paul Morton.

"There is a bottle of cordial; I take a wineglass of it once an hour."

Paul Morton took up the bottle and gazed at it thoughtfully.

"Is your nurse attentive?" he asked.

"Yes, I have no fault to find with her."

"Where is she now?"

"She just went down to prepare my dinner."

"When did you take your cordial last?"

"About an hour since."

"Then it is time to take it again."

"Yes, I suppose so; but I presume a few minutes later will make no difference."

"It is better to be regular about it. As the nurse is away I will give it to you."

"Thank you."

"I must go to the window, to see how much to pour out. How much do you usually take?"

"A wine-glass two-thirds full."

Paul Morton took the bottle and the glass to the window. As he stood there he was out of the observation of the patient. He poured out the required quantity of the cordial into the glass; but after doing so, he slyly added a small quantity of powder from a paper which he drew from his vest pocket. He put the paper back, and reappeared at the bedside holding the glass in his hand.

"I think I have poured out the right quantity," he said; but his voice was constrained, and there was a pallor about his face.

The sick man noticed nothing of this. He took the cup and drained it of its contents, as a matter of course.

"Thank you, Paul," he said.

Paul Morton could not find anything to say in reply to the thanks which fell upon his soul like a mockery.

He took the glass from the trembling hand of the sick man, and looked into it to see if in the depths there might be any tell-tale trace of the powder which he had dropped into it; but he could see nothing.

"Well, I must leave you for a time. Perhaps you can sleep,"

he said.

"Perhaps so; I will try," was the answer.

Paul Morton left the sick chamber, and shut himself up in his own room. He wanted to screen himself from the sight of all, for he knew that he had taken the fatal step, and that already, in deed, as well as in heart, he was a murderer!

CHAPTER III.
AN UNEXPECTED DISCOVERY

The next day Ralph Raymond's unfavorable symptoms had returned, and he was pronounced worse by the physician. Yet the change was not sufficiently marked to excite suspicion. It was supposed that his constitution had not vitality enough to rally against the steady approaches of the disease under which he was laboring.

Paul Morton read from the old medical book which he had picked up in Nassau Street, and which, as we know, had given him the first suggestion of the horrible crime which he had determined upon, the following words:

"The patient has been known to recover where but one dose of this poison has been administered, but should it have been given on two successive days, there is little or no chance that he will survive. Yet, so slow is its operation, that after the second time of administering, it is not impossible that he may survive several days. Cases have been known where the period has extended to a week, but of the final fatal result there can be no question."

"I must go through it again," muttered Paul Morton to himself. "It will not do to fail. While I am about it, I must make a sure thing of it."

He accordingly sought the bedside of the sick man on the next

day, about the same time as before. He had watched till he saw the nurse go down to prepare the patient's dinner.

"How are you feeling, to-day?" he inquired, in apparent anxiety.

"Worse, my friend," said the sick man, feebly.

"But yesterday you said you were better, did you not?"

"Yes, I felt better then, but to-day I have a dull throbbing pain here," and he pointed to his breast.

"Did you not sleep well?"

"Yes, better than usual."

Paul Morton knew that this was the effect of the poison, for it had been referred to in the book.

"I wonder, then, you do not feel better," he said. "I supposed sleep always had a salutary effect."

"It has not had in my case. No, my friend, I feel convinced that I have not many days to live."

"I hope you are wrong. What can I do for you? Shall I not give you your cordial as I did yesterday?"

"Yes, if you like."

Again Paul Morton poured out the cordial, and again, as on the day previous, he filliped into the glass a minute portion of the powder.

The sick man drank it.

"I don't know what it is," he said, "but it does not taste as it used to."

Paul Morton turned pale, but he rallied at once.

"Your sickness, doubtless, affects your sense of taste," he said. "It is very often the case in sickness, even of a lighter character than yours."

"Very likely you are right."

"Can I do anything more for you?" asked Paul Morton, who was now anxious to get away from the presence of his victim. Strange thoughts came over him when he felt that he had taken a decisive step, which now could not be recalled. He had administered the poisonous powder for the second time, and, according to the medical authority which we have already quoted, there was no longer any help for the sick man, his victim. He might live two, three or four days, possibly a week, though this was not probable in the case of one whose constitution was enfeebled by a lingering malady, but his doom was sure.

But he was as truly a murderer as if he had approached him with a loaded pistol, and discharged it full at his temple. Twenty-four hours had made him such. But he did not realize this. He said to himself, "He was sure to die; this act of mine has only hastened the event a little. After all, it may be merciful, for it can hardly be desirable for him to linger in his present condition."

With this miserable casuistry he strove to palliate the treachery and crime which he had just committed, not against a foe who had done him harm, but against his early friend, for whom he had always professed the strongest affection. And all this for the sake of a little dross!

"There is something I want to tell you, Paul," said the sick

man, turning his head on the pillow by an effort, "something which will, perhaps, surprise you, and after that I shall have a favor to ask of you. Will you grant it?"

"Yes," said Paul Morton, "I will grant it. Speak on."

His curiosity was not a little excited by what he had heard. He drew a chair to the bedside, and sat down.

"I am ready to hear what you have to say, Ralph," he said.

"You suppose, and the world supposes that I have never married," the sick man commenced.

Paul Morton started, and he awaited nervously what was to follow.

"The world is right, is it not?" he said hastily.

"No, the world is wrong. Sixteen years ago I married a portionless girl. For reasons which it is unnecessary now to mention, my marriage was not made public, but it was strictly legal. My young wife lived less than two years, but ere she died she gave me a son."

"Is he still living?" asked Paul Morton, in a hoarse voice.

"Yes, he still lives."

"Then," thought Paul, with a sense of bitter disappointment, "all my labor has been for naught. This boy will inherit Raymond's fortune, and his death will be of no benefit to me."

"Where is the boy now?" he asked.

"He is at a boarding-school on the Hudson. He was early educated abroad, but for two years he has been at Dr Tower's boarding-school, about forty miles from New York."

"Does he know anything of his parentage?"

"Yes, I went to see him before I came last to your house. Besides, I have thought it well to communicate all the facts in the case to Dr. Tower as it was possible, that I might die suddenly, and his testimony might be required to substantiate my son's claims to my estates."

"What is your son's name?" asked Paul Morton, rousing a little from the stupor into which the information had thrown him.

"Robert Raymond. It was the name of my wife's only brother, who had died young, and as I had no particular preference, I allowed her to name him."

"Is he in good health?"

"Yes; happily he has not inherited my constitution. He seems healthy and likely to live long. But I am sorry that he will be left so alone in the world, as he must be by my death. This brings me to the favor I was about to ask of you. In my will I have appointed you the guardian of my boy, who is now between fourteen and fifteen. I think it will not occasion you much trouble. My property, which I have put into solid securities, will amount to one hundred and twenty thousand dollars. Of course, therefore, there will be no occasion for stinting him. I desire him to have the best advantages. As for you, my old friend, as a slight compensation for the trouble you will take, and as a proof of my affection, I authorize you to appropriate to your own use, during my son's minority, one-half of the income of the property and pay his expenses out of the other half. What there may be over

can be added to the principal."

"But suppose—though, if the boy is as healthy as you say, there is little fear of that—suppose Robert should die before attaining his majority."

"Should that event happen, and, as you say, it is possible, I desire that the property should go without reserve to you. I have so provided in my will."

A flush of gratification mantled the cheek of Paul Morton, as he heard this statement. "All is not lost," he thought. "The boy *may* die and then–"

This is what he thought, but he said:

"Ralph, you are too kind and generous. It is my earnest hope that such a contingency may never occur."

"I am sure of that. I have perfect confidence in you, and I know you will be kind to my boy. He may be here to-morrow morning."

"Here to-morrow morning!" ejaculated Paul Morton, in surprise.

"Yes. I requested the nurse to write to him yesterday afternoon, in my name, to come at once. As I have but a short time to live, I wish to have him with me during the short remainder of my life—that is, if it will not be inconvenient to you to have him in the house."

"Certainly not, I shall be glad to have him come," said Paul Morton, absently.

"I begin to feel drowsy. I will try to sleep," said the sick man.

"Then I will leave you. I hope you may awake refreshed."

Paul Morton walked out of the sick-room with his eyes bent upon the floor. He wanted to think over this new and unexpected turn of affairs.

CHAPTER IV.
RALPH RAYMOND'S HEIR

In the revelation which had been made him by Ralph Raymond, Paul Morton found fruitful subject of meditation. To begin with, he had been disappointed to find a young life between himself and the estate which he coveted. But, on the other hand, that estate was twenty thousand dollars larger than he supposed; and, moreover, as the boy's guardian, he would have in his own hands the control of the whole for nearly seven years, and be paid in the meantime a handsome sum for his trouble. Besides, many things might happen in seven years. The boy was young and healthy, so his father said, but life is uncertain in all cases. He might die, and in that event, the entire property without reserve, would fall to him—Paul Morton. The situation, therefore, was far from being as discouraging as it might have been.

The next morning Paul Morton was sitting at the breakfast table with his wife opposite him. As nothing has yet been said of Mrs. Morton, a few words of description may not be inappropriate.

Mrs. Morton, then, was ten years younger than her husband. She had belonged to a proud but poor family, and had married from no impulse of affection, but because she considered Mr. Morton a rich man who could give her a luxurious home. No

sympathy need be wasted upon her, for she had very little heart, and lived only for ostentation. There had been very little domestic harmony between the two. She had shown herself lavishly extravagant, even beyond her husband's means, and any tendency on his part to curb her extravagance was met by biting sarcasm, and an exhibition of ill temper which soon compelled him to surrender at discretion.

Such was the ill-assorted couple who sat at the breakfast table on the morning of which I am speaking.

Mr. Morton, of whose personal appearance I have not yet spoken, was in appearance fifty-four years of age, though he was really several years younger. He had lost nearly all his hair, retaining only a few locks on either side of his head. There was a furtive look about his eyes calculated to inspire distrust. He seemed reluctant to look one full in the face. On the whole the impression given by his features was unfavorable. They seemed to indicate a mean, ignoble disposition, so truly do the inner qualities mark their impress on the face.

