

Pinkerton Allan

# The Spiritualists and the Detectives



Allan Pinkerton

**The Spiritualists and the Detectives**

«Public Domain»

**Pinkerton A.**

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## The Spiritualists and the Detectives

### PREFACE

I WISH to anticipate any adverse criticism that may be made upon the following pages, by being as frank with the public as I trust the critics will be fair with me.

Therefore I must say at the beginning that I expect many well-meaning people to differ with me as to the propriety of giving this book to the public; but I am exceedingly hopeful that that difference will not amount to a serious condemnation. Nor can I think it will when I earnestly assert that I have caused its publication out of as honest a motive as I ever possessed; and I am sure that whatever the American people have come to think of me in other respects, they are pretty certain of my honesty.

The incidents related are true, though, out of a proper regard for my patrons and many who do not sustain that relation, but who unavoidably become identified in numberless ways with my operations in ferreting out crime and criminals, I have deemed it best to locate the story in a city several hundred miles from the place where the occurrences really transpired, and, for the same reason, have given the characters fictitious names; but the incidents are exact parallels of the original facts, and in many cases are literal transcripts of, while in every instance they agree with, the records of the case as minutely reported during its progress.

By way of further explanation, I desire to remind my readers how very difficult it is for those not familiar with the detective business to realize the masses of iniquity we are often obliged to unearth, unpalatable as the work may be and is. But while, from the nature of my business, my records are necessarily so exhaustive, and have been made so thoroughly minute, as to contain simply everything, good or bad, regarding an operation, and are, therefore, as records, reliable and true – though they thus become repositories of much that is vile – I have striven in every instance, while relating the truth and nothing but the truth, to speak of unpleasant things in as delicate a manner as possible, and in a way which, while plain enough to convey with proper force and directness the moral lessons that these developments cannot fail to impress upon the minds of all readers, might still leave no unclean thought behind them; and the only sense in which a charge that my "Detective Stories" were in any respect untrue might be sustained, would be in the fact that I have in numberless instances, for the very good reason mentioned, told immeasurably less, and never more, than the whole truth.

I make no assumption of having given in this book an exhaustive *exposé* of modern spiritualism, and I wish it as well remembered that I have no more prejudice against the good there is in that ism than I have against the good there is in any other ism; but my experience with these people, which has been large, has invariably been against their honesty or social purity.

So far as there being anything about Spiritualism to compel awe or attract any but weak-minded or "weak-moraled" people, the assumption is simply absurd; for the few illustrations given in the following pages will show how utterly preposterous the claim of supernatural power is, as applied to the *cause* of these "manifestations," which are not, in themselves, first-class tricks, but which, when made mysterious and enshrouded with the element of superstitious fear – which all of us in some measure possess – lead crowds of inconsiderate people into unusual eccentricities, if not eventually into insane asylums, as in some painful instances of which the public are already well aware.

In my exceptionally strange avocation I have been enabled to view this entire matter from the side which the public cannot reach – the side where the fraud of it all is so apparent that it becomes disgustingly monotonous and common; and as a matter of duty to those who are half inclined to accept Spiritualism as a divine revelation and blessed experience, I have given but a single case – a sample of hundreds of others – which illustrates the despicable character of many, if not a majority,

of Spiritualism's public champions and private disciples; only adding that in this instance the picture does not show a thousandth part of the hideousness of the original.

The Judge Williams mentioned as having presided at Batavia, N. Y., is no myth, but an eminent jurist at present sitting upon the bench of one of the most important courts in the country. He has not only furnished a copy of his scathing remarks to the Winslow-Lyon jury upon their disagreement, as related, but will vouch for the correctness of much of this narrative, as most of the facts mentioned came under his personal observation.

I have given them to the public trusting they will fill some good place in the world, and assist in removing from the minds of those who are occupying the debatable ground regarding the question of the genuineness of Spiritualism and Spiritualistic "manifestations" the superstitious fear and the sensuous fascination which have heretofore bound and held them.

*ALLAN PINKERTON.*

**Chicago, January, 1877.**

## CHAPTER I

"Kal'm'zoo!" – The Home of the Nettletons. – Lilly Nettleton. – A wild Heart and a burning Brain.

MOST commercial and uncommercial travellers filling the swift shuttles of transit between the East and the West will remember that while passing through Michigan, over the Central road, the brakeman has shrieked the legend "Kal'm'zoo!" at them as the train rushed into one of the prettiest little cities in the country. There is nothing particularly picturesque about Kalamazoo, unless the wondering face of some harmless lunatic, on parole from the Asylum which stands so gloomily among the hills beyond the town, the solemn visage of some Baptist University student, who with his toast, tea and Thucydides, has become grave and attenuated, or the plump form of some "seminary girl" who *will* look at the incoming trains, and flout her handkerchief too, in spite of parents, principals, and all the proprieties, and the ordinary ebb and flow of the life of a stirring provincial town, may be so considered. Neither is there anything particularly interesting about Kalamazoo, save its native, quiet beauty. It meets life easily, and, like a happily-disposed tradesman, takes its full measure of traffic and enjoyment with undisturbed tranquillity, cultivating neat yards and streets, the social graces, and occasionally the arts, with a lazy sort of satisfaction that is pleasant to look upon and contemplate.

Standing at any street-corner of the city, you will see wide avenues of fine business houses or elegant residences, and, where the latter, a wealth of neatly-trimmed shrubbery, and long lines of overarching maple trees merging into pretty vistas which seem to invite you beyond to the beautiful hills, uplands and valleys, with their murmuring streams, sloping farms and well-kept homes, where both plenty and contentment seem to be waiting to give you a right hearty welcome.

About twenty-five years ago, when the country was much newer, and the sturdy farmers that have made this great West blossom so magically until it has become the whole world's storehouse, were held closely to their arduous work by the hard hand of necessity and toil, a few miles up the river from the then little village of Kalamazoo might have been seen a comfortable log farm-house which nestled within a pretty ravine sloping down to the banks of the lazily-flowing stream. It was a plain, homely sort of a place, but there was an air of thrift and cleanliness about the locality that told of earnest toil and its sure reward.

The farm was of that character generally described as "openings;" here a clump of oak, beech, and maple trees, there a rich stretch of meadow-land; beyond, a series of hills extending to the uplands, the bases of which were girted with groves, and whose summits were composed of a warm, rich, stony loam, where the golden seas of ripening grain, touched by passing zephyrs, waved and shimmered in the glowing summer sun; while where the river wound along towards the villages below, there was a dense growth of elm, maple, and beech trees, standing there dark and sombre, save where the glintings of sunlight pierced their foliated armor, like grim sentinels of the centuries.

This was the home of Robert Nettleton, a plain and uneducated farmer, who had several years before removed from the East with his family, and with them was slowly accumulating a competence for his declining days.

Robert Nettleton's family consisted of himself, his wife, and their three children. He was looked upon by his neighbors as somewhat erratic and strange, being repelling in his manner, and at times sullen and reticent. He went about his duties in a severe way, and at all times compelled the strictest obedience from each member of his family. On the contrary, his wife was a meek-eyed little woman, patient and long-suffering, and was looked upon in the neighborhood as a nonentity from her unresisting, broken-down demeanor, save in times of sickness and trouble, when she was immediately in great demand, as she had little to say, but much to do, and had an effective method of noiseless, tender watching and nursing at command, which was at all times ungrudgingly employed.

The children consisted of one boy and two girls, the eldest of whom, now in her eighteenth year, little dreamed of the despicable commotion she was to create in after-life, and was the reigning belle of the community, though she always kept the country bumpkins at a respectful distance and was feared by fully as many as she was admired, from her impetuous, imperious ways, that brooked no opposition or hinderance. One would have to travel a long distance to find a more attractive figure and face than those possessed by this country girl. She was somewhat above the medium height, a living model for a Venus, supple and lithe as the willows that grew upon the banks of the winding stream, and so physically powerful that she had already gained some notoriety among her acquaintances through having soundly shaken the pedagogue of the district school, and afterwards pitched him through the window into an adjacent snow-drift, where he had remained buried to his middle, his legs wildly waving signals of distress, until she had just as impulsively released him.

Although somewhat strange and unusual, her features, while not strikingly beautiful, were still singularly attractive. Her head, which was large and seemingly well provided with faculties of quick perception, was covered with a wondrous wealth of black hair, so heavy and luxurious as to be almost unmanageable, and which, when not in restraint, fell about her form, hiding it completely, nearly to her feet. Her forehead was full and prominent, while her eyes, large and rather deeply set, and fringed with heavy lashes, were of that peculiar gray color which at times may be touched by all shades, while a trace of blue always predominates. There was nothing worth remarking about other portions of her face, save that, critically examined, too much of it seemed to have got into her chin, and her upper lip had a strange habit of hugging her brilliantly white teeth too closely, and then curling upward before meeting the lower one, where sometimes crimson and ashy paleness played like quick and cruel lightning, a key to the slumbering devils within her. At these times, too, there was a certain light in her eyes that an observing person would feel a peculiar dread of awakening, though usually her face showed a complete repose, and it would have been difficult to decide whether she was a very ordinary or a very extraordinary character.

Still, with her magnificent figure and strangely attractive face, she was a young woman to strongly draw just two classes of men towards her – students of character and students of form. The first she invariably disappointed and repelled, always awakening the indefinable dread I have mentioned, while her presence among the latter class as swiftly opened the floodgates of passion to swiftly sweep the better nature and all good resolves before it. So, with her peculiarly unfortunate construction, it is not strange that, on arriving at that period of life when the almost omnipotent power of a self-willed woman begins to develop and hint at the possibilities beyond the threshold of the strange life her inexperienced feet had just reached, Lilly Nettleton should have felt an oppressive sense of littleness in the quiet community in which she lived, and experienced a burning desire to cast these humble associations from her, to compel admiration and conquer whoever and whatever she might meet in the wide, wide world beyond.

## CHAPTER II

The "Circuit-Rider." – Mr. Pinkerton and these Gospel Knights-Errant in the early Days. – The Rev. Mr. Bland appears. – "And Satan came also!" – A "charge" is established. – A Compact "where the golden maple-leaves fall." – Bland departs. – "The scared form of a young Woman steals away from her Home!"

DURING the summer the presiding elder of the Kalamazoo district decided to bid for the benighted souls that dwelt in Mr. Nettleton's neighborhood, and made arrangements to "supply" the school-house at the corners where Lilly had distinguished herself in giving the schoolmaster a cold bath in the snow-bank, with circuit-riders, or with young clergymen who had just graduated and were supposed to be in training for more extended fields of labor.

At that time the system of salvation as carried on by the Methodist Church – which must certainly be credited with a vast amount of push and energy in furthering its peculiar plan of redemption – outside of the large cities was almost exclusively one which necessitated the employment of circuit-riders, as they were then called, and are now called in some portions of the extreme west. They were usually men of great suavity of manner, personal bravery, unbounded zeal, and remarkable religious enthusiasm. They trusted principally in the Lord, but also placed implicit confidence in the extraordinary hospitality of the plain pioneer people with whom they came in contact, who, if not prepared to accept everything told them, responded to their strenuous efforts for their salvation by an unqualified welcome; so that the appearance of the circuit-rider, or "supply," was not only cause for unusual Bible catechism and hymn reading, but also a signal for culinary preparations on a grand scale, to which, as a rule, the hen-roost materially contributed.

Time and time again, in the early days, have I journeyed with these Gospel Knights-errant, listening to their interesting adventures, almost as strange as my own, and their simple tales of blessed experiences; often tarrying with them at their "stations," and for some good purpose, best known to myself, joining in their efforts to sow seed meet unto repentance as we crossed the beautiful streams and broad prairies of Illinois; and as we journeyed along so pleasantly together the thought that my comrade was giving his whole life to the work of saving sin-sick souls, while mine was as irrevocably devoted to bringing many of them to summary justice, has flashed across my mind with such startling force, that the dramatic nature of the life we live was presented to me more powerfully than I have since seen it shown before the footlights of any of the grandest theatres of the world.

As the Nettleton family had belonged to that church in the East, and had also attended service at the village when the roads and weather were favorable, they were, of course, leaders in the plan to secure "meetings" nearer home; and when the good brother made his appearance one pleasant autumn Saturday afternoon, as was natural, he directed his faithful Rozinante to the comfortable log-house by the river, where both it and its reverend rider were given a genuine welcome.

The new preacher was none of your soiled, worked-out, toiling itinerants. He was a young clergyman, scarcely thirty years old, and just from college; tall, well-formed, with a florid, smoothly-shaven face, and plenty of hair and hallelujah about him. He could tell you all about the stars, and just as easily point out the merits or demerits in your plate of mutton or porter-house; and, being of this tropical nature, if there were two things above any other two things in life for which he had a penchant, they were a spirited nag and a spirited woman. In fact, he had accepted the ministry just the same as he would have accepted any other profession, merely as a makeshift, and had submitted to being ground through the theological mill, and afterwards to this backwoods breaking-in process, simply because his widowed mother, a Detroit lady, was immensely pious and also immensely wealthy; and if he should become a noted minister, he would get all her property, which otherwise would go to

the good cause direct, but which, once in his hands, would enable him to gratify his elegant tastes and do as he pleased generally.

So, being a thorough judge of women, he was at once more interested in Lilly Nettleton than in the welfare of the souls of the Nettleton neighborhood; and after a bountiful supper had been disposed of, and the family were gathered upon the verandah for a pleasant chat with the minister in the long, hazy September sunset, and the Rev. Mr. Bland – for that was the young clergyman's name – had flattered Mr. Nettleton on the merits of his pretty farm, Mrs. Nettleton upon her elegant cooking, and the younger children upon their various degrees of perfection, he passed directly to the subject which most occupied his mind, and in a patronizing way, evidently with a view of attracting Lilly's attention without arousing the suspicions of her honest parents, said:

"By the way, Mr. Nettleton, your beautiful daughter here – ah, what may I call her? thank you, Lilly; and a very appropriate name, too – is the perfect image of a very dear friend of ours – my mother's and my own – in Detroit."

There was certainly a flush on Lilly's face deeper than could have been put there by the red glow of the setting sun. Mr. Bland did not fail to notice it either; and as there was no response to his remark, he continued, occasionally glancing at Lilly, who, though apparently only interested in her needle-work, drank in every word that fell from the reverend gentleman's lips.

"In fact," said the minister, "the resemblance is quite striking, though I really think your daughter Lilly is the finer-looking of the two – indeed, has quite an intellectual face, and would, I am sure, make a thorough student."

"But she won't go to school here," interrupted Mr. Nettleton; while the strange light came into Lilly's eyes and the crimson and ashy paleness played upon the curled lips.

"But, Brother Nettleton, you must remember that we are not all similarly created. The world must have its hewers of wood and drawers of water, but it must also have its grand minds to direct – "

"I can do all the directin' necessary here," bluntly persisted Mr. Nettleton.

"Of course, of course," pleasantly continued Mr. Bland, talking *at* Lilly, though answering her father; "but I hope Lilly can some time have those advantages which would certainly cause her to shine in society – "

"And despise her home!" said Mr. Nettleton, bitterly.

The storm was still playing fiercely over Lilly's face, and her heaving bosom told how hard a struggle was necessary to restrain her from then and there saying or doing some reckless thing, and then rushing away into the woods and the night to escape the restraint that set so heavily upon her imperious spirit.

"No, I think not," replied Mr. Bland soothingly. "I am a pretty good judge of human nature, though a young man, and am sure that Lilly has a kind heart and will prove a blessing to your later years. Our dear Detroit friend was also a little spirited, but she is now one of the leaders of Sunday-school and church society, and is much sought after – yes, much sought after," repeated Mr. Bland slowly, as he saw its effect upon Lilly.

The clergyman's good opinion of their daughter made the simple parents really happy; but she knew as well as he what it was all said for, and she already hated the flippant Mr. Bland, for her quick woman's instinct – they never reason – had analyzed him thoroughly. But her heart throbbed at the idea of being considered "fine-looking," and her brain burned with the desire to also become "sought after." Yes, young and inexperienced as she was, she was old in the crime of impure thought and unbridled ambition, and was ready to lend herself to any scheme, however questionable, that might offer release, or give promise of the gratification of her passion for notoriety, and ruling or ruining anything with which she came in contact.

After this the evening passed pleasantly to the old people, who, after a time, went into the house to attend to their several duties; and also to the young people, Mr. Bland and Lilly, who, without any effort on the part of either, had arrived at a thorough understanding – so much so, indeed, that

when the voice of Mr. Nettleton was heard apprising Mr. Bland that he would show him to his room whenever he desired to retire, he quietly stepped near to where Lilly was sitting in the weird moonlight, and taking her pretty, warm hand within his own, said rapidly, but in a low voice:

"My dear Lilly, I have a deep interest in you; your people cannot understand it, and, should they know it, would only suspect me, and watch and restrain you. *Make* an opportunity for us to be together alone. I will remain until you accomplish it; and – " Mr. Nettleton's step was now heard in the hall – "quick, Lilly! do we understand each other?"

She gave him a look that would have withered any but a lecherous villain as he was; but he met it in kind, as she whispered "Yes!" and added, disengaging herself as Bland stealthily stepped back and carelessly leaned against the door:

"What book did you say?"

"Ah, yes – 'hem! 'Young's Night Thoughts.' It is a pure book, and would not only cultivate your mind, but aid you in the common duties of life. I will send it to you, and you can read it aloud to your parents. I know they will enjoy it too! Ha! Mr. Nettleton, excuse me Lilly, of course you will join us at prayers?"

She had been taught her first lesson, was an apt scholar, too; and as the man of God on his bended knees prayed that all blessings might descend upon this happy home, however much his cursed soul might have been stung by the devilish hypocrisy of the hour, there was not a pang of remorse in her heart for the bold step she knew she had taken.

Lilly did not attend service at the school-house on Sabbath, and made her appearance but once or twice during the day, feigning illness; but on Monday she was about the house fresh and rosy as ever, and the first opportunity that offered suggested to Bland the propriety of asking her out for a boat-ride on the river, which he did in the afternoon during Mr. Nettleton's absence, his meek wife thinking it a great honor to the family, and in her poor mother's heart, no doubt, praying that the good man might so soften her proud daughter's heart that she might be bettered, and eventually led to the source of all good.

Whether he did or not, if the reader of this book could have followed the couple up the winding river to a secluded spot where the golden maple-leaves fell upon the stream and were borne away in silence, whatever of mad passion or reckless guilt might have been discovered, just before they stepped into the boat to float with the tide back to the dishonored home, a certain Rev. Mr. Bland might have been seen placing in Lilly Nettleton's shameless hand a roll of bills, and heard to say to the same person:

"Be sure, now – next Sunday night. Row down to Kalamazoo in this boat, and take the late night train for Detroit. Go to the Michigan Exchange Hotel, where I will meet you Monday evening!"

So the little neighborhood had had its "religious supply," but had also had its loss; for, as the weird moonlight of the next Sunday evening fell upon the quiet log farm-house, built strange forms among the moaning, almost leafless trees, and pictured upon the river's bosom a thousand ghostly figures, the scared form of a young woman stole away from her home, glided to the murmuring stream, sprang into the little boat, and was borne away to the hell of her future just as noiselessly but just as resistlessly as the river itself pushed onward to the great lakes, and was swept from thence to the ultimate, all-absorbing sea!

## CHAPTER III

Lilly in Detroit. – First and last Remorse. – The reverend Villain and his Victim enjoy the Hospitality of the Michigan Exchange Hotel. – A Scene. – "Bland, am I to go to your Mother's, as you promised?" – The Clergyman(?) "crazed." – Everything, save Respectability. – A Woman's Will – And a Man's Cajolement.

TO the imagination of the wayward country girl Detroit was a great city, and as she was whirled into the depot, where she saw the rushing river beyond, and was hustled hither and thither by the clamorous cabmen, a sense of giddiness came upon her, and for the first, and undoubtedly last time, she yearned for the quiet of the old log farm-house by the pleasant river.

Perhaps the old forms and faces called to her imploringly, pleading with her, as only the simple things of home, however plain and commonplace, can plead with the wandering one; and in a swift, agonized longing for the restfulness which the meanest virtue gives, but which had forever fled from her, the thought, if not the words:

"Of all sad words of tongue or pen  
The saddest are these: It might have been" —

sped through her mind in a pitiful way; but just as she had almost resolved to return to her parents, ask their forgiveness, and disclose the character of the reverend villain, a man approached her, who, saying he was "from Bland," conducted her to a carriage in waiting and conveyed her to the Michigan Exchange Hotel, where she was fictitiously registered, and the clerk informed that her brother would call for her in the evening.

She had been assigned a very pretty room, elegantly furnished, and the windows gave her a view of the river and the shipping, with Windsor and the bluff hills of Canada beyond. It was all beautiful and wonderful to her – the hotel a palace, the river, with its great steamers, vessels, and ferries – a fairy scene; and Windsor, with the broken country beyond, all covered by the soft, blue, gossamer veil of early autumn – a beautiful dream!

With her thoroughly unprincipled nature there was a lazy sort of enjoyment in all this; and when her dinner was brought to her room, as had been previously ordered by the hackman, and she was gingerly served by an ordinarily nimble waiter, but who took every possible occasion to illustrate the fact that he was cultivated and she was not, she received the attention in as dignified a manner as though born to rule, and had been accustomed to the service of menials from infancy.

The afternoon wore away, and as the gas-lights began to flare out upon the city, a gentle tap was heard at her door, and a moment after, before an invitation to enter had been given, the oily Bland slid into Lilly's apartment, closed the door after him, and turned the key in the lock. Then he walked right over to where Lilly was sitting upon the sofa, and took her in his arms, saying:

"Well, I see my dearest Lilly has kept her word."

She allowed him to fondle her just long enough to dare to repel him gently, and answered:

"After what passed by the river, I could not do otherwise than keep my word. Yes, your 'dearest Lilly' has kept her word. And what now, Mr. Bland?"

Seeing that she was disposed to ask leading questions, he changed the subject laughingly.

"Why, some supper, of course," and immediately rang the bell, ordering of the servant, who appeared directly, a sumptuous spread, not forgetting a bottle of wine.

During the preparation of the meal Lilly stepped to the window, and pressing her restless face against the panes, seemed intently regarding the dancing lights upon the broad river, while Bland whistled softly, and warmed his delicate, pliable hands at the coals in the fireplace, which gave to

the chilly evening a pleasant, cheery glow. Suddenly she stepped close to him, leaned her head in her left hand, her elbow resting upon the marble mantel, while with her right hand she firmly grasped his shoulder. She then said, in a quiet, determined way:

"Bland, am I to go to your mother's, as you promised?"

She said this in such a resolute, icy way, and her hand rested upon his shoulder so heavily, that, for the first time, he looked at her as if satisfied that he had a beautiful tigress in keeping, and it might possibly require supreme will force to control her.

"No, Lilly, you will not go to my mother's."

"Then I will go home."

"You will not go home. You will remain here."

"Bland, no person on God's earth shall say 'will' to me. That is just as certain as the course of that river!" and her long, trembling forefinger swept towards the rushing stream.

The appearance of the waiter with supper quieted the conversation, which was becoming stormy, and it was only resumed when Bland saw that Lilly was mellowing under the influence of the wine, which thrilled through her veins, pushing the rich, healthy blood to her cheeks, and lighting her great gray eyes with a wonderful lustre. It could not be said that he loved the girl, but he had a mad passion for her which was simply overwhelming at these times when, untutored and uncultivated as she was, she became truly queenly in appearance.

It was a dainty little supper served upon a dainty little table, and they were sitting very closely together, and Bland, after feasting his eyes upon her magnificent form for a time, drew her into his arms impulsively, kissing her again and again, calling her endearing names, and promising her everything that could come to the tongue of a talented man made wild by wine and a woman.

"Lilly, you have crazed me – ruined me!" he said, excitedly. "You know what I profess to be – a Christian minister! God forgive me for my cursed weakness, but you have me in your power!"

Although her face rested against his, and their hot cheeks burned together, the old wicked light gleamed in her eyes, and the crimson and ashy paleness played upon the curled lip. If it all could have been seen by the reverend gentleman, it would have sobered him. The words "in your power" had flung the lightning into Lilly Nettleton's face. Power, power, power! No matter how secured; no matter what the result. The very word maddened her, made a scheming devil of her, but also made her ready for any proposition Bland might offer, as it swiftly came into her mind that the deeper she sank with him the greater would be her power over him.

"Well?" she said, reassuringly.

"'Well?' – I am at your mercy. A knowledge of what has passed between us would be my ruin; your ruin also. We have done what cannot be undone; yes," he continued passionately, and drawing her closer to him, "what I would not undo!"

"Well?" It was tenderly said, and gave him courage.

"I am rich, or will be, Lilly."

"If you are careful," she added with a light laugh.

"Exactly. I can do a great deal for you, and will – "

"Conditionally?"

"Yes, conditionally. The conditions are that you live quietly at an elegant place to which we will shortly be driven. You will be mistress of the place; that is, you will have everything you can desire – "

"Save respectability, Mr. Bland?"

She was shrewder than he – in fact, his master already; but hinted at the sale of her soul so heartlessly that it shocked even him.

"You had 'respectability' at home, Lilly; and," glancing at her plain garments, which were a burlesque upon her beautiful figure, "and old clothes, and surveillance, and restraint, and – "

"Bland," she said, springing to her feet with such violence as to send him sprawling to the floor, from which he stared in amazement at her magnificent form, which trembled like a leaf, while the

wicked lightning gleamed from her eyes, and swift shuttles of color flashed back and forth upon her lips; "Bland, be careful! Never speak to me again of the meanness of my home. The meanness of your black heart is a million times greater. You have something more than a country girl to deal with, sir; you have a woman and a woman's will. It is enough that I have sold my body and soul for what you can, or might, give me. I bargained for no contempt; and, Bland," she continued, advancing towards him fiercely as he regained his feet and retreated from her in dismay, "as sure as there is a heaven, and as sure as there ought to be a hell for such as we, if you begin it, I will kill you! Yes," she hissed, "I will kill you!" and then, woman-like, having passed the climax of feeling and expression, she threw herself on the bed for a good cry, while Bland, with wine and words and countless caresses, soothed her wild spirit, bringing her back to pliant good nature, where she was as putty in his dexterous hands.

## CHAPTER IV

Tells how the Rev. Mr. Bland preached a Funeral Sermon. – Shows a dainty Cottage, holding more than the Neighbors knew. – Installs Lilly as a Clergyman's Mistress. – Reverts to a Desolate Home. – Introduces Dick Hosford, a returned "Forty-Niner," who begins a despairing Search. – And shows that unholy, as well as true Love, does not always run smoothly.

SHORTLY afterwards a closed cabriolet containing two persons was rapidly driven from the Michigan Exchange up Wisconsin street, from thence into Griswold, and out towards the suburbs, finally drawing up before a neat cottage-house, where the lights, peeping around the edges of the drawn curtains, showed the place to be in a state of preparation.

A man and a woman quickly alighted from the carriage, and as the woman, apparently a young one, though closely veiled, stepped to the gate, opened it and waited for her escort, the gentleman said in a low tone to the coachman:

"James, drive to the house and inform mother that while down town this evening I received an unexpected call to Ann Arbor, to preach a funeral sermon over the remains of an old student-friend at the University, and that I may not be home until late to-morrow evening;" then, after handing James some coin, "you understand, James?"

James thought he understood, grinned grimly, put the money in his pocket and drove away.

"Remember, Lilly," said Bland, stepping to the gate and taking her arm, "you are Lilly Mercer here."

"Yes, Bland."

"And you are never to mention anything regarding yourself to the lady who owns this place."

"I think I can keep my own counsel."

"And, if any inquiries are made here, by any person whatever, regarding myself, you are to be innocently and utterly ignorant."

"And what are you to do?" asked Lilly, naïvely.

"I? – why I am to do well by you."

"Just so long as you do that, Bland, you are perfectly safe!"

She had taken to dictating also; but it was a pretty little cottage and grounds, and a feeling of satisfaction at being their mistress, even if it necessitated being his mistress, came over her that made her affable and winning, if she did occasionally say things that hinted at a stormy future.

They strolled up the broad brick walk, he thrilled with his magnificent capture, and she just as satisfied with the power she had attained over one so high socially, and who stood in such near prospect of obtaining vast wealth. Instead of entering the house at its little front door with its highly ornamented porch, they opened the door of a little trellis-worked addition to the cottage, which was now covered by an almost leafless mass of vines, and passed to a side entrance, where a gentle pull of the bell caused the immediate appearance of a very fat and very flabby woman of middle age, who at once conducted them to a suite of rooms, consisting of a parlor and a large sleeping-room, between which, in place of the original folding-doors, had been substituted rich hangings sufficiently drawn apart to admit of the passage of one person, and which, with the tastefully draped windows, the deeply-framed pictures, the vari-colored marble mantels and fireplaces, the heavy, yielding carpet giving back no sound to the foot-fall, and the great easy-chairs into which one sank as into pillows of down, gave the rooms the hintings of such luxuriousness that Lilly was completely dazzled and bewildered with the unexpected elegance, and the, to her, never before realized splendor.

"Mother Blake," said Bland, "this is Lilly Mercer, who is my friend, and whom you are to make comfortable."

Mother Blake, as if realizing that her duties began whenever Bland spoke, majestically crossed the room, sat down beside Lilly and immediately kissed her very affectionately, merely remarking, "And a very nice girl she is, too, Mr. Bland."

"That'll do, mother. You may get us a small bottle of wine, and then go to bed. It's getting late, and you know you need a good deal of sleep."

Mother Blake chuckled, and shook from it as though her enjoyment of any sort of pleasantries came to the surface only in a series of ripples over her great fat body, instead of in echoes of enjoyment from her great fat throat. But it might have been merely a habit with its origin in the necessities of her quiet mode of life; and, doing as requested, only lingered to fasten back the curtain so that the low, luxurious bed came temptingly into view, after which she beamingly backed out of the room, wishing the couple "a pleasant night, and many of 'em!"

If shame hovered over this pretty place, it did not pale the amber glow of the sparkling wine; it came not into the ruddy coals upon the hearth, which gave forth their glowing warmth just as cheerily as from any other hearth in the broad land; it never dimmed the light from the gilded chandeliers; it put no crimson flush upon the faces which touched each other with an even flow of blood, nor quickened the pulses of the hands that as often met; and God only knows whether, when, as sleep came down upon the city, and the man and woman rested in each other's arms upon the bed beyond the rich curtains (which, as the light in the fireplaces grew or waned, never contained one ghostly rustle or semblance), there was even a guilty dream to mark its presence!

But what of the inmates of the old log farm-house by the pleasant river?

The morning came, and the agonized parents found that their daughter had gone. Robert Nettleton set his teeth and swore that he would never search for her, while his poor wife was completely broken and crushed as much from the agonized fears that flooded into her heart as from the actual loss of her child.

The most dejected member of the household, however, was a new-comer, one Dick Hosford, who years before had drifted into the Nettleton family and had been brought up by them until, becoming a stout young man, he was borne away in the gold excitement with the "Forty-niners" to California, where by hard work and no luck whatever, being an honest, simple soul, he had got together a few thousand dollars; with no announcement of his proposed return, had come back as far as Terre Haute, Indiana, where he had purchased a snug farm, and immediately turned his footsteps towards Mr. Nettleton's, arriving there the very morning after Lilly's departure, as he said, "to marry the gal, but couldn't find her shadder."

He was simply inconsolable, and it took off the keen edge of the parents' grief somewhat to find that another shared it with them, and even seemed to feel that it was all his own.

So it was arranged that the inquisitive neighbors should only know that Lilly had "gone to town for a week or two," while Dick Hosford should go to Chicago, and then back east as far as Detroit, making diligent search for something even more tangible than the "shadder" of the lost girl; and as he said good-by to the Nettletons with quivering lips and suspiciously dimmed eyes, he added:

"Bob Nettleton, and mother – for you've always been a half-dozen mothers to me – don't ye never expect to see me back to these yer diggin's 'thout I bring the gal. I've sot my heart onto her; and" with an oath that the Recording Angel as surely blotted out as Uncle Toby's, for it was only the clinching of a brave determination, "I'll have her if I find her in a – " He stopped suddenly as he saw the pain in their faces, shook their hands in a way that told them more than his simple words ever could have expressed, and trudged away with as little certainty of finding whom he sought, save by accident – or, if found, of securing the prize for himself, unless through her whim – as of ever himself becoming anything save the honest, faithful, gullible soul that he was.

At Detroit, Mother Blake had orders to provide Lilly Mercer, her latest charge, with a suitable wardrobe and some fine pieces of jewelry, which was accordingly done; and in the novelty of her transformation, which really made her a beautiful young woman, her ardor of fondness for Bland was

certainly sufficient to gratify both his vanity and passion to the fullest extent. But, to some women, both passion and finery must be frequently renewed in order to insure constancy; and while Bland was as hopelessly in her toils as ever, as she had always despised him and now despised his offerings, which were neither so numerous or costly as at first, she became almost unmanageable, caused Mother Blake great perturbation of spirit, and led Bland a deservedly stormy life.

## CHAPTER V

Reckless Fancies. – The "Cursed Church Interests." – Bland's "little Bird" