

**ALGER  
HORATIO JR.**

HELEN FORD

Horatio Alger

**Helen Ford**

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# Jr. Horatio Alger

## Helen Ford

### CHAPTER I.

### IN SEARCH OF LODGINGS

Not many minutes walk from Broadway, situated on one of the cross streets intersecting the great thoroughfare, is a large building not especially inviting in its aspect, used as a lodging and boarding-house. It is very far from fashionable, since, with hardly an exception, those who avail themselves of its accommodations belong to the great class who are compelled to earn their bread before they eat it. Mechanics, working-men, clerks on small salaries, seamstresses, and specimens of decayed gentility, all find a place beneath its roof, forming a somewhat miscellaneous assemblage. It must not be supposed, however, that perfect equality exists even here. It is often remarked, that social distinctions are more jealously maintained in the lower ranks than in the higher. Here, for instance, Alphonso Eustace, a dashing young clerk, who occupies the first floor front, looks down with *hauteur* upon the industrious mechanic, who rooms in the second story back. Mademoiselle Fanchette, the fashionable *modiste*, occupying the second story front, considers it beneath her dignity to hold much intercourse with Martha Grey, the pale seamstress, whose small room at the head of the third landing affords a delightful prospect of the back yard. Even the occupants of the fourth story look down, which indeed their elevated position enables them to do, upon the basement lodgers across the way.

Mother Morton is the presiding genius of the establishment. She is a stout, bustling woman, of considerable business capacity; one of those restless characters to whom nothing is so irksome as want of occupation, and who are never more in their element than when they have a world of business on their hands, with little time to do it in.

Mrs. Morton is a widow, having with characteristic despatch, hustled her husband out of the world in less than four years from her wedding-day. Shortly afterwards, being obliged to seek a subsistence in some way, good luck suggested the expediency of opening a boarding-house. Here at length she found scope for her superabundant energies, and in the course of seventeen years had succeeded in amassing several thousand dollars, in the investment of which she had sought advice from no one, but acted according to the dictates of her own judgment. These investments, it must be acknowledged, proved to have been wisely made, affording a complete refutation, in one case at least, of the assertion often made, that women have no business capacity.

Why Mrs. Morton should have had the title of mother, so generally conferred upon her, is not quite clear. She had never been blessed with children. It might have been her ample proportions, for Nature had moulded her when in a generous mood; but at all events for many years, she had been best known by the name of Mother Morton.

Our landlady required promptness on the part of her lodgers in the payment of their bills. She had no mercy on those whom she suspected of fraudulent intentions. In such cases she had but one remedy, and that a most efficacious one,—immediate ejection. When, however, no such design was suspected, and failure to make the regular payment proceeded from sickness or misfortune, she had been known to manifest great kindness and consideration. When, for example—Martha Grey, the young seamstress, was stricken down by a fever, induced by over-work, Mother Morton attended her faithfully during her illness, and, so far from making an extra charge, even remitted her rent for the time she had been ill.

With these preliminary words, our story begins.

The dinner hour had passed. The last lingerer at the table had left the scene of devastation, which he had contributed to make, and the landlady, who superintended the clearing away, had just sent away the last dish, when her attention was arrested by a faint ring of the door-bell. Hastily adjusting her dress before the glass, she proceeded to answer the summons in person.

Opening the door, she saw standing before her a young girl of perhaps fourteen, and a man, who, though but little over forty, looked nearly ten years older. The little girl is mentioned first, for in spite of her youth, and the filial relation which she bore to her companion, she was the spokesman, and appeared to feel that the responsibility in the present instance fell upon her. There was a curious air of protection in her manner towards her father, as if the relationship between them were reversed, and he were the child.

“You have lodgings to let?” she said, in a tone of inquiry.

“We’re pretty full, now,” said Mother Morton, looking with some curiosity at the eager face of the young questioner. “All our best rooms are taken.”

“That makes no difference,” said the young girl; “about the best rooms, I mean. We are not able to pay much.”

She cast a glance at her father, who wore an abstracted look as if he were thinking of some matter quite foreign to the matter in hand. Catching her glance and thinking that an appeal was made to him, he said, hurriedly, “Yes, my child, you are quite right.”

“I wonder whether he’s in his right mind,” thought the practical Mrs. Morton. “The little girl seems to be worth two of him.”

“I have one room in the fourth story,” she said aloud, “which is now vacant. It is rather small; but, if it will suit you, you shall have it cheaper on that account.”

“I should like to see it,” said the child. “Come, father,” taking him by the hand, and leading him as if she were the elder; “we’re going up stairs to look at a room which, perhaps, we may like well enough to hire.”

At the head of the fourth landing the landlady threw open a door, revealing a small room, some twelve feet square, scantily provided with furniture. Its dreariness was, in some measure, relieved by a good supply of light,—there being two windows.

The young girl was evidently accustomed to look on the bright side of things; for, instead of spying out the defects and inconveniences of the apartment, her face brightened, and she said, cheerfully, “Just what we want, isn’t it, papa? See how bright and pleasant it is.”

Thus applied to, her father answered, “Yes, certainly;” and relapsed into his former abstraction.

“I think,” said the young girl, addressing the landlady, “that we will engage the room; that is,” she added, with hesitation, “if the rent isn’t too high.”

Mother Morton had been interested in the child’s behalf by the mingling of frank simplicity and worldly wisdom, which she exhibited, and perhaps not least by the quiet air of protection which she assumed towards her father, for whom it was evident she entertained the deepest and most devoted affection. An impulse, which she did not pause to question, led her to name a rent much less than she had been accustomed to receive for the room.

“One dollar and seventy-five cents a week,” repeated the child. “Yes, that is reasonable. I think we had better engage the room; don’t you, papa?”

“Eh?”

“I think we had better engage this room at one dollar and seventy-five cents a week.”

“Oh, certainly,—that is, by all means, if you think best, my child. You know I leave all such matters to you. I have so many other things to think of,” he added, dreamily, raising his hand to his forehead.

“Yes,” said the child, softly; “I know you have, dear papa.”

“We’ll take the room,” she said to Mother Morton, whose curiosity momentarily increased, “at the price you named, and will commence now, if you have no objection.”

“Oh, no; but your baggage. You will need to bring that.”

“We have not much to bring. We shall get it to-morrow.”

“You will board yourselves?” asked the landlady.

“Yes, I shall cook. I am quite used to it,” was the grave reply.

“At any rate you won’t feel like it to-night. I will send you up some supper.”

“Thank you,” said the child, her face lighting up gratefully; “I am sure you are very kind,” and she held out her hand in instinctive acknowledgment.

If Mother Morton had before been prepossessed in her favor, this act, so frank and child-like, completed the conquest of her heart.

“I am very glad,” said she, quite enveloping in her own broad palm the little hand which the child extended; “I am very glad, my dear child, that you are going to live here. I think I shall like you.”

“How kind you are!” said the child, earnestly. “Everybody is kind to father and me;” and she turned towards her parent, who was gazing abstractedly from the window.

“Your father does not say much,” said Mrs. Morton, unable to repress her curiosity.

“He has a great deal on his mind,” said the child, lowering her voice, and looking cautiously to see whether he heard her; but the report of a pistol would scarcely have disturbed him, so profound seemed his meditations.

“Oh!” said the landlady, somewhat surprised; “business, is it?”

“No,” said the child; “not exactly business.”

Observing that the landlady looked thoroughly mystified, she added, quietly, “Papa has a great genius for inventing. He is going to make a discovery that will give him money and fame. He is thinking about it all the time, and that is the reason he doesn’t say much. I wish he wouldn’t think quite so much, for I am afraid it will hurt him.”

Mother Morton looked at the father with a sudden accession of respect.

“Perhaps there is something in him, after all,” she thought. “There must be, or this little girl, who has a great deal more sense than many that are older, wouldn’t believe in him so firmly. I suppose he’s a genius. I’ve heard of such, but I never saw one before. I must think well of him for the child’s sake.”

“I hope your father’ll succeed,” she said aloud, “for your sake, my child. I am going down stairs now. Is there anything you would like to have sent up?”

“Nothing, thank you.”

“One thing more. Your names, please?”

“My father’s name is Robert Ford. My name is Helen.”

“Good afternoon, Helen. I hope you will like your room.”

“Thank you; I am quite sure I shall.”

The landlady descended the stairs, wondering a little at the sudden liking she began to feel for her young lodger.



## CHAPTER II. THE DREAMER

The light of a June morning lent a warm and cheerful look to the broad streets, and under its influence even the dingy lanes and alleys looked a little less gloomy than usual. The spell which had lain upon the city during the night season was broken. Here and there might be seen a vegetable cart or a milk wagon rumbling through the streets, of late so silent and deserted. Sleepy clerks unlocked the shops and warehouses, and swept them in readiness for the business of the day. Hackmen betook themselves to the steamboat landings in the hope of obtaining a fare before breakfast. Creeping out from beneath old wagons and stray corners where they had been able to procure shelter and lodging, came the newsboys, those useful adjuncts to our modern civilization. Little time wasted they on the duties of the toilet, but shook themselves wide awake, and with the keen instinct of trade, hurried to the newspaper offices to secure their pile of merchandise.

Morning found no sluggards at Mrs. Morton's boarding-house. With the first flush of dawn she was astir, ordering about her servants, and superintending the preparations for breakfast. This must be ready at an early hour, since her boarders were, for the most part, engaged in some daily avocation which required their early attention.

With the early sun Helen rose. Her father was still sleeping. From the nail on which it hung she took down her bonnet, and, with a tin pail depending from her arm, she left the room with softened tread, lest she might awaken her father. Betaking herself to a baker's near by, she bought a couple of loaves of bread, and stopping a milkman, had her pail filled with milk. A half-pound of butter purchased at a grocery completed her simple marketing, and she hastened home.

When she entered the boarding-house, her cheeks were flushed with exercise, her eyes sparkled with a pleasant light, and her rare beauty, despite her plain attire, appeared to unusual advantage. She returned just in time to meet the boarders descending to breakfast. Her childish beauty did not fail to attract attention. Conscious of being observed, Helen blushed a deeper crimson, which added to the charm of her beauty.

"Hey! What have we here?" exclaimed Alphonso Eustace, the dashing young clerk, fixing a glance of undisguised admiration upon her embarrassed face. "A very Peri, by Jove! Deign to inform me, fair maid, by what name thou art known."

So saying, he purposely placed himself directly in her path.

"Will you let me pass, sir?" said Helen, uneasily. "My father is waiting for me."

"Your father! Then you live here. I am glad of that. We shall be well acquainted before long, I hope. Won't you tell me your name?"

"My name is Helen Ford," said the child, rather reluctantly, for the clerk did not impress her favorably.

"And mine is Alphonso Eustace. Let us shake hands to our better acquaintance."

"I have both hands full," returned Helen, who did not much relish the freedom of her new acquaintance.

"Then I will await another opportunity. But you don't seem gracious, my dear. You must be very tired, carrying that heavy pail. Allow me to carry it for you."

"I am not at all tired, and I would much rather carry it myself."

Helen managed to slip by, much to her relief, and somewhat to the discomfiture of the young clerk, who could not conceal from himself that his overtures had met with a decided rebuff.

"Never mind," thought he; "we shall be better acquainted by and by."

"By the way, Mrs. Morton," he inquired, "tell me something about the little fairy I met on the stairs. I tried to scrape acquaintance with her, but she gave me very short answers."



"I suppose it was Helen Ford," returned the landlady. "She is a little fairy, as you say. Is your coffee right, M'lle Fanchette?"

"Quite right," replied that lady, sipping it. "What room do the little girl and her father occupy?"

"The fourth story back."

"Ah, indeed!" said M'lle Fanchette, elevating her eyebrows. It was easy to see that lodging in the fourth story back was sufficient in her eyes to stamp Helen as one whose acquaintance it was quite beneath her dignity to cultivate.

"She has a very sweet, attractive face," said Martha Grey.

"Beautiful! angelic!" exclaimed Mr. Eustace, with enthusiasm.

"I don't see anything very beautiful or angelic about her," remarked M'lle Fanchette, who would much prefer to have had her dashing neighbor's admiration bestowed upon herself.

"You should have seen the beautiful flush upon her cheeks."

"So I did."

"And did you not admire it?"

"I happened to look into the kitchen yesterday," returned M'lle Fanchette, passing her plate for some toast, "and I saw Bridget who had been over the hot stove all day, with just such a pair of red cheeks. Did I admire her?"

There was a momentary silence. All who had seen Helen, felt the injustice of the comparison.

"There is no accounting for tastes," interrupted the landlady, somewhat indignantly. "If you had seen the tenderness with which she waits upon her father, who, poor man, seems quite incapable of taking care of himself, you would find that she has a heart as beautiful as her face. Her beauty is not her only attraction."

"What does her father do?"

"That is more than I can tell. Helen says that he is an inventor, and that he has made some discovery which is going to make them rich."

"After all," thought M'lle Fanchette, "it may be well to notice her. But they are poor now?" she said aloud.

"Yes. They seem to have little baggage, and dress quite plainly. They cannot have much property."

Meanwhile, Helen, quite unconscious that she had been a subject of discussion among the boarders, drew out the table into the middle of the room, and spread over it a neat white cloth. She then placed upon it two bowls of different sizes into which she poured the milk. Several slices were cut from one of the loaves and laid on a plate. Near by stood the butter. These simple preparations being concluded, she called upon her father to partake.

"You are a good girl, Helen," said he, rousing for the moment from his fit of abstraction. "You are a good girl, and I don't know how I should get along without you."

"And I am sure I could not get along without you, papa," was her reply, accompanied with a glance of affection.

"Have you not always cared for me, Helen, and given up the society of those of your own age in order to minister to my comfort? But it shall not always be so. Some day I shall be rich—"

"When you have completed your invention, papa."

"Yes, when that is completed," said her father, earnestly. "Then we shall be rich and honored, and my Helen shall be dressed in silks, and ride in a carriage of her own."

"You are quite sure you shall succeed, papa?"

"I am sure of it," he answered, in a tone of quiet conviction. "I only fear that some one will be beforehand with me, and snatch away the honor for which I am toiling. To me it seems passing strange that mankind should have been content for so many years to grope about upon the earth and never striven to rise into the nobler element of the air, while the sea, which presents difficulties as great, is traversed in every part. For me," he continued, assuming a loftier mien, and pacing the small room

proudly,—“for me it remains to open a new highway to the world. What compared with this will be the proudest triumphs of modern science? How like a snail shall we regard the locomotive, which now seems a miracle of swiftness! Borne aloft by the appliances which I shall furnish, man will emulate the proud flight of the eagle. He will skim over land and sea, and in his airy flight look down upon the monuments of human skill and industry flitting before him, like the shifting scenes of a panorama.”

“It will be a glorious destiny,” said the child, “and how proud I shall feel of you who have done all this!”

“While we are speaking, time passes,” said the father. “I should be at work even now. I must bring hither my implements without delay. Every moment wasted before I attain my object, is not my loss, only, but the world’s.”

“Wait till I have cleared away the table, papa, and I will go with you.”

This was speedily done, and the two descended the stairs, and went forth into the busy streets hand in hand. Helen diligently cared for the safety of her father, who, plunged into his usual abstraction, would more than once have been run over by some passing vehicle but for her guardianship.

## CHAPTER III. A HALF RECOGNITION

The character of Robert Ford may be divined without much difficulty from the glimpses which have already been given. He was an amiable man, but strikingly deficient in those practical traits which usually mark our countrymen and command success even under the most unpromising circumstances. He was not a man to succeed in business, nor suited for the rough jostling with the world which business men must expect. He ought rather to have been a quiet scholar, and dreamed away long days in his library,—“the world forgetting, by the world forgot.” Such would have been his choice if his circumstances had been easy. Under the pressure of necessity he had turned aside from the ordinary paths of money-making to devote himself to a chimerical plan by which he hoped to attain wealth and distinction.

No man of a well balanced mind would have labored with such sanguine expectations of success on a project so uncertain as the invention of a flying machine. But Mr. Ford had not a well balanced mind. He was much given to theorizing, and, like many amiable but obstinate persons, it was as difficult to dislodge from his mind a purpose which had once gained entrance there as to convert him by some miraculous transformation into a sharp man of the world. Had he lived in the middle ages it is very probable that his tastes and the habits of his mind would have led him to devote himself to alchemy, or some other recondite science, which would have consumed his time and money without any adequate return.

We will now suppose three months to have elapsed since the events recorded in our first chapter; three months in which the flowers of June had been exchanged for the fruits of September, and the mellow beauty of autumn had succeeded the glory of early summer.

During this time Helen has become an established favorite with all the inmates except M<sup>lle</sup> Fanchette, who yet, finding the tide of general opinion against her, is content with privately stigmatizing the child as an “upstart,” and a “forward hussy,” though in truth it would be difficult to imagine anything more modest or retiring than her conduct. She and her father still occupy the little room in the fourth story back. Nothing has come of Mr. Ford’s invention yet, though he has filled the room with strange, out-of-the-way appliances, wheels, and bits of machinery, on which he labors day after day in the construction of his proposed flying machine. His repeated failures have little effect in damping his spirits. He has the true spirit of a discoverer, and is as sanguine as ever of ultimate success. He has learned the difficult lesson of patience.

“With such an end in view,” he sometimes exclaims with enthusiasm, half to himself, half to Helen, “what matter a few months or years! Rome was not built in a day, nor is it to be expected that a discovery which is to affect the whole world in its consequences, should be the result of a few hours’ or days’ labor.”

Helen, whose veneration for her father is unbounded, listens with the fullest confidence, to his repeated assurances. It pains her to find that others are more skeptical. Even Mother Morton who, though some find her rough, is invariably kind to Helen, looks upon the father as a visionary, since she has discovered the nature of his labors. She one day intimated this to Helen. It was some time before the latter could understand that a doubt was entertained as to her father’s success, and when the conviction came slowly, it brought such an expression of pain to her face, that the landlady resolved never in future to venture upon an allusion which should grieve the child, whom she could not but love the better for her filial trust and confidence.

Meanwhile the rent of the apartment which they occupy, and the cost of living, simple as is their fare, have sensibly diminished their scanty supply of money. This Helen, who is the steward and treasurer, cannot help seeing, and she succeeds in obtaining work from the slop-shops. Her father

does not at first discover this. One day, however, he said abruptly, as if the idea had for the first time occurred to him, "Helen, you always seem to be sewing, lately."

The child cast down her eyes in some embarrassment.

"You cannot be sewing so much for yourself," continued her father. "Why, what is this?" taking a boy's vest from her reluctant fingers. "Surely, this is not yours."

"No, papa," answered Helen, laughing; "you don't think I have turned Bloomer, do you?"

"Then what does it mean?" questioned her father, in real perplexity.

"Only this, papa, that being quite tired of sitting idle, and having done all my own sewing, I thought I might as well fill up the time, and earn some money at the same time by working for other people. Is that satisfactory?" she concluded, playfully.

"Surely this was not necessary," said Mr. Ford, with pain. "Are we then so poor?"

"Do not be troubled, papa," said Helen, cheerfully. "We could get along very well without it; but I wanted something to do, and it gives me some pocket-money for myself. You must know that I am getting extravagant."

"Is that all?" said her father, in a tone of relief, the shadow passing from his face. "I am glad of it. I could not bear to think of my little Helen being compelled to work. Some day," passing his hands fondly over her luxuriant curls; "some day she shall have plenty of money."

This thought incited him to fresh activity, and with new zeal he turned to the odd jumble of machinery in the corner.

The evening meal was studiously simple and frugal, though Helen could not resist the temptation of now and then purchasing some little delicacy for her father. He was so abstracted that he gave little heed to what was set before him, and never noticed that Helen always abstained from tasting any luxury thus procured, confining herself strictly to the usual frugal fare.

After tea it was the custom for father and daughter to walk out, sometimes in one direction sometimes in another. Often they would walk up Broadway, and Helen, at least, found amusement in watching the shifting scenes which present themselves to the beholder in that crowded thoroughfare. Life in all its varieties, from pampered wealth to squalid poverty, too often the fruit of a mis-spent life jostled each other upon the sidewalk, or in the street. The splendid equipage dashes past the humble handcart; the dashing buggy jostles against the loaded dray. Broadway is no exclusive thoroughfare. In the shadow of the magnificent hotel leans the foreign beggar, just landed on our shores, and there is no one to bid him "move on." The shop windows, too, are a free "World's Fair Exhibition," constantly changing, never exhausted. Helen and her father had just returned from a leisurely walk, taken at the close of a day of labor and confinement, and paused to rest for a moment on the west side of the Park.

While they were standing there, a handsome carriage drove past. Within were two gentlemen. One was already well advanced in years, as his gray hairs and wrinkled face made apparent. He wore an expression of indefinable sorrow and weariness, as if life had long ago ceased to have charms for him. His companion might be somewhat under forty. He was tall and spare, with a dark, forbidding face, which repelled rather than attracted the beholder.

As the carriage neared the Park, the elder of the two looked out to rest his gaze, wearied with the sight of brick and stone, upon the verdure of this inclosure. This, be it remembered, was twenty years since, before the Park had so completely lost its fresh country look. He chanced to see Mr. Ford and Helen. He started suddenly in visible agitation.

"Look, Lewis!" he exclaimed, clutching the arm of his companion, and pointing to Mr. Ford.

The younger man started almost imperceptibly, and his face paled, but he almost instantly recovered himself.

"Yes," he said, carelessly; "the Park is looking well."

"Not that, not that," said the old man, hurriedly. "That man with the little girl. He is,—he must be Robert, my long-lost son. Stop the carriage. I must get out."

“My dear uncle,” expostulated the younger man, who had been addressed as Lewis, “you are laboring under a strange hallucination. This man does not in the least resemble my cousin. Besides, you remember that we have undoubted proof of his death in Chicago two years since.”

“You may be right,” said the old man, as he sank back into his seat with a sigh, “but the resemblance was wonderful.”

“But, uncle, let me suggest that more than fifteen years have passed away since my cousin left home, and even if he were living, he must have changed so much that we could not expect to recognize him.”

“Perhaps you are right, Lewis; and yet, when I looked at that man, I was startled by a look that brought before me my dead wife,—my precious Helen. I fear I have dealt harshly with her boy.”

He relapsed into a silence which his companion did not care to disturb. He watched guardedly the expression of the old man, and a close observer might have detected a shade of anxiety, as if there were something connected with his uncle’s present mood which alarmed him. After a short scrutiny he himself fell into thought, and as we are privileged to read what is concealed from all else, we will give the substance of his reflections.

“Here is a new danger to be guarded against, just at the most critical time, too. Shall I never attain the object of my wishes? Shall I never be paid for the years in which I have danced attendance upon my uncle? I *must* succeed by whatever means. He cannot last much longer.”

The evident weakness of his uncle seemed to justify his prediction. He looked like one whose feet are drawing very near the brink of that mysterious river which it is appointed to all of us at some time to cross.

## CHAPTER IV. A GLANCE BACKWARDS

It was growing late. Night had drawn its sombre veil over the great city, and the streets, a little while before filled with busy passers-by, now echoed but seldom to the steps of an occasional wayfarer. The shops were closed, the long day assigned to trade being over. To plodding feet and busy brains, to frames weary with exhausting labor, to minds harassed by anxious cares, night came in friendly guise, bringing the rest and temporary oblivion of sleep.

From a small building in a by-street, or rather lane, which nevertheless was not far removed from the main thoroughfare, there gleamed a solitary candle, emitting a fitful glare, which served, so far as it went, to give a very unfavorable idea of the immediate vicinity. Within, a young man, painfully thin, was seated at a low table, engrossing a legal document. The face was not an agreeable one. The prevailing expression was one of discontent and weak repining. He was one who could complain of circumstances without having the energy to control them; born to be a subordinate of loftier and more daring intellects.

He wrote with rapidity and, at the same time, with scrupulous elegance. He was evidently a professional copyist.

After bending over his writing for a time, during which he was rapidly approaching the completion of his task, he at length threw aside the pen, exclaiming, with an air of relief, "At last it is finished! Thank Heaven! that is," he added, after a slight pause, "if there be such a place, which I am sometimes inclined to doubt. Finished; but what after all is a single day's work? To-night I may sleep in peace, but to-morrow the work must begin once more. It is like a tread-mill, continually going round, but making no real progress. I wish," he resumed, after a slight pause, "there were some way of becoming suddenly rich, without this wear and tear of hand and brain. I don't know that I am so much surprised at the stories of those who, in utter disgust of labor, have sold themselves to the arch fiend. Why should I have been born with such a keen enjoyment of luxuries, and without the means of obtaining them? Why should I be doomed—"

When discontent had thus opened the way for its favorable reception, temptation came.

There was a knock at the door.

Thinking it might be some strolling vagabond who, in his intoxication, was wandering he knew not whither, he did not at first respond, but waited till it should be repeated.

It was repeated, this time with a considerable degree of force.

The young man approached the door, but feeling apprehensive that it might prove to be some unwelcome visitor, he paused before drawing the bolt, and called out, in a voice marked by a tremulous quaver, for he possessed but little physical courage, "Who are you that come here at such an unseasonable hour? Unless I know your name, I shall not let you in."

"Don't be alarmed, Jacob," was the reply. "It is only I, Lewis Rand. Open at once, for I come on business which must be quickly despatched."

The explanation was evidently satisfactory, for the scrivener in eager haste opened the door, and admitted his visitor. It was the younger of the two men upon whom the chance meeting with Helen and her father seemed to have produced an impression so powerful. Jacob, though well acquainted with him, was evidently surprised at his presence at an hour so unseasonable, for he exclaimed, in a tone of mingled surprise and deference, "You here, Mr. Rand, and at this time of night! It must be something important which has called you at an hour when most men are quietly sleeping in their beds."

"Yet you are up, Jacob, and at work, as I conjecture," said the visitor, pointing to the table on which the completed sheets were still lying.

"True," said the copyist, for this recalled to him the grounds of his discontent; "but I must work while others sleep, or accept a worse alternative. Sometimes I am tempted to give up the struggle. You have never known what a hard taskmaster poverty is."

"Perhaps not," returned the other; "but I can testify that the apprehension of poverty is not less formidable. However, I can perhaps lend you a helping hand, since the business on which I come, if successfully carried out, of which with your co-operation I have strong hopes, will prove so important to me that I shall be able to put a better face upon your affairs."

"Ah!" said the young man, with suddenly awakening interest; "what may it be? I will gladly give you all the aid in my power."

"Jacob," said his visitor, fixing his eyes steadily upon the scrivener, "you know there is an old maxim, 'Nothing venture, nothing have.' In other words, he who aims to be successful in his undertakings, must not scruple to employ the means best suited to advance his interests, even though they may involve the *possibility* of disaster to himself. Do you comprehend my meaning?"

"Not entirely. At least, I need to be informed of the connection between what has just been said and the service you require at my hands."

"You shall presently know. But first promise me solemnly that what I may say, and any proposition which I may make to you to-night, shall forever remain a secret between us two."

The scrivener made the required promise, though his wonder was not a little excited by the extraordinary language and significant tone of his companion.

"I promise," he said. "You may proceed. I am ready."

"You are quite alone, I suppose," said Lewis, inquiringly. "There is no fear of eavesdroppers?"

"Not the least," replied Jacob, muttering to himself in an undertone, "Margaret must be fast asleep, I think. You need be under no apprehensions," he said, aloud. "We shall not be disturbed."

At this moment a small clock over the mantel struck two.

"Two o'clock!" exclaimed Lewis. "I had not supposed it so late. However, it is perhaps better, since we are the safer from interruption. You are somewhat acquainted," he continued, "with the position in which I stand to my uncle. For years I have been his constant companion, the slave of his whims and caprices, depriving myself of more agreeable and congenial society, in order to maintain my hold upon his affections, and secure the inheritance of his large property. No son would have done as much as I have. And now, when half my life is gone, and the realization of my hopes is apparently near at hand, an incident has occurred, which threatens to disarrange all my plans, and defraud me of all but a tithe of that which I have so long looked upon as my sure inheritance."

"Surely, your uncle has no nearer relatives than yourself!" exclaimed Jack, in surprise.

"That is what the world thinks, but they are deceived. My uncle has a son, and that son has a daughter. You see, therefore, that there is no lack of heirs. But you need an explanation.

"My father died when I was not quite five years of age. He was what is called a gay man, and spent freely what property he possessed, in extravagant living, and, lest that might not prove sufficient, he lost large sums at the gaming table. He died in an affair of honor which grew out of a dispute with one of his gambling acquaintances, leaving, as my inheritance, a few debts and nothing more. But for my uncle I should have been thrown upon the cold charities of the world. Fortunately for me, my uncle had none of his brother's vices, and had preserved his property intact, so that when need came, he was able to stretch forth a helping hand to his nephew.

"I can remember the day when I became an inmate of my uncle's household. I did not mourn much for my father, who seldom took any notice of me. Child as I was, I understood that his death, in consigning me to my uncle's care, had left me better off than before.

"I was nearly five, as I have said. My uncle had a son,—but one,—who was two years my senior. So my cousin Robert and I grew up together. Although we were treated in every respect alike, having the same tutors, the same wardrobe, and even sharing the same room, I cannot remember a time when I did not hate him. There was nothing in his manner or his treatment of me that should



lead to this, I acknowledge. He always treated me as a brother, and I suffered not a word or a gesture, not even a look, to indicate that I did not regard him in the same light. You will perhaps wonder at my aversion. It is easily explained. Although our treatment was the same, I soon learned that our prospects were very different. I soon became aware that he, as heir of his father's wealth, already considerable and rapidly increasing, was considered, by many, a far more important personage than myself. Notwithstanding my uncle's indulgence to me, I well knew that his pride, and a certain desire, inherited from his English ancestors, that his estate should be handed down entire from generation to generation, would receive anything beyond a moderate annuity. I could not brook my cousin's superior prospects, and determined to injure him with my uncle, if an opportunity offered.

"The opportunity came. My cousin fell in love with a beautiful girl, who, but for her poverty, would have attracted me also. This, however, proved an insuperable obstacle. I waited until the attachment had ripened into the most ardent affection, and then I made it known to my uncle with all the embellishments which I thought best calculated to arouse his irritation. The object of my cousin's attachment I described as an awkward country-girl, without cultivation or refinement. It was a heavy blow to my uncle's pride, for he had nourished high hopes for his son, and aspired to an alliance with a family as old and distinguished as his own. In the exasperation of the moment he summoned Robert to him, and peremptorily insisted on his at once giving up his attachment, stigmatizing the object of it in such terms as I had employed in describing her. My cousin's spirit was naturally roused by such manifest injustice, and he refused to accede to his father's wishes. The discussion was a stormy one, and terminated as I hoped and believed it would. My cousin went forth from the house, disowned and disinherited, and I remained, filling his place as heir."

Jacob surveyed the speaker with a glance of admiration. He paid homage to a rascality which surpassed his own. He admired his craftiness and address, while his want of principle did not repel him.

"What became of your cousin?" inquired the scrivener, after a pause.

"He married and went out West. He possessed a small property inherited from his mother, and this enabled him to live in a humble way. I have heard little of him since, except that he had but one child, a daughter, who must now be not far from fourteen years old. This I learned from a letter of her father's which I intercepted."

"Has your uncle ever shown any symptoms of relenting?" asked Jacob.

"Two years ago he was very sick and it was thought he might die. During that sickness he referred so often to his son that I began to tremble for my prospective inheritance. I accordingly procured a notice of his death to be inserted in a Chicago paper, which I took care to show my uncle. The authenticity of this he never dreamed of doubting, and I felt that my chances were as good as ever. But within the last week a fact has come to my knowledge which fills me with alarm."

The copyist looked up inquiringly.

"It is this," resumed Lewis. "Not only is my cousin living, but he is in this city. Furthermore my uncle has seen him, and but for my solemn assurance that he was mistaken, and my recalling to his recollection that Robert's death was well attested, he would have taken immediate measures for finding him out. If found, he would be at once reinstated in his birthright, and I should be reduced to the position of a humble dependent upon my uncle's bounty."

"But you have escaped the danger, and all is well again."

"By no means. Notwithstanding my representation, my uncle clings obstinately to the belief that either he or some child of his may be living, and only yesterday caused a new will to be drawn up, leaving the bulk of his estate to his son or his son's issue; and, failing these, to me. You will readily see how I stand affected by this. Of course in the event of my cousin's death a search will be immediately instituted for my cousin and his daughter, and being in the city they will probably be found."

"Your prospects are certainly not of the most encouraging character," said Jacob, after a pause.

"But, if I may venture to inquire, what assurance have you that such is the tenor of your uncle's will?"

"This," replied Rand, taking from a side-pocket a piece of parchment tied with a blue ribbon, and leisurely unrolling it. Jacob watched his movements with curiosity.

"This," said he, bending a searching glance upon the scrivener, as if to test his fidelity; "this is my uncle's will."

The copyist could not repress a start of astonishment.

"The will!" he exclaimed. "How did you obtain possession of it?"

Lewis smiled.

"It was for my interest," he said briefly, "to learn the contents of this document, and I therefore made it my business to find it. You see that I have been successful. Read it."

The copyist drew the lamp nearer, and read it slowly and deliberately.

"Yes," said he, at length, looking up thoughtfully; "the contents are as you have described. May I ask what it is your intention to do about it, and what is the service I am to render you?"

"Can you not guess?" demanded his visitor, fixing his eyes meaningly upon him.

"No," returned the scrivener, a little uneasily; "I cannot."

"You are skilful with the pen, exceedingly skilful," resumed Lewis, meaningly. "Indeed, there has been a time when this accomplishment came near standing you in good stead, though it might also have turned to your harm."

Jacob winced.

"Ah!" pursued the visitor, "I see you have not forgotten a little occurrence in the past, when, but for my intervention, you might have been convicted of—shall I say it?—forgery. You need not thank me. I never do anything without a motive. I don't believe in disinterestedness. The idea struck me even at that time that I might at some time have need of you."

"I am ready," said Jacob, submissively.

"That is well. What I want you to do is this. You must draw me up another will as nearly like this as possible, except that the whole estate shall be devised to me unconditionally. Well, man, what means that look of alarm?"

"It will be very dangerous to both of us," faltered the copyist.

"It will be a forgery, I admit," said Lewis, calmly; "but what is there in that word, *forgery*, which should so discompose *you*? Did it ever occur to you that the old charge might be renewed against you, when no intervention of mine will avail to save you?"

The copyist perceived the threat implied in those words, and hastened to propitiate his visitor, of whom he seemed to stand in wholesome fear.

"Nay," said he, submissively, "you know best the danger to both of us."

"And I tell you, Jacob, there is none at all. You are so cunning with the pen that you may easily defy detection, and for the rest, I will take the hazard."

"And what will be the recompense?" inquired the scrivener.

"Two hundred dollars as soon as the task is completed," was the prompt reply. "One thousand more when the success of the plan is assured."

Jacob's eyes sparkled. To him the bribe was a fortune.

"I consent," he said; "give me the will. I must study it for a time to become familiar with the handwriting."

He drew the lamp nearer and began to pore earnestly over the manuscript, occasionally scrawling with the pen which he held in his hand an imitation of some of the characters. It was a study for an artist,—those two men,—each determined upon a wrong deed for the sake of personal advantage. Lewis, with his cool, self-possessed manner, and the copyist, with his ignoble features and nervous eagerness, divided between the desire of gain and the fear of detection.

All this time a woman's eye might have been seen peering through a slightly open door, and regarding with a careful glance all that was passing. The two men were so intent upon the work before them that she escaped their notice.

“Oho,” said she to herself, “there shall be a third in the secret which you fancy confined to yourselves. Who knows but it may turn out to my advantage, some day? I will stay and see the whole.”

She drew back silently, and took her position just behind the door, where nothing that was said could escape her.

Meanwhile Jacob, having satisfied himself that he could imitate the handwriting of the will, commenced the task of copying. Half an hour elapsed during which both parties preserved strict silence. At the end of that time the copyist, with a satisfied air, handed Lewis the manuscript he had completed. The latter compared the two with a critical eye. Everything, including the names of the witnesses, was wonderfully like. It was extremely difficult from the external appearance, to distinguish the original from the copy.

“You have done your work faithfully and well,” said Lewis, with evident satisfaction, “and deserve great credit. You are wonderfully skilful with the pen.”

The copyist rubbed his hands complacently.

“With this I think we need not fear detection. Here are the two hundred dollars which I promised you. The remainder is contingent on my getting the estate. I shall be faithful, in that event, to my part of the compact.”

Jacob bowed.

“It must be very late,” said Lewis, drawing out his watch. “I am sorry to have kept you up so late; but no doubt you feel paid. I must hasten back.”

He buttoned his coat, and went out into the street. A smile lighted up his dark features as he speculated upon the probable success of his plans. He felt not even a momentary compunction as he thought of the means he had employed or the object he had in view.

Meanwhile those whom he was conspiring to defraud were sleeping tranquilly.

## CHAPTER V. THE PETTIFOGGER

The legal profession numbers among its disciples a large class of honorable and high-minded men; and it also includes some needy adventurers well versed in the arts of pettifogging and chicanery, and willing, for a consideration, to throw over the most discreditable proceedings the mantle of the law, thus perverting, to the injury of the public, that which was intended for its principal safeguard.

Of this latter class was Richard Sharp, Banister, whose name might have been read on the door of an exceedingly dirty little office not far from Wall Street. Being under the necessity of introducing my reader to some acquaintances and localities not altogether desirable I must trouble him to enter Mr. Sharp's office.

In the centre of the office stands a table covered with green baize. Scattered over it are diverse bundles tied with red tape, evidently intended to give the unsophisticated visitor the impression that Mr. Sharp's business is in a most flourishing condition. Nevertheless, since the novelist is permitted to see farther into the shams which he describes than is accorded to others less privileged, it may be remarked that these identical bundles have lain upon the table with no other alteration than an occasional change of arrangement, ever since the office was opened.

The enterprising proprietor of the bundles aforesaid is smoking a cigar, while reading the *Morning Herald*, and occasionally glancing out of the window near by. His features would hardly justify the description of "beauty in repose," being deeply pitted with smallpox, which is not usually thought to improve the appearance. His nose is large and spreading at the base. His hair is deeply, darkly, beautifully red, bristling like a cat's fur when accidentally rubbed the wrong way. Add to these a long, scraggy neck, and the reader has a tolerable idea of Mr. Sharp as he sat in his office on the first day of October, 18—.

How long he would have sat thus, if uninterrupted, is uncertain. His meditations were broken in upon by a quick, imperative knock at the door. The effect upon Mr. Sharp was electrical. He sprang from his seat, tossed his cigar away, wheeled his chair round to the table, and drawing a blank legal form towards him, knit his brows and began to write as if life and death depended upon his haste. Meanwhile the visitor became impatient and rapped again, this time more imperatively.

"Come in," called Mr. Sharp, in a deep bass voice, not raising his eyes from the paper on which his pen was now scratching furiously. "Take a seat; shall be at leisure in a moment,—full of business, you know,—can't get a moment's rest."

When at length he found time to look up, he met the gaze of our recent acquaintance, Lewis Rand. The latter, who had penetration enough to see through the lawyer's artifice, smiled a little derisively.

"It must be a satisfaction to you," he said, rather dryly, "to find your services in such request."

"Why, yes, ahem! yes," said the lawyer, passing his fingers through his bristling locks. "It is a satisfaction as you say, though I confess," he continued, with a dashing effrontery quite refreshing to contemplate, "that sometimes when my labors are protracted far into the night, I feel that business has its pains as well as pleasures, and cannot help wishing that—"

"That you had a partner to relieve you of a portion of your toils, you doubtless mean to say," interrupted Lewis, with a quizzical smile; for he was quite aware that Mr. Sharp meant no such thing. "In that case I know the very man for you; a young man just entered at the bar, very promising, and bidding fair to distinguish himself in his profession. I should be happy to serve both you and him. When shall I introduce him?"

"Why," said Sharp, in some embarrassment, for he knew to his cost that his business was quite too limited to support himself, much less a partner. "Why, you see, although my business is, as I said,

very driving, I do not at present think of taking a partner. The fact is, I never enjoy myself more than when I am hard at work. It is an idiosyncrasy of mine, if I may so express myself."

And Mr. Sharp looked up, thinking he had made a very clever evasion.

"When I do conclude to take a partner, which the increase of my business may at some time render absolutely necessary," he added, graciously inclining his head, "I will certainly think of your friend. Your recommendation will be a sufficient guarantee of his ability."

"I feel deeply indebted to you for the confidence you express in my judgment," said Lewis, bowing, "particularly as I am a perfect stranger to you. Such instances are rarely met with in a world like ours."

Mr. Sharp was not quite sure whether his visitor was not secretly bantering him. He thought it best, however, to construe his meaning literally.

"I am not usually hasty in bestowing my confidence, Mr.—your name escaped me."

"I think I have not mentioned it."

"O ho, ahem! perhaps not," continued Mr. Sharp, finding his little artifice to obtain his visitor's name ineffectual, "but as I was about to say, I seldom give my confidence without good reason. I am—I may say—somewhat skilled in physiognomy, and a cursory examination of the features is sufficient, in ordinary cases, to enable me to form an opinion of a person."

Mr. Sharp was fertile in expedients, and had an abundant share of self-possession.

"Perhaps we had better proceed to business," said Lewis, abruptly.

"Oh, by all means, sir, by all means?" returned Mr. Sharp, assuming a brisk tone at the prospect of a client. "As I before remarked, I never feel more completely in my element than when immersed in business. It is an—"

"If you will give me your attention for a few minutes," pursued Lewis, unceremoniously interrupting him, "I will endeavor to explain the nature of the service I require."

Mr. Sharp bent forward, and assumed an attitude of the most earnest attention. He nodded slightly, and screwed up his eyes, as if to intimate that he was about to concentrate all his mental energies upon the matter in hand.

"You must know," said Lewis, slowly, "that there are two persons living in this city whose presence, in what way it is needless to specify, conflict very seriously with my interests. It is my wish to bring some motive to bear upon them which shall lead to their departure from the city."

"I understand," nodded Mr. Sharp, with an air of profound wisdom. "Go on, my good sir."

"One difficulty, however, meets me at the outset," continued Lewis; "I do not know in what part of the city the two persons—"

"Aforesaid," prompted Mr. Sharp, nodding sagaciously.

"Live," concluded Lewis, not heeding the interpolation; "nor have I any definite clew by which to find them."

"Can you describe these persons to me so that I may be able to identify them?"

"That is not easy, since one of them I have never seen but once, and the other but once in fifteen years."

Mr. Sharp looked a little puzzled.

"I can, however, tell you this much. One is a man of about forty, who appears somewhat older. The other, his daughter, is a girl of fourteen, or thereabouts. The former is a little absent in manner, or was formerly so; the little girl, I should judge, is attractive in her personal appearance."

"When did you last meet them?" inquired the lawyer.

"One evening last week."

"And where?"

"They were then leaning against the railing on the west side of the Park."

"Can you tell at what hour?"

"About six."

“Then it is quite possible that they may be found at the same place some evening, at or near this hour. Very probably they are in the habit of taking a walk at that time and in that direction. We are all creatures of habit, and are apt to stick to the ruts we have made. Have you no other clew by which I may be guided? It is quite likely that there are others to whom the description you have given will apply. When you saw them, in what manner were they dressed?”

“I had but a brief glimpse, and do not feel altogether sure. The father is as tall as yourself. I can tell you the girl’s name also; it is Helen.”

“And her father’s?”

“I could tell you his real name, but as I have every reason to believe that he has dropped it and assumed another, it will, perhaps, be unnecessary. His Christian name is Robert.”

“The first step, then,” said Mr. Sharp, reflectively, “is, of course, to find these persons. This will be a matter of some difficulty, and may require considerable time. I do not doubt, however, that I shall ultimately be able to accomplish it. May I inquire whether they are in good circumstances pecuniarily?”

“Probably not. I presume their means are quite limited.”

“So much the better.”

“For what reason?” inquired Lewis, in some curiosity.

“Simply this. You tell me you are desirous of removing them from the city; if they are poor it will be much easier to offer an inducement likely to weigh with them, than if they were in prosperous circumstances.”

“There is something in that, I admit, but if Robert is as proud as he used to be in days gone by, such an attempt would avail but little. However, there is no occasion to consider what further steps are to be taken, till we have actually found them. That must be our first care.”

“In that I shall endeavor to serve you. How and where shall I communicate with you?”

“I shall call upon you frequently. There may, however, be occasions when it will be needful to communicate with me without delay. In such an event, a note directed to L. Thornton, Box 1228, will reach me.”

Mr. Sharp noted this address on a slip of paper, and bowed his client out.

There will of course be no difficulty in divining why Lewis considered it detrimental to his interests that Helen and her father should remain in the city. He was in constant alarm lest some accident should bring together the father and son, who had for so long a time been separated from each other. He was playing for a large stake, and was not fastidious as to the means employed, provided they insured his success. His visit to the copyist, and the bold forgery perpetrated with his assistance, afforded sufficient evidence of this. He was disposed, however, to use very prudent precaution. Why he was induced to call in the co-operation of a needy, and well nigh briefless lawyer like Mr. Sharp, may be gathered from the soliloquy in which he indulged on leaving the office of the worthy attorney.

“There’s a great deal of humbug about that fellow,” he said to himself, “but he is quick-witted and unscrupulous—two qualities which adapt him to my service. Again, he is poor, and not overburdened with business, so that he will be the more likely to attach himself to my interests. Things seem to be in a fair train. It is fortunate that my cousin does not know of his father’s removal to this city; he doubtless imagines him a hundred miles away. It is indispensable that I should not show myself in this business, but leave everything to Sharp. When the property is mine, I can bid my cousin defiance.”

The wily nephew hastened to the bedside of his uncle, where, with feigned solicitude, he inquired after his health. It is well for our happiness that we cannot always read the hearts of those about us. How hollow and empty would then seem some of the courtesies of life!

## CHAPTER VI. SO FAR, SO GOOD

Lewis Rand had displayed his usual sagacity in selecting Mr. Sharp as his agent in the affair which now occupied so large a share of his attention. The worthy attorney was not particularly scrupulous, and the thought that he was lending his aid to defraud, did not have the least effect in disturbing Mr. Sharp's tranquillity. Indeed, he considered it a stroke of remarkably good luck that he should have secured so promising a client, through whom his rather limited income was likely to receive so important an accession. To do him justice he intended to devote his best exertions to the case now in his hands, and insure the success of his client if it could in any manner be compassed.

For several evenings subsequent to the interview described in the last chapter, Mr. Sharp found it convenient to walk for an hour or more towards the close of the afternoon. Singularly enough he never varied his promenade, always selecting the neighborhood of the Park. It was his custom to walk slowly up and down, attentively scanning the different groups that passed under his eye. But among the thousands who passed him, he could for some time discover none that resembled the description furnished by his client.

It chanced that Helen and her father had suspended their walks for a few days, in consequence of a slight indisposition on the part of the latter. This, however, Mr. Sharp could not be expected to know. His hopes of ultimate success diminished, and although he continued his daily walks, he began to be apprehensive that they would result in nothing. But one evening as he was glancing restlessly about him, his eye fell upon a plainly-dressed man, above the middle height, but stooping, walking hand in hand with a young girl. Their ages seemed to correspond with those given by Lewis Rand.

The thought flashed upon Mr. Sharp that these might be the two persons of whom he was in search. Judging that they might let fall something in their conversation which would decide the matter, he followed closely behind them. But unluckily for the lawyer's purpose, Mr. Ford was in one of his not uncommon fits of abstraction, and maintained an unbroken silence.

Mr. Sharp pondered, and set his wits to work to devise some method by which he could gain the information he desired. At length it occurred to him that the little girl's name was Helen, and this might help to identify her.

After a while Helen and her father slackened their pace. Mr. Sharp took up a position behind them. Assuming an air of unconcern, he pronounced, in a low tone, the word "Helen," at the same time slipping dexterously behind an old gentleman of somewhat aldermanic proportions who had just come up.

On hearing her name pronounced, Helen turned quickly around as Mr. Sharp had anticipated. Her eyes rested on the grave features of the respectable old gentleman before alluded to. He was not even looking at her. Evidently it could not be he. She did not observe the somewhat flashily attired gentleman behind, whose red locks contrasted so vividly with the grayish white hat somewhat jauntily perched on the side of his head. Supposing, therefore, that her ears must have deceived her, she turned away. Her sudden movement, however, had not been unobserved by the watchful eyes of the lawyer.

"That must be she," he said to himself. "She would scarcely have turned round so quickly on hearing any other name than her own. That's the first link in the chain, Sharp. You've got a little to build upon now. Now we'll see how well you will succeed in following it up."

Mr. Sharp was in the habit of apostrophizing himself in such familiar terms as "old fellow," and would indulge in commendations, or otherwise, of his conduct, as if of a second person.

When Helen and her father left the spot, they were followed at a little distance by the lawyer, whose object of course, was to ascertain where they lived. His curiosity was gratified. Helen entered



Mother Morton's boarding-house, quite unconscious that she had been followed. A rapid glance satisfied Mr. Sharp of the name and number which were at once transferred to his note-book.

"So far, so good," thought he, with inward satisfaction. "I must inform my client forthwith, and then we can decide upon further steps."

So elated was Mr. Sharp by the discovery that he had made, that he stepped into a saloon on Broadway, and indulged in potations so very generous, that he narrowly escaped arrest by a policeman on the way home.

Helen, meanwhile, was becoming daily more and more troubled in mind. Her father was so wrapped up in his model that he could think of nothing else. To her, accordingly, had been committed the common purse, and upon her had devolved the duty of providing for their daily wants, as well as discharging the rent which was due once in four weeks. She therefore knew more of their pecuniary condition than her father. She had been repeatedly alarmed at the rapid diminution of the funds placed in her hands, and this, notwithstanding she exercised the strictest economy in all their expenses. For some time, as we have seen, she had eked out their scanty means by working for the slop-shops. Now, however, there was a lull in the clothing business, and this resource was temporarily cut off. How heavily upon the young and inexperienced falls the burden of pecuniary trouble! Helen saw with a feeling of dismay that a few weeks would find their means exhausted. What would become of them then, she did not dare to think. If only her father's invention could be completed before that time, she thought, in her simplicity, that all would be well. Of the long years before even a successful invention can be made profitable, she knew nothing. She trusted implicitly to her father's confident assurances, and never doubted that some time they would become rich through his discovery. This consideration, however, did not afford her present relief. Although her father labored assiduously, it did not appear to her unpractised eye that he was any nearer the end than he had been six months before. Confident as she was of his final success, the question how they should live in the mean time assumed grave importance, and occasioned her not a little perplexity.

If Helen could have shared her doubts and anxieties with some one who might have sympathized with her, she would have felt less troubled. But there seemed to be no one to whom she could speak freely. She was only too anxious to keep it from her father, who, she felt instinctively, could give her little or no assistance. She thought of speaking to Mrs. Morton, but the fear lest, if she should acknowledge her poverty, the latter might be unwilling to allow them to retain their room any longer, restrained her.

We have before mentioned the humble seamstress, Martha Grey, who occupied the room beneath that of Mr. Ford. Though plain in appearance, and of quiet demeanor, Helen had been attracted by the expression of goodness which lighted up her face. Sometimes, when her father seemed wholly immersed in his labors, she would steal down stairs and spend a quiet hour in Martha's company.

On one of these occasions Martha had a visitor. Although introduced as a cousin, one could scarcely imagine a greater contrast than existed between her and Martha. Her dress was more showy than tasteful, and evidently occupied a large share of her attention. She was employed in a millinery establishment where she earned good wages,—twice as much as Martha,—but saved nothing, expending everything upon personal adornment. She lacked entirely the refinement and quiet dignity of her cousin. In spite of her humble circumstances, Martha would have been recognized by any one possessing discernment as a lady. Her cousin, in spite of her dress, was never in any danger of being mistaken for one. Her manner towards Martha, however, was a patronizing one, and she evidently considered herself as occupying a much higher position than the seamstress.

"I am astonished, Martha," said she, glancing contemptuously at the plain room, and plainer furniture, "that you should be willing to live in such a hole. I believe if I was cooped up here I should die of loneliness in less than a week."

"I find it very comfortable," said Martha, composedly.

“Yes, I suppose it will do. It will keep out the rain and wind, and is better than nothing, of course. But I want something better than that.”

“I am very well contented,” said Martha, “and even if I were not, I could afford no better.”

“Do you stay here all the time? Don’t you ever go to concerts or the theatre?”

“No.”

“What a humdrum life you must lead! It’s Wednesday afternoon. Suppose we go to the theatre. There’s going to be a splendid play.”

Martha hesitated.

There is so little to excite or interest in the monotonous life of a hard-working seamstress, that she really longed to throw aside the needle, and accept her cousin’s invitation.

“I should like to go,” she said at length, “but I am afraid I ought not to spend either the time or the money.”

“Then I’ll make you a fair offer. If you’ll spare the time, I’ll spare the money. I’ll buy the tickets. Won’t you go, too?” she continued, turning to Helen. “I’ll pay for you.”

Helen looked at Martha who nodded kindly, and said, “Did you ever go to the theatre, Helen!”

“No, Martha.”

“Then you had better come. You can come back with me.”

“Thank you,” said Helen. “I will see if father needs me.”

She hastened up stairs, but found that her father, absorbed in his engrossing employment, had not even been aware of her absence.

“Do you think you can spare me for two or three hours, papa?” she asked. “I have been invited to go out.”

She had to repeat the question before her father comprehended.

“Go, by all means, my dear child,” he answered. “I am afraid you confine yourself too much on my account.”

Helen was soon ready. She went out with Martha Grey and her cousin, and a few minutes found them standing before a large building with a spacious entrance.

“This is the theatre,” said Martha, addressing herself to Helen.

Helen little thought of the consequences that were to follow this—her first entrance within the walls of a theatre.

## CHAPTER VII. A NEW TALENT

Seated in the theatre, Helen looked about her in bewilderment. She had never been within the walls of a theatre. In the street the sun shone brightly. Here the sun was rigorously excluded, and gas took its place. It seemed to the unsophisticated child like a sudden leap from noon to night. She could hear the rumbling of vehicles in the streets, but it appeared to her, somehow, as if they were far away, and that she had come into a different world. She wondered what there was behind that broad green curtain in front, and why the lights should be arranged so oddly at the foot of it.

“Lor’, child, that’s the stage,” was the lucid explanation of Martha’s cousin, to whom she applied for information. “Haven’t you ever been to the theatre before?”

“No, never,” said Helen.

The cousin looked at her with some curiosity, as if there must be something out of the common way about a person who had never been to the theatre, and expressed her decided conviction that Helen’s education had been shockingly neglected.

“Why,” said she, “before I was half as high as you, I had been to the theatre ever so many times.”

She spoke with so much complacency that Helen imagined she must be a very superior person, and possessed great knowledge of the world.

While these and other thoughts were passing through her mind, the bell rang twice, and then the curtain rose.

Helen nearly uttered an exclamation of surprise, so unprepared was she for the spectacle which was presented to her dazzled gaze. The play was a fairy extravaganza, which depended for its success chiefly upon scenery and stage effect. In the first scene was represented the palace of the Queen of the fairies, crowning the summit of a hill, rising in the centre of a beautiful island. Above floated fleecy clouds, from a break in which streamed the sunshine, lending its glory to the scene.

In the foreground stood a circle of children about Helen’s age or younger, who figured as sylphs. With united voices they sang a song in honor of the Queen of the fairies, who directly afterwards was seen floating through the air above the stage, arrayed in such style as seemed befitting her illustrious rank.

So complete was the illusion to Helen, that she gazed with suspended breath and a feeling, half of awe, as if the scene she looked upon was really one of enchantment.

“Is she really a fairy?” she asked of Martha’s cousin.

“No, child, of course not. It’s Henrietta Blake. I’ve seen her in the street many a time. Once I was introduced to her.”

“What a beautiful creature she must be!” said Helen, admiringly.

“Beautiful!” repeated the cousin, with some disdain. “For my part, I don’t think she’s anything to boast of in that line. Just notice what a poor complexion she has. You’d see it if it wasn’t for the paint. You wouldn’t have thought her very fairy-like if you had seen her in at Taylor’s the other evening, eating oysters.”

Helen could scarcely believe her ears. It seemed to be almost like sacrilege to associate such a gross idea with the ethereal being that floated before her in all the majestic beauty of a fairy queen. It took from the scene before her something of the charm with which her fancy had invested it. Still it was with a feeling of intense enjoyment that she followed the play to its conclusion, watching scene after scene pass before her, and the music was truly enchanting.

At length the play was finished, and the curtain dropped. This, however, did not conclude the performance. After a short pause the curtain rose once more, and a young girl came forward and sang the well-known little Scotch song, “Comin’ thro’ the Rye.” It was sung correctly and in good taste,

but with no remarkable display of power. Still it was vociferously encored, and, on its repetition, was applauded warmly.

There was an afterpiece, but, as it was already late in the afternoon, Martha and her cousin decided not to remain.

“Well, how did you like it?” asked the cousin, patronizingly.

“Oh, it was beautiful!” exclaimed Helen, enthusiastically. “I am so much obliged to you for taking me.”

“They have better plays sometimes,” returned the cousin, with an air of superior knowledge of the world. “I didn’t think much of the acting to-day, for my part. I’ll take you again some time when they’ve got something else.”

Even after she was fairly in the street, Helen found it difficult to throw off the illusion of the stage. She could still see in imagination the gorgeous spectacle, the splendid fairy palace, the graceful sylphs, and the queen in her regal magnificence. She was so entirely under the dominion of fancy that to her the outer world seemed unreal, and that which she had seen, the real. She walked on, heeding little, till she was suddenly roused from her reverie in a very forcible manner, by coming in collision with some person. It proved to be a very fat old lady, who was walking, or rather waddling, slowly along the sidewalk, with her head thrown back. At the unexpected collision, she screamed, and gasped for breath, eyeing Helen, meanwhile, with no very amiable expression of countenance.

“You’ve just about beaten the breath out of my body, you young trollop. Where was you brought up, I’d like to know, not to have any better manners?”

“I hope you’ll excuse me,” said Helen, humbly, somewhat ashamed of her preoccupation. “I didn’t mean to run against you.”

“Don’t tell me,” said the irritated old lady. “You did it a purpose. I know you did.”

“She might as well say you ran into her on purpose,” retorted Martha’s cousin.

“I didn’t speak to you, ma’am,” said the exasperated old lady. “It’s my belief that you’re all in league together, and I’ve a great mind to have you given in charge of the police.”

“Indeed!” said the cousin, ironically.

“Come away,” said Martha, in a low voice. “Don’t let us have a scene here.”

As quickly as possible they escaped from the irate old lady. She stood panting for breath, and glaring at them over the rims of her glasses, which had been accidentally misplaced. This encounter, ludicrous as it was, served to bring Helen back from the ideal world to the real, and without any further adventures she reached home.

It was already time to prepare their frugal meal. She found her father as busily occupied as ever. She was glad of this, for it showed that her presence had not been missed.

The next day Martha Grey was at work harder than ever. She felt that she must make up by extra exertion for the unwonted relaxation of the day before.

“What are you thinking of, Martha?” asked Helen, playfully, as she stole in unperceived, and placed her hands over the eyes of the seamstress. “Come, tell me before I take my hands away.”

“I was thinking,” said Martha, “that I should like to hear once more the song that was sung at the theatre yesterday.”

“You enjoyed it, then?”

“Very much.”

“Shall I sing it to you?” asked Helen, quietly.

“You, Helen?” asked Martha, lifting up her eyes in astonishment. “Can you sing? I never heard you.”

“I do not sing very often,” said Helen, sadly. “My mother taught me, and whenever I sing it brings up thoughts of her.”

“I should like very much to hear you sing, Helen,” said Martha; “but do not do it if it will make you sad.”

“Never mind, Martha. I will sing, if it will give you pleasure.”

Helen commenced the song, and sang it to the end in a voice of remarkable richness and power. She was gifted with a voice of extraordinary flexibility and compass, whose natural power had evidently been improved by cultivation. Martha, who, though no singer herself, was very fond of listening to music, and could judge when it had merit, listened with unaffected astonishment and delight. She felt that she had never heard a voice of equal sweetness and power.

“You have a beautiful voice,” she said, when Helen had finished the song. “You sang it much better than it was sung at the theatre yesterday. Some day you may become a great singer.”

“Do you really think so?” asked Helen, her eyes sparkling with delight. “I am very glad.”

Martha looked up in some surprise, not understanding why it was that Helen felt so much pleased. But a new thought had come to the child.

“Is there anything else you would like to hear?” she asked.

“I should like to hear ‘Home, Sweet Home.’”

It was a song which Helen had often sung, and to which she could do full justice. It was not difficult to account for the feeling which led Martha Grey to make choice of this song. She was one of a large family, who had never known sorrow or separation till the death of her parents, following each other in quick succession, turned them all adrift upon the world.

As the song proceeded, Martha called up in fancy the humble farm-house among the New Hampshire hills, with its comfortable barn and well-tilled acres around it. She recalled the broad, low kitchen, with its large fireplace and blazing back-log, around which the family was wont to gather in the cheerful winter evenings. She recalled her little sister Ruth, who was about the age of Helen when their home was broken up, but whom she had not seen since, Ruth having been placed in the family of an uncle. She recalled her happy school-days, her school companions, and, above all, her father and mother, who had never been otherwise than kind to her, and then looked about the small and desolate room which she now called home. She could not help contrasting her present lonely position with what it had been when she was at home in the midst of her family, and as the last strain died away upon Helen’s lips, she burst into tears.

Helen looked up in surprise at this unwonted display of emotion on the part of one, usually so quiet and composed as Martha Grey.

“Don’t mind me, Helen,” said Martha, through her tears. “It came over me, and I couldn’t help it. Some time, perhaps, I will tell you why it is that that song always makes me shed tears.”

## CHAPTER VIII. SUNDAY AND TRINITY CHURCH

It was Sunday morning. To thousands of frames, wearied by exhausting labors, it brought the benediction of rest. To thousands of throbbing brains it brought grateful relaxation. The great business thoroughfares wear a Sunday look. The shops are closed, and no longer hold out, through showily-arranged windows, invitations to enter. The bells in a hundred steeples ring out in many voices the summons to worship.

Helen tapped gently at Martha's door.

"Where do you attend church?" she inquired.

"I was just going to call for you, Helen," said the seamstress, "to ask if you and your father wouldn't like to attend Trinity Church with me."

Helen hesitated a little.

"That is the great church at the lower end of Broadway, isn't it?" she inquired.

"Yes."

"I thought it might be a fashionable church. Father and I have been to one or two of the great churches, where the sexton didn't seem to care about giving us seats, but finally put us away back where we found it difficult to hear the service."

"I have had the same experience more than once," said Martha; "but we shall have no such trouble at Trinity. Though one of the finest churches in the city, it is free to all, and the poor are as welcome as the rich."

"Then I shall be glad to go, and so will papa. Wait a moment, and I will tell him."

They were soon in the street, mingling with the well-dressed crowds, wending their way to their respective houses of worship.

"Sunday was always pleasant to me," said Martha, "even as a child. I remember the plain old meeting-house, where we all sat in square, high-backed pews, listening to the good old minister who is gone now to his rest and his reward. There have been great changes since then," and she sighed sadly.

A short walk brought them to the church portals. They were early, and obtained excellent seats. The organist was already playing. Helen's face lit with pleasure, for she had never before heard so fine an instrument or so skilful a player. Exquisitely fitted by nature for receiving musical impressions, she felt her soul uplifted by the grandeur of the music, and her heart penetrated by its sweetness. Now there was a thunderous clang, as if the organist were seeking to evoke from the instrument a fitting tribute to the majesty and power of the Creator. It seemed as if hosts of angels were clashing their cymbals, and singing God's high praise. Now a delicate rill of silver-voiced melody trickled forth, clear and sweet, interpreting the unfathomable love wherewith God loves his children, even the lowliest.

Helen listened as one entranced, and when the last strain died away, and the organ was still, she turned towards Martha, and whispered, for she could not keep silence, "It lifts me up. It almost seems as if I were in heaven."

Unconsciously Helen expressed the same feeling which Milton has embodied in fitting lines,—

"But let my due feet never fail  
To walk the studious cloisters pale,  
And love the high embowered roof  
With antique pillars massy proof,  
And storied windows richly dight  
Casting a dim religious light;

There let the pealing organ blow  
To the full-voiced choir below  
In service high and anthem clear,  
As may with sweetness through mine ear  
Dissolve me into ecstasies  
And bring all heaven before mine eyes.”

It is a mistake to suppose that the plainest and cheapest churches are good enough for the poor. Europe is far more democratic in matters of religion than America. In the great continental cathedrals I have more than once felt inexpressibly touched to behold at my side some child of poverty and misfortune bending a reverent gaze upon some imaged saint. I have pictured to myself his probable home in some filthy court or dingy alley, with the light of heaven shut out, dark, forbidding and noisome, and rejoiced to think that it was his privilege to pass from such a scene into the splendors that fitly adorn the house of God. It is something to shed a ray of sunlight upon the life of a poor man—to gratify his taste, mortified by the gloomy surroundings of his daily life, to nourish the little flower of sentiment struggling out of the rubbish that has well-nigh choked out his æsthetic nature, and help him to feel that life has a beautiful side, from which he is not utterly shut out.

So Helen and the poor seamstress, confined through the week in poor and unattractive chambers, felt a quiet satisfaction in the grand architectural proportions and solemn beauty of the great church in which they felt themselves welcome guests. They derived new strength for the plain and humble duties of every day in the thought that one day in seven they could escape into a loftier atmosphere, and feel God’s presence nearer.

Occasionally, as the service proceeded, Helen stole a glance at her father, who sat beside her. His face wore a look of calm enjoyment and intelligent appreciation.

As he sat with his clasped hands resting on his knees, and his eyes fixed upon the preacher, the vanished years returned, and beside him there sat once more the fair young bride, whose pure and saintly image lived a hallowed remembrance in the heart of father and daughter alike.

When the service closed, he did not change his position, till Helen, touching him gently, said, “It is time to go, papa.”

“We will come again next Sunday, Helen,” he said.

“Yes, papa.”

They walked back slowly and thoughtfully to their humble homes, speaking little, but each more happy and peaceful for the hour passed in the great church whose lofty spire seemed ever pointing upwards to that God in whose service it was reared.



## CHAPTER IX. THE LAWYER'S PROGRESS

The day after his meeting with Helen and her father, the worthy attorney, Mr. Sharp, took his way leisurely to the boarding-house of Mrs. Morton. Although the object of his visit was clearly defined to his own mind, he scarcely knew in what manner he might best attain it. But Mr. Sharp was not a man to be abashed or daunted by small difficulties. Trusting, therefore, to what chance and the inspiration of the moment might suggest, he mounted the steps and rang the bell.

"Mrs. Morton, I presume," he remarked, with great affability, as that lady opened the door in person.

"You are quite right, sir."

"I believe," he remarked with suavity, "that I am correct in the supposition that you take boarders."

"I wonder what he's aiming at," thought Mother Morton, glancing with something of suspicion at the white hat set jauntily on one side of his head. "I hope he won't apply for board. I am always suspicious of those who are so smooth-tongued."

"Yes, sir," she said aloud, "I do take boarders, but I am full now."

"Indeed!" said Mr. Sharp, with a benignant smile, "I am delighted to hear of your prosperity. I was not, however, thinking of making an application for board in my own behalf, though I should undoubtedly esteem it a high privilege to be an inmate of a boarding-house which I am confident is so admirably conducted. Will you have the goodness to tell me whether you have a boarder or lodger named Dupont?"

It is scarcely necessary to explain that this inquiry was employed by Mr. Sharp as a plausible method of accounting for his calling, and to pave the way for something else. He had no particular choice in the name, but thought Dupont would be as uncommon as any.

"Yes," was the unexpected reply of Mrs. Morton, "we have a lodger of that name. I believe he is in. Will you step in and see him, sir?"

Unprepared for this answer, Mr. Sharp was for the moment undecided how to act. Being sufficiently quick-witted, however, he soon devised a way to extricate himself from his embarrassment.

"Poor man!" said he with a gentle sigh; "he's much to be pitied."

"Pitied!" echoed the landlady, opening wide her eyes in astonishment. "Why?"

"To a sensitive mind," continued Mr. Sharp, in a tone of mild pathos, "bodily deformity must be a great drawback to one's comfort and happiness."

"Deformity!" repeated the landlady in increased surprise.

"Yes, Mr. Dupont is a humpback, is he not?"

"A humpback!" returned Mrs. Morton, in a tone of some asperity. "You are quite mistaken, sir; I have no humpback among my boarders."

"Then it cannot be the man I mean," said the lawyer, rejoiced to have got out of the scrape so cleverly. "I beg ten thousand pardons for having put you to so much trouble."

"No trouble, sir," was the civil reply.

Mrs. Morton held the door, wondering why the visitor still remained, now that his errand was accomplished. The lawyer's purpose, however, still remained to be effected. He was even now cudgelling his brains to devise a method of reaching it.

"A moment more," he said, with suavity. "I think, as I passed last evening, that I saw a little girl enter with an elderly gentleman."

"Helen Ford?"

“Oh, yes. She boards with you, does she not?”

“Helen and her father have a room up stairs. They board themselves. I only lodge them.”

“Pardon my curiosity, but I have an object in view. What is her father’s occupation?”

“He is busy about some invention, and has been ever since he came here. A flying machine, I believe.”

“Ah, yes,” said the lawyer, to whom this was all new. “It is as I supposed. Can I see them? I picked up a small purse,” he added, by way of explanation, “just after they passed me in the street, and I thought it not unlikely that the young lady might have dropped it.”

“Certainly,” said the landlady, somewhat more favorably disposed to Mr. Sharp, in consequence of this evidence of his integrity. “Their room is on the fourth floor, at the head of the stairs. Perhaps I had better go up and show you.”

“Oh, by no means, madam, by no means,” said the lawyer, politely. “I know the value of your time, and would on no account subject you to so much unnecessary trouble. I shall easily find it from your directions.”

Helen was looking out of the window, and her father was busied as usual, when a low tap was heard at the door.

Supposing it was Martha, who, in fact, with the exception of the landlady, was her only visitor, she cried, “Come in,” and then creeping softly to the door, jumped out playfully upon the one who entered. Her dismay may readily be conceived when, instead of the quiet seamstress, she found that she had narrowly escaped jumping into the arms of a tall man with a white hat.

“I am very sorry,—I did not know,—I thought it was Martha,” she faltered, in great confusion, her cheeks dyed with blushes.

“Don’t apologize, I beg of you,” said the stranger, courteously. “It is I, on the contrary, who should apologize for intruding upon you, and,” he added, glancing to the corner of the room, “upon your respected parent. I am not mistaken,” he added, inquiringly, “in supposing him to be your father?”

“No, sir,” said Helen, who, without understanding why, felt a little ill at ease from the elaborate politeness of her visitor.

“But I have not yet disclosed the motive of my visit. I chanced to be walking behind you and your father yesterday in the afternoon. You walked out at that time?”

“Yes, sir.”

“I thought I could not be mistaken. There are some countenances, my dear young lady, that we are not likely to forget.”

Helen, unused as she was to flattery, did not understand that this was meant for a compliment. Therefore it quite failed of its effect. Perhaps this was quite as well, since, if understood, it would have confused rather than pleased her. She was too deficient in vanity to have felt flattered by a compliment from a stranger. Yet no one was more desirous of winning the approval of those whose friendship she valued. Helen was, in short, a truthful, unsophisticated child, perfectly transparent and straightforward, and imagined that others were equally so. So she only waited patiently for Mr. Sharp to announce the object of his call.

“Afterwards I discovered this purse on the sidewalk,” continued the lawyer, displaying his own purse. “As you and your father had just passed, I conjectured that one or the other of you must have dropped it. I have, accordingly, called this morning to ascertain if I am correct in my supposition, and if so, to return the purse.”

“No,” said Helen, shaking her head. “It cannot be ours.”

“Then I must seek farther for the owner. I beg you will pardon me for this intrusion.”

Helen said, rather awkwardly, that it was of no consequence.

“May I inquire,” said Mr. Sharp, as if the idea suddenly struck him, “whether your father is not an inventor? I think I was told so by the very respectable lady down stairs.”

“Yes,” said Helen, more at her ease. “Papa has been busy a great while about his invention. It requires a great deal of time and patience.”

“Indeed! Would it be taking too great a liberty to inquire the nature of the proposed invention?”

“It is a flying machine,” said Helen. “Some people laugh at it,” she added, a little hurriedly. “It seems strange to them because they have never thought much about it.”

“Let them laugh,” said Mr. Sharp, with warmth. “Let them laugh, my dear young lady,” he repeated in a tone of profound sympathy. “It is the way of the world. There has never been any great discovery or invention, from the earliest ages to the present time, that has not encountered ridicule. Wait till success crowns your father’s exertions, and then you will see how all will be changed.”

“So papa thinks,” said Helen, quite grateful to the lawyer for his words of encouragement; “and it is that which makes him labor so patiently.”

“Undoubtedly. Would it be too great a liberty to ask permission to examine your father’s invention. It is a subject in which I feel a very deep interest. Indeed, I may say that I am something of an inventor myself.”

Poor confiding Helen! How could she imagine that these words of sympathy covered an unblushing falsehood?

“Papa will be very glad to show it to you,” she said. Then to her father: “Papa, this gentleman would like to examine your model.”

“Certainly,” said Mr. Ford, courteously.

This was a subject on which, despite his taciturnity, he could talk fluently. Mr. Sharp listened with an appearance of profound attention, occasionally asking a question, and remarking modestly that he had once entered upon a similar train of investigation, but that the imperative claims of business had brought it to an abrupt termination.

“I have not by any means,” he concluded, “lost my interest in scientific matters; and it would afford me great pleasure if you will permit me occasionally to look in upon you and note your progress. I dare not hope that I could offer any suggestions likely to be of service to one so far my superior in scientific attainments, but should it be in my power to aid you in any way, you can count on me with confidence.”

Mr. Ford felt flattered, as was but natural, by this evidence of interest in his pursuits, and cordially invited Mr. Sharp to call whenever he found it convenient.

“Well, Sharp,” said that gentleman, apostrophizing himself, as he made his way down stairs, “you’ve done well, old fellow, though at one time I trembled for you. You’ve flattered your way into the good graces of that chimerical old fool, and now you are in a fair way to accomplish something more, if needful.”

The next day found him closeted with Lewis Rand, from whom he received instructions as to his future course.

## CHAPTER X. NEW PROJECTS

Helen had been long and anxiously considering in what manner she could employ herself so as to earn a sufficient amount to defray the expenses of living. Every day the little stock of money remaining in her purse became less. They lived very frugally, but there was the rent, and two persons cannot live on air. So the little hoard diminished, and five dollars were now all that remained to Helen. Five dollars! it might keep them ten days, but certainly would not last longer, economize as they might. From her father Helen could hope for no present assistance. He was always at work, but his labor, however well it might be compensated in the future, brought in no money now. And for money there would soon be pressing occasion. Helen grew very uneasy at the thought that they might be turned penniless into the street. Hitherto they had never been without money. The five dollars that remained was the last instalment of a small property left her father by his mother.

One morning Helen sat at the table, leaning her head upon her hand, plunged in anxious thought. At first she could think of no possible resource. But when everything looks dark, and all paths seem closed to us, suddenly from out the thick darkness there sometimes streams a ray of hope to cheer and sustain the sinking heart.

So it was in the present case.

In her humility, Helen had never dreamed that she possessed extraordinary musical powers, and it was only through the warm commendation of Martha Grey that this fact became known to her. Why should she not employ these in her father's service? At the theatre a singer, but little older than herself, and as Martha declared inferior in talent, had won the popular applause. Why should not she gain employment in a similar capacity? Full of these thoughts, she entered Martha's room.

The seamstress sat at the open window. The cool breeze that found its way in, lent a faint flush to her pale cheeks. In the cage over her head a canary bird sang—Martha's solitary extravagance. As she sat alone from morning till night engaged in her monotonous task, the bird supplied the place of human company, and beguiled a portion of the weary time.

Helen came in and seated herself on a cricket at Martha's feet.

Martha's face brightened, for she had already learned to love the child.

"I am glad to see you, Helen," she said. "How is your father, to-day?"

"Papa is much as usual."

"Hard at work as ever, I suppose."

"Yes; he allows himself no time to rest. I really think he ought. But, Martha, I am going to ask your advice about something very important to me," said the child, gravely.

"Thank you for your confidence, Helen. Whatever is of importance to you will be of interest to me."

"You remember telling me the other day that you liked my singing, and that I might some day become a great singer. You know I told you at the time how glad I was to hear you say so."

"Yes, Helen; I remember it."

"I did not tell you then why I felt glad; but I will now."

Helen paused a moment, and then in a frank tone, which showed how little she was affected by the conventional shame some feel in disclosing their poverty, continued: "My father and I are very poor. We have been so for some time, but I got a little money by sewing, and that helped along. Now, you know, business is dull, and I can get no more work to do. The little money we have left will not last a fortnight, though I am *very* economical. So you see, Martha, it is quite necessary that I should find some way of earning more money at once."

"Does your father know how near you are to destitution?" inquired the seamstress.

“No,” was the child’s reply; “and I hope he will not find out. I cannot bear to trouble him with that, when he has so much to think of. It can’t be very long before he finishes his model, and then we shall have plenty of money. If I can only earn enough to keep us along till that time I shall be very glad.”

“Poor child!” thought Martha, compassionately; “it will be long enough before your father’s invention fills your purse.”

She was about to offer to procure Helen some work from the establishment where she was employed, but when she looked at the bright face of the young girl, and thought to what hours and days of weariness it would consign her, how it would steal one by one the roses from her cheeks, and the freshness from her heart, leaving her with little to enjoy in the present and less to hope for in the future, she had not the heart to offer her the destiny which she had been compelled to accept for herself; nor could she bear to dim the child’s trustful confidence in her father’s success by the expression of a single doubt.

She remained silent.

Finding that Martha said nothing, Helen continued: “When I came to see you the other day, Martha, I had been trying to think of some way in which I could help poor papa, but I could think of nothing. Then when I sang to you and you liked it, I thought it possible that others might like it, too. Do you think,” she asked, lifting her eyes with a look of earnest expectation; “do you think they would hire me to sing at the theatre?”

Martha started in surprise. As yet no thought of the child’s purpose had entered her mind. To one so unobtrusive and retiring by natural temperament, the thought of going forth at the head of an army would have seemed scarcely more formidable than that of standing before a public audience. Yet this was what Helen, so diffident always, actually proposed to do.

“Can you really be in earnest, Helen?” she asked; gazing in amazement at the child who cherished such bold aspirations.

She did not understand the power of the motive which influenced Helen; how she made everything subordinate to the promptings of filial affection, which was stronger than any other feeling of her nature. That gave her courage to think of what she would otherwise have shrunk from with nervous timidity. For her father she felt that she could dare all. It was a strange position, that of a young girl at her age, called upon to assume the oversight and care of providing for her father’s comfort and necessities. Stranger still was it, that with all the knowledge of her father’s dependence upon herself and his utter ignorance of the world and its ways, she should yet have retained so thorough a respect and reverence for him.

“Can you be in earnest?”

It was Helen’s turn to be surprised at the question.

“Why not?” she asked. “It is my duty to help poor papa, and if I can do so in this way, why should I not?”

“That is true, Helen, but think of standing before so many hundreds, or perhaps thousands of people, with every eye fixed upon you. How could you bear that?”

“I should not think of it at all, Martha. When I am singing I can see nothing and hear nothing. I seem to be mounting up—up into the air, and floating among the clouds. I can’t tell you how much I enjoy singing.”

As Helen spoke her eyes sparkled, and her face flushed with enthusiasm. The exhibition of deep natural feeling is always impressive. Martha felt it to be so, and could not help admiring and loving the child more than ever. Helen had almost persuaded her.

“But,” she continued with returning caution, “you may not always feel so. There would be times when you would not feel like singing, but sing only because you were obliged to. Then when you encountered the glances of so many eyes, would not your heart sink and your courage fail you?”

"Then, Martha," said Helen, with simplicity, "I should think of poor papa, and how by my exertions I was able to make him comfortable, and how by and by, when he had succeeded, I should not be obliged to do anything more. Then I should think how much he had done for me, and how hard he is laboring even now. There would be a great satisfaction in that. I ought not to hesitate when I have an opportunity to do something for him, ought I, Martha?"

"You are a dear, good child," said the seamstress, affectionately; "and I will not say a single word more against your plan. But you must not be too hopeful. You may meet with disappointment about getting a situation."

"You mean that perhaps I shall not sing well enough, Martha," said Helen. "But I shall do my best when I think how much my father's comfort depends upon my success; and that will be sure to help me."

"No, Helen; that was not what I meant. I never for a moment doubted that you would sing well enough. Why, you sing like an angel."

"Did you ever hear an angel sing?" asked Helen, a little mischievously.

"In my dreams," said Martha, smiling. "But that was not the difficulty I thought of. Would your father be willing to have you go on the stage?"

"He would not be willing at first, so I think I shall not tell him till I find out whether they are willing to employ me. Papa is so thoughtful of me that he would think I was attempting too much, or suspect it was poverty that led me to it. It will be better not to tell him at first."

"Then there is another thing to be considered. Perhaps there will be as many singers employed as are required. It is not always easy to obtain an engagement, even where one is deserving. If you only had some influential friends—"

"I have you," said Helen, archly.

Martha smiled faintly.

"I am afraid if that is all you have to rely upon that it will be leaning on a broken reed. However, we will hope for the best, and not despond till we have reason to do so."

So the two conversed till Helen heard a neighboring clock striking five.

"Five o'clock!" she exclaimed. "I did not know it was so late. I must go up and prepare supper."

She tripped lightly up stairs with a new hope in her heart. Unconscious of the cares which had fallen so early upon his daughter, Mr. Ford was laboring at his machinery. Helen came and stood by his side.

"Well, papa, what progress?" she asked, cheerfully.

"Very good, my child," said the dreamer. "I have just succeeded in obviating a difficulty which has perplexed me for some time."

"How very glad I am, papa. That ought to give you a good appetite for your supper. I shall have it ready in a few minutes."

## CHAPTER XI. THE ENGAGEMENT

The next day Helen resolved to put her plan into execution. As soon as her morning duties were completed, and her father seated at his never-ending task, she dressed herself in the best manner her limited wardrobe would admit. Though inexperienced in the ways of the world, she felt instinctively the importance of making a favorable first impression. When she was quite ready, she left the room softly, and was soon mingling with the busy crowds that thronged Broadway. At first she walked rapidly, but, as she drew nearer her destination, and could see the imposing front of the theatre, her heart beat quick and her step became slower.

When she actually reached the entrance, a feeling of diffidence seized her, which she found it almost impossible to overcome. She felt that she could not enter, at least just then, and walked slowly by. After a while she walked back, but was withheld from entering again by a feeling scarcely less strong. Again she walked past, and again returned. This time she had schooled herself to the effort, and approaching, with hesitation, the office where tickets were sold for the evening's entertainment, inquired, in a low voice, for the manager.

"Who did you wish to see?" inquired the clerk, with some surprise visible in his manner.

The request was repeated.

"The manager? Can't say whether he's in or not. You must go to the back entrance and turn to the left. Then knock at the first door."

Helen looked bewildered.

"Have you been here before?"

"No, sir."

"Stop a minute, and I will show you, then. I shall close the office directly."

Helen was very glad of the delay, as it gave her time to assume an outward semblance of calmness.

Mr. Bowers, the manager, was seated in a small room connecting with the stage. He was a man of comfortable proportions, and bore the appearance of one whom the world had used not unkindly. Though, in general, good-tempered, he was, on this particular morning, "out of sorts." A new play was to be brought out in the evening. The actors had been allowed very little time to "get up" their parts, and, as a natural consequence, the rehearsal of the morning had been, thus far, a series of blunders. In addition to this, the "star" had failed to make his appearance, and the prospect for a successful evening did not look very bright.

Under these circumstances it was not altogether surprising that Mr. Bowers should feel disappointed and irritated.

It was at this inauspicious moment that Helen was ushered into his presence. The manager looked up with visible vexation, serving to add to the embarrassment under which Helen was already laboring.

"Well?" he demanded, in a quick, impatient tone.

Helen felt that it would be a relief if the floor would open and swallow her up, or if she could escape in some other way. The interview, which had seemed comparatively easy in the quiet of her own room, had now become very formidable. She began to wonder at her own presumption in supposing herself capable of pleasing the public with her simple songs, and to feel that Martha's partiality must have led astray her better judgment.

While these thoughts were passing through her mind, she sat silent, quite unable to frame a sentence. The manager regarded her with surprise, unable to account for her silence.



“What is your business with me?” he inquired, in a tone which indicated that his time was of great consequence, and the sooner he was left to himself the better he should be suited.

Helen understood the tone quite as readily as the words, and, imperative as it was, it assisted in recalling her to herself. She came to the point at once.

“Do you wish to engage any one to sing for you?”

She had said all that was necessary, and then she stopped, half-frightened at her own temerity.

It was the manager’s turn to look surprised. He had not taken the trouble to wonder what the child’s business was. He had only asked as a necessary form, preparatory to dismissing her. He looked more particularly at her now, noticing her childish form and air, and asked, abruptly,—

“Are you inquiring for yourself?”

“Yes, sir.”

She looked up earnestly in his face. Her bonnet had partly fallen back, revealing the rare loveliness of which she was unconscious. She waited breathlessly for the answer.

“Our company is full,” said Mr. Bowers, coldly. He turned again to his desk, and resumed his writing. His manner said, so plainly, “You may go,” that Helen prepared to obey the unspoken but implied direction. Her heart sank within her at this first disappointment. Thoughts of the coming destitution, which she had hoped to ward off by this means, crowded upon her, and she could scarcely keep back the rebellious tears, which, had she been alone would have had free course.

As she passed slowly out, a messenger hurriedly entered the office.

“Well, what now?” asked the manager, somewhat testily. “Any more blunders? It seems as if everything conspired against us. Has — made his appearance?”

“No, sir.”

“And won’t, I’ll be bound. These fellows claim the lion’s share of the profits, and trouble themselves little about the convenience of their employers.”

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