"Well, Mr. Morton," said his wife, leaning back in her chair, "have you brought me the money I asked for yesterday?"

"No," said Mr. Morton uneasily, for he knew that this reply would elicit a storm.

"And why not, I should like to know?" she exclaimed, with flashing eyes. "Don't pretend to say you forgot it, for I won't believe any such nonsense."

"No, I didn't forget it, Mrs. Morton," said her husband, "but

the fact is, it was not convenient for me to bring it."

"Not convenient! What do you mean by that, Mr. Morton?" exclaimed the lady in an angry voice.

"It is just as I say. Business is very dull and money is tight."

"That is what you always say," said Mrs. Morton, curling her lip.

"Whether I do or not, it is true enough now. I wish it wasn't."

"I only asked for a hundred dollars. Surely that would make no difference in your business."

"That is where you are mistaken. If you will be kind enough to remember how often you call upon me for such trifles, and have a head for arithmetic, you can estimate what they will amount to in the course of a year."

"But I haven't a head for arithmetic, and don't want to have. I always despised it. All I know is, that I have picked out a lovely silk dress pattern at Stewart's, and I want to go round and secure it this morning, or I may lose it altogether."

"If you do, I think you will manage to survive it."

"You'd better not try to be sarcastic, Mr. Morton. You haven't the brains for it, and it isn't in your line."

"You are complimentary."

"No, I only show a proper discrimination. Heaven knows I have lived with you years enough, and weary ones at that, to understand you thoroughly. Can't you send me up a check from your store? It will be in time if I receive it by eleven o'clock."

"No, I cannot," said Paul Morton, with unusual firmness.

"So you refuse, do you?" exclaimed Mrs. Morton, in deep anger.

"I do; and for a good reason."

"Give me your reason, then. I should like to judge of it myself."

"Then I will tell you without reserve, what I had not intended to mention. In all my mercantile career I was never in such danger of ruin as at the present. The dull times at which you sneer have proved very disastrous to me. It is all I can do to keep my head above water. Every day I fear that the crash will come, and that instead of being able to afford you this establishment, I shall be obliged to remove into some humble dwelling in Brooklyn, and seek for a position as clerk or bookkeeper. How would you fancy this change, madam? Yet it is at such a time you harass me with your unreasonable demands for money. If I am ruined, it will be some satisfaction that you, who have had so much to do with bringing it on, are compelled to suffer its inconveniences with me."

Mrs. Morton turned pale while he was speaking, for she had never known anything of her husband's business affairs, and supposed that such a thing as his failure was impossible. To be reduced to poverty, where a wife loves her husband and is beloved in return, is not so hard; but where there is no pretence of love, and the wife lives only for show, it is felt as a terrible misfortune.

"You are only saying this to frighten me," she said after a

pause, with an attempt to rally.

"If you think that, you are utterly mistaken," said her husband. "I wish, indeed, that it were true, but unfortunately it is not. My position is to the full, as hazardous, and my ruin as imminent as I have told you. You can imagine whether I have a hundred dollars to spare for you to spend at Stewart's."

Mrs. Morton was for a brief time silent. She hardly knew how to answer; at last she said, "There's your sick friend upstairs. Isn't he a rich man?"

"Yes."

"He won't live very long, probably. Won't he leave you anything?"

"I expected that he would leave me his entire fortune, according to an old promise between us; but only yesterday I learned that he has a son living."

"And you will receive nothing, then?" said his wife, disappointed.

"Not so. I shall be left guardian of the boy, and for seven years I shall receive half the income of the property in return for my services."

"And how much is the property?"

"A hundred thousand dollars or more."

"What will be your share of the income?"

"Probably not less than four thousand dollars."

"Four thousand dollars!" said the lady with satisfaction. "Then you won't have to get a situation as clerk, even if you do fail.

We can go to a stylish boarding-house. It won't be so bad as I thought."

"But I shan't be able to give you two thousand dollars a year for dress, as I have been accustomed to do."

"Perhaps you won't fail."

"Perhaps not. I hope not."

"Where is this boy?"

"He is at a boarding-school on the Hudson. I expect him here this morning."

Scarcely had he said this when a servant opened the door and said, "Mr. Morton, there is a boy just come who says he is Mr. Raymond's son."

"Bring him in," said Paul Morton.

A moment later, and a boy of fourteen entered the room, and looked inquiringly at the two who were sitting at the table.

"Are you Robert Raymond?" inquired Mr. Morton.

"Yes, sir," said the boy, in manly tones. "How is my father?"

"Your father, my poor boy," said Paul Morton, in pretended sadness, "is, I regret to say, in a very precarious condition."

"Don't you think he will live?" asked Robert, anxiously.

"I fear not long. I am glad you have come. I will go up with you at once to your father's chamber. I hope you will look upon me as your sincere friend, for your father's sake. Maria, my dear, this is young Robert Raymond. Robert, this is Mrs. Morton."

Mrs. Morton gave her hand graciously to the boy. Looking upon him as her probable savior from utter ruin, she was disposed

to regard him with favor.

Mr. Morton rose from the table, and motioning Robert to follow him, led the way to the sick man's chamber.

CHAPTER V.
JAMES CROMWELL GAINS SOME INFORMATION

On the east side of the Bowery is a shabby street, which clearly enough indicates, by its general appearance, that it is never likely to be the resort of fashionable people. But in a large city there are a great many people who are not fashionable, and cannot aspire to fashionable quarters, and these must be housed as well as they may.

There stands in this street a shabby brick house of three stories. In the rear room of the upper story lived James Cromwell, the clerk in the druggist's store already referred to in our first chapter. The room was small and scantily furnished, being merely provided with a pine bedstead, painted yellow, and a consumptive-looking bed, a wooden chair, washstand, and a seven-by-nine mirror. There was no bureau, and, in fact, it would have been difficult to introduce one into a room of the dimensions.

The occupant of the room stood before the mirror, arranging his rather intractable hair, which he had besmeared with bear's grease. He surveyed the effect with some complacency, for it is a little remarkable that those who are least gifted with beauty, are very apt to be best satisfied with their personal appearance.

He had arrayed himself in a rusty black suit which showed his lank figure in all its natural ungracefulness and was evidently on the point of going out.

"Now for Twenty-ninth Street," he said, as he descended to the street. "I hope Hake has not deceived me. If he has, I will twist the little rascal's neck."

He got on board a Fourth Avenue car, and rode uptown. Nothing occurred to interrupt his progress, and in the course of half an hour he stood before the house which, as we already know, was occupied by Paul Morton.

He stood and surveyed it from the opposite side of the street.

"That's the house that Hake described," he said, "but whether my customer of the other day lives there or not, I cannot tell. And what is worse, I don't know how to find out."

While he was devising some method of ascertaining this, to him, important point, fortune favored him. Mr. Paul Morton himself appeared at the door, accompanied by the physician. As the distance was only across the street, James Cromwell had no difficulty in hearing the conversation that passed between them.

"What do you think of him, doctor?" asked Paul Morton, in accents of pretended anxiety. "Don't you think there is any help for him?"

"No; I regret to say that I think there is none whatever. From the first I considered it a critical case, but within two or three days the symptoms have become more unfavorable, and his bodily strength, of which, at least, he had but little, has so sensibly

declined, that I fear there is no help whatever for him."

"How long do you think he will last, doctor?" was the next inquiry.

"He cannot last a week, in my judgment. If he does it will surprise me very much. He is wealthy, is he not?"

"Yes; he has been a successful man of business."

"Where has he passed his life?"

"In China. That is, he has lived there for a considerable time."

"Probably the climate may have had a deleterious effect upon his constitution. I will call round upon him to-morrow."

"Very well, doctor. I will rely upon you to do whatever human skill can accomplish for my sick friend."

"I am afraid human skill, even the greatest, can do little now. There are some recent symptoms which I confess, puzzle me somewhat, as they are not usual in a disease of the character of that which affects our patient."

"Indeed!" said Paul Morton, briefly, but in a tone which did not indicate any desire to continue the discussion of this branch of the subject. "Well, doctor, I will not further trespass upon your time, which I know very well is valuable. Good-night."

"Good-night!" said the physician, and drawing on his gloves, he descended the steps, and jumped into the carriage which was waiting for him.

Paul Morton closed the door, unaware that there had been a listener who had gleaned valuable information from the conversation he had just had with the doctor.

"Well," thought James Cromwell, emerging from the shaded doorway in which he had silently concealed himself—for he did not wish to run the risk of detection and possible recognition by his old customer, whom he, on his part, had recognized without difficulty,—"well, I'm in luck. I happened here just at the right time. I know pretty well what's going on now, and I can give a guess as to the rest. It seems there's a sick man inside, and that within two or three days he has been growing sicker. Maybe I could give a guess as to what has made him grow sicker. So the doctor don't understand some of his recent symptoms. Perhaps I could throw a little light upon the matter, if it were worth my while. Then, again, the sick man happens to be wealthy. Perhaps, there is nothing in that, and then, perhaps, again, there is. Well, there are strange things that happen in this world, and, if I'm not mistaken, I'm on the track of one of them, I rather think I shall find my advantage in it before I get through. I've got that man in my power, if things are as I suspect, and it won't be long before I shall let him know it. I might as well be going home now."

James Cromwell walked to Broadway, then walked a few squares down, until he reached the Fifth Avenue Hotel, bright with lights, and thronged as usual in the evening.

"I think I will go in and have a smoke," said James Cromwell.

He entered, and making his way to the cigar stand, purchased an expensive cigar, and sat down for a smoke. It was not often that he was so lavish, but he felt that the discovery he had made would eventually prove to him a source of income, and this made

him less careful of his present means.

"This is the way I like to live," he thought, as he looked around him. "Instead of the miserable lodging, where I am cooped up, I would like to live in a hotel like this, or at least, in a handsome boarding-house, and fare like a gentleman."

While he was thinking thus, his attention was drawn to a conversation which he heard beside him. The speakers were apparently two business men.

"What do you think of Morton's business position?"

"What Morton do you mean?"

"Paul Morton."

"If you want my real opinion, I think he is in a critical condition."

"Is it as bad as that?"

"Yes, I have reason to think so. I don't believe he will keep his head above water long unless he receives some outside assistance."

"I have heard that whispered by others."

"It is more than whispered. People are getting shy of extending credit to him. I shouldn't be surprised myself to hear of his failure any day."

James Cromwell listened eagerly to this conversation. He was sharp of comprehension, and he easily discerned the motive arising in Paul Morton's embarrassed affairs, which should have led him to such a desperate resolution as to hasten the death of a guest. There was one thing he did not yet understand. Paul

Morton must be sure that the death of the sick man would rebound to his own advantage, or he would not incur such a risk.

"Probably, it is his brother or uncle, or, perhaps, father," concluded the clerk. "Whoever it is, it makes little difference to me. Let him play out his little game to the end, and enter into possession of his money, which, by the way, I hope will be a pretty good pile. Then I will step quietly in, and with what I know of a certain purchase, it will be very strange if I cannot help myself to a generous slice."

After finishing his cigar, the druggist's clerk went out of the hotel, and it being a fine, moonlight evening, he concluded to walk home. As he walked, his mind was full of pleasing reflections. He looked about him with disgust, as he entered his humble and not very attractive home, and he soliloquized:

"If things go right, I won't live here much longer, nor will I stand behind the counter of a two-penny druggist's shop, at ten dollars a week."

CHAPTER VI.
THE FACE AT THE FUNERAL

"Ralph, here is your son," said Paul Morton, ushering the boy into the sick chamber of his father.

The sick man turned his face toward those who had just entered, and his face lighted up as his glance rested on his son.

"I am glad you have come, Robert," he said.

"Dear father," said Robert, bursting into tears, "how sick you are looking!"

"Yes, Robert," said Ralph Raymond feebly, "I am not long for this world. I have become very feeble, and I know that I shall never leave this chamber till I am carried out in my coffin."

"Don't say that, father," said Robert in tones of grief.

"It is best that you should know the truth, my son, especially, as my death cannot be long delayed."

"You will live some months, father, will you not?"

"I do not think I shall live a week, Robert," said his father. "The sands of my life are nearly run out; but I am not sorry. Life has lost its attractions for me, and my only desire to live would proceed from the reluctance I feel at leaving you."

"What shall I do without you, father?" asked the boy, his breast heaving with the painful sobs which he was trying in vain to repress.

"I shall not leave you wholly alone, my dear boy. I have arranged that you may be in charge of my old friend, Mr. Morton, who, I am sure will take the tenderest care of you, and try to be a father to you."

"Yes," said Paul, coming forward, "as your father says, I have promised to do for you what I can when he has left us. I would that he might be with us for many years, but since Providence in its inscrutable wisdom has ordained otherwise, we must bow to the stroke and do the best we can."

He put his fine cambric handkerchief to his eyes to wipe away the tears which were not there, and seemed affected by deep grief.

Robert cast a glance at the friend to whom he was to be consigned, but saw nothing to inspire confidence. There are some who almost unconsciously attract children, and draw young hearts to them in love and confidence. But Paul Morton was far from being one of the class. There was much in his crafty, insincere face to repel, little to attract, and so Robert judged, though he did not think of it at that time. He rather wondered why he felt so little drawn toward the man whom his father praised so highly; but the instincts of childhood were right; and the boy found no subsequent reason to correct his first impressions.

The interview did not last long, for it was apparent that the excitement was acting unfavorably upon the sick man, whose strength was now very slight. So Paul Morton left the room, but by Ralph's request Robert was left behind, on condition that he

would not speak. The boy buried his head in the bed clothes and sobbed gently. In losing his father he lost his only relative, and though he had not seen very much of him in his lifetime, that little intercourse had been marked by so much kindness on the part of his father, that apart from the claims of duty arising from relationship, he felt a warm and grateful love for his parent. The bitterness of being alone in the world already swept over him in anticipation, and he remained for hours silent and motionless in the sick chamber of his father.

Matters continued thus for two days. During that time Paul Morton came little into the sick chamber. Even his audacious and shameless spirit shrank from witnessing the gradual approaches of that death which had been hastened by his diabolical machinations.

Besides, there was no object to be gained, he thought. Death was now certain. There was no need of his doing anything more to hasten it. Then, as to the disposition of the property, there was no chance now of any change being made in the arrangement. He knew precisely what advantage he was himself to reap from his friend's death, and though it was not so great as he at first anticipated, it would be enough to put a new face upon his affairs.

Besides, he would have the entire control of his ward's property, and he did not doubt that he could so use it as to stave off ruin, and establish himself on a new footing. Then again, there was the contingency of the boy's death; and upon this, improbable as it was, he was continually dwelling.

After two days the end came.

The nurse came hurrying into the room of her master, and said, "Come quick, Mr. Morton. I think the poor gentleman is going."

"Not dying?" asked Paul Morton, with a pale face, for though expected, the intelligence startled him.

"Yes; you must come quick, or you will not see him alive."

Paul Morton rose mechanically from his chair, and hastily thrust into his pocket a sheet of paper on which he had been making some arithmetical calculations as to the fortune of his dying guest, and following the nurse entered the sick chamber.

It was indeed as she had said. Ralph Raymond was breathing slowly and with difficulty, and it was evident from the look upon his face, that the time of the great change had come.

Robert stood by the bedside holding his father's hand, and sobbing bitterly.

As Paul Morton entered, the dying man turned his glazing eyes toward him, and then toward the boy at his side, as if again to commend him to his care.

Paul understood, and with pale face he nodded as if to assure the dying man that he undertook the trust.

Then a more cheerful look came over the face of Ralph. He looked with a glance of tender love at his son, then his head sank back, his eyes closed, and the breath left his body.

The deed was consummated! Ralph Raymond was dead!

"Poor gentleman! So he's dead!" said the nurse with a

professional sigh, "and no doubt he's better off."

No answer was made to this remark. Neither Paul Morton nor Robert seemed inclined to speak. The former was brought face to face with the consequence of his crime. The latter was filled with the first desolation of grief.

Three days later the funeral took place. Paul Morton took care that everything should be in strict accordance with the wealth and position of the deceased. He strove to satisfy his troublesome conscience by paying the utmost respect to the man for whose death he had conspired.

Owing to the long absence of Ralph Raymond from the country, there were not very many who remembered him, but Paul Morton invited his own friends and acquaintances liberally, and the invitation was accepted by a large number, as there are always those who have some morbid feelings and appear to enjoy appearing at a funeral.

The rooms were draped in black. The doorbell was muffled in crape, and the presence of death in the house was ostentatiously made known to all who passed.

Among these there was James Cromwell, who for some reason, nearly every evening, after his hours of labor were over, came up to take a look at the house in Twenty-ninth Street, which appeared to have a great attraction for him. When he saw the crape he managed to learn through a servant the precise hour of the funeral, and applied to his employer for leave of absence on that day.

"It will be inconvenient," said his employer.

"I must go," said the clerk, "I wish to attend a funeral."

Supposing that it must be the funeral of a relation, or at least, a friend, the employer made no further objection.

As the time of the service approached, James Cromwell attired himself in his best, and made his way to the house. His entrance was unnoticed amongst the rest, for there was a large number present. He got into an out-of-the-way corner, and listened attentively to the solemn service for the dead, as performed by one of the most eminent clergyman in the city. Among the rest his eye rested on Paul Morton, who sat with his face buried in his handkerchief.

At length Paul looked from behind the handkerchief, and his eye roved over the company. Suddenly he turned livid. His eye met that of a thin young man, with light hair, in an out-of-the-way corner, *and he remembered at once under what circumstances they had met before.*

CHAPTER VII.
PAUL MORTON HAS A VISITOR

Paul Morton's consternation can hardly be described, when, in the number who had come to witness the funeral ceremonies of Ralph Raymond, he recognized the shopman in the obscure druggist's shop where he had purchased the poison. The sweat stood out upon his brow, and he eagerly questioned himself—how much did this man know, or what did he suspect, or was his presence purely accidental?

But he could hardly believe that a man in such a position would attend the funeral, unless he had some object in view. How had he found out his name and residence? Was it possible that he had been tracked?

He looked furtively at the young man, now grown an object of strange and dread interest to him. He noted his insignificant features, and the general meanness of his appearance, and he began to pluck up courage.

"Suppose he does suspect anything," he thought; "will his testimony be believed against mine? A miserable druggist's clerk, probably on a starvation salary. At the worst I can buy him off for a small sum."

Reassured by these thoughts, he recovered his boldness, and in looking about him, did not hesitate to meet the gaze of James

Cromwell, without suffering a trace of the first agitation to be seen.

But that first agitation had been observed at the time by the druggist's clerk, and he had drawn his own conclusions from it.

"He has used the poison," he said to himself, "and it is for that reason that my presence alarms him," he said.

At length the funeral ceremonies were over.

The company who were assembled left the house, and with them James Cromwell. He went back to his room, not feeling that it was of importance to remain longer. He had shown himself at the funeral, he had been recognized, and thus he had paved the way for the interview which he meant to have, and that very shortly.

Two evenings later, he approached the house in Twenty-ninth Street, and ascending the steps, boldly rang the bell.

The servant who answered the summons, looked at him inquiringly, supposing from his appearance that he had merely come to bring some message.

"Is Mr. Morton at home?"

"Yes, he is at home."

"I would like to see him."

"He doesn't see visitors, on account of a death in the family. I will carry your message."

"I must see him," insisted the clerk, boldly.

"I don't think he will see you."

"I do. So go and tell him I am here."

"What name shall I carry to him?"

"The name is of no consequence. You can tell him that the young man whom he noticed at the funeral is here, and wishes to see him on very important business."

"That's a queer message," thought the servant, but concluded that it was some one who had something to do with furnishing something for the funeral, and was anxious to get his pay.

Mr. Morton was sitting in his library, or a room furnished with books, which went by that name, when the servant entered.

"There is somebody to see you, sir," she said.

"Who is it?"

"I don't know his name."

"Is it a gentleman?"

"No, sir."

"Did you tell him I was not receiving visitors now?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well?"

"He said he wanted to see you on very important business."

"Why didn't he give his name?"

"He said that I was to tell you it was the young man you noticed at the funeral," said the servant.

Mr. Morton turned pale, but at once recovered himself.

"I am not sure that I know who it is," he said, "but I can easily ascertain. You may bring him up."

"You are to come up," said the girl reappearing.

James Cromwell smiled in conscious triumph.

"I thought so," he said to himself. "Well, now for my game. It will be a difficult one, but I will do my best."

Left alone, Paul Morton began to consider how he should treat the new-comer. He resolved to affect no recognition at first, and afterward indifference. He thought he might be able to overawe the young man, from his own superiority in social position, and so prevent his carrying out the purpose he proposed.

Accordingly, when James Cromwell entered the room, he arched his brows a little, and looked inquiringly at him.

"Have you business with me?" he said, abruptly. "Did not my servant inform you that, on account of a recent death, I am not receiving callers at present?"

"I thought you would see me," said the young man, with a mixture of familiarity and boldness.

"Really, I don't know what claims you have to be excepted to my rule," said Paul Morton, haughtily. "If you are a tradesman, and have a claim against me, you might have sent it in the regular way."

"I am not a tradesman, and I have no claim against you, Mr. Morton," said the young man—"that is, no regular claim."

"You speak in riddles, sir," said Mr. Morton, in the same haughty tone. "If you have no business with me, I am at a loss to know why you have intruded yourself upon me at such a time. Perhaps, however, you were unaware of my recent affliction."

"I am quite aware of it, Mr. Morton. In fact, I was present at the funeral, if you refer to the death of Mr. Raymond, and unless

I am greatly mistaken, you yourself observed me there."

"You were present at the funeral! What brought you here?"

"That seems rather an inhospitable question. For some reasons of my own, I felt an interest in what was going on in this house, and made it my business to become acquainted with all that passed. When I heard of Mr. Raymond's death, I resolved at once to attend the funeral."

"I suppose you must have known Mr. Raymond, then," said Paul Morton, with something of a sneer.

"No, I had not the pleasure of a personal acquaintance with the gentleman," said James Cromwell, who, far from being overawed by the evident haughty tone of the other, preserved his composure with admirable success.

"Then let me repeat, I do not understand why you should have taken the trouble to be present at his funeral. Persons, in general, wait for an invitation before intruding on such occasions," he added, with a palpable sneer.

"He wouldn't parley so long if he did not know me and fear me," thought James Cromwell, and this conclusion showed that he was not without a certain natural shrewdness.

"Was Mr. Raymond rich?" he asked, nonchalantly.

This was more than Paul Morton could bear. He was naturally an irritable man, and he had been obliged to exercise considerable self-control thus far in the interview. It angered him that this insignificant druggist's clerk—this miserable specimen of a man—should have ventured to intrude himself in this

manner on his privacy, but the terror of his crime and the consciousness that this man suspected it, had hitherto restrained him.

But when James Cromwell asked this question, sitting coolly, with one leg crossed over the other, and staring impudently in his face, he could not restrain himself any longer. He rose to his feet with angry vehemence, and pointing to the door with a finger literally quivering with rage, he said, hoarsely:

"You impertinent scoundrel! begone instantly, or I will summon my servants and have you kicked down my front steps!"

"That might not be altogether prudent, Mr. Morton," said James Cromwell.

"Might not be prudent! What do you mean by your cursed impudence?" demanded the merchant, glaring furiously at the druggist's clerk.

"What do I mean?" repeated James Cromwell. "Do you wish me to answer your question?"

"I demand that you answer my question, and that immediately," said the merchant, hardly knowing what he did, so carried away was he by his unreasonable anger.

"Very well, I will do so," said the clerk, quietly, "but, as it may take a brief time, will you not be kind enough to resume your seat?"

CHAPTER VIII.
JAMES CROMWELL'S TRIUMPH

The coolness displayed by James Cromwell had its effect upon the merchant. Mechanically he obeyed, and resumed his seat.

"Say what have you to say, and be done with it," he muttered.

"In the first place, then, I beg leave to ask you a question. Do you not remember me?" and the clerk looked searchingly with his cold gray eyes in the face of Paul Morton.

"I may possibly have met you before," he replied with an effort, "but I meet a great many people, and there is no particular reason, that I am aware of, why I should remember you in particular."

"I also meet a considerable number of persons," said James Cromwell, "but circumstances have led me to remember you very well."

"Well, grant that you remember me," said the merchant, with nervous impatience, "what then?"

"It may be necessary for me to remind you that I am employed in a druggist's shop on the Bowery."

"I hope you like your situation," said Paul Morton, with a sneer.

"No, I don't like it, and that is the reason why I have come to you, hoping that you will help me to something better."

This was said with quiet self-possession, and Paul Morton began to realize with uneasiness that this young man, whom he had looked upon with contempt, was not so easily to be overawed or managed as he had expected.

"This is a cool request, considering that you are a comparative stranger to me."

"But consider the peculiar circumstances," said James Cromwell, significantly.

"What peculiar circumstances?" demanded the merchant, desperately.

"Shall I mention them?" asked Cromwell, pointedly.

"If you want me to understand, yes. You are talking in enigmas, and I never was good at understanding enigmas."

"Then," said James Cromwell, leaning slightly forward, and looking intently at Mr. Morton, "may I ask to what use you have put the subtle poison which you purchased of me ten days since?"

The color rushed to Paul Morton's face at this direct interrogation.

"The poison?" he repeated.

"Yes, you certainly have not forgotten the purchase."

"I think you must be mistaken in the person."

"Pardon me, I am not."

"Suppose that I did buy poison, how should you identify me with the purchaser, and how came you to know where I lived?"

"I sent a boy to follow you home," said Cromwell.

"You dared to do that?"

"Why not? We have no curiosity about our ordinary customers, but when a person makes such a purchase as you did, we feel inclined to learn all we can about him."

"A praiseworthy precaution! Well, I admit that I did buy the poison. What then?"

"I asked to what purpose you had put it?"

"Very well, I have no objection to tell you, although I deny your right to intrude in my private affairs, which I regard as a piece of gross impertinence. I bought it, as I think I stated to you at the time, at the request and for the use of a friend."

"Would you tell me the friend's name?" asked the clerk, imperturbably.

"He lives in Thirty-seventh Street."

"What is his name?"

"None of your business," exclaimed the merchant, passionately.

"I beg your pardon, but I was blamed by my employer for not taking down the name of the purchaser, and I told him in return that I would gather full particulars."

"You may tell him it is all right. He must have heard of me and of my firm, and that will satisfy him."

"But the name of this gentleman in Thirty-seventh Street–"

"It is not necessary to the purpose."

"*Has there been a death in his family within ten days?*" asked the clerk in quiet tones, but there was a significance in them which sent a thrill through the frame of his listener.

"What makes you ask that?" he stammered.

"I will tell you," said James Cromwell, boldly throwing off his reserve. "It is as well to be frank, and there is no use in mincing matters. I do not believe this story of the man in Thirty-seventh Street. I think you bought the article for your own use. Since the purchase there has been a death in your house."

"Your inference is ridiculous," said the merchant, nervously. "My intimate and dear friend, Mr. Raymond, was sick of an incurable disease, as the physician will testify, and it could have terminated in no other way."

"I am quite willing to believe you are right," said the clerk. "Still, under the circumstances, you will not object to an investigation. I feel it my duty to inform a coroner of the facts in the case, and if on examination no traces of the action of poison can be found in the deceased, of course you are entirely exonerated from suspicion!"

"What!" exclaimed Paul Morton. "Do you think I will suffer myself to be subjected to such a degrading suspicion—a man of my position in society—what advantage could I possibly reap from my friend's death?"

"He was a rich man," suggested James Cromwell, significantly.

"That is true," said the merchant, with self-possession. "He was a rich man."

"And he may have left his property to you."

"You happen to be mistaken there. He had left his property to

his son, a boy of fourteen."

"Where is this son?" asked the clerk, a little taken aback by this discovery, which was new to him.

"He is now in my house."

"And suppose the boy dies?"

It was now Paul Morton's turn to hesitate.

"That is not very probable," he said. "He is a strong, vigorous boy."

"Who is to be his guardian?"

"I am."

"Indeed! And if he dies, is there no provision made as to the property?"

"It will go to me, if he dies before attaining his majority."

The clerk coughed—a little significant cough—which annoyed Mr. Morton not a little. It conveyed an imputation which he couldn't resent, because it was indirect.

"I hope you are satisfied," he said at length.

"Oh, certainly; that is, nearly so," said James Cromwell: "but then it is not enough that I should be satisfied."

"Why not?"

"My employer may not be."

"Does your employer know who made the purchase?"

"No, I have not as yet communicated the name to him."

"Don't tell him, then. It is none of his business."

"He will not agree with you there."

"What matter if he does not?"

"You must remember that I am a poor clerk, dependent on my salary, and that in my position, it is not safe to risk offending my employer. Suppose I am discharged from my position, how am I to live?"

"Can you not procure another situation?"

"Not if he refuses his recommendation, which would probably be the case. Besides, our business is crowded, and under the most favorable circumstances I might be weeks, and possibly months, without employment."

Paul Morton leaned his head on his hand, and considered what was to be done with this difficult visitor. It was evident that he expected to be bought off and that he must be.

"What wages do you get?" he asked, looking up.

"Twenty dollars a week, sir," said Cromwell.

As the reader knows, this was just double what he did receive, and as Mr. Morton was not likely to inquire of his employer, he felt that the lie was a safe one, and likely to conduce to his advantage.

"Twenty dollars a week! Very well, I will tell you what you must do. In the first place, you must refuse to make your employer any communications respecting this affair."

"Very well, sir."

"And if he discharges you, I will pay you twenty dollars a week until you can get another situation. Perhaps I may find you some other employment, unless you prefer your present business."

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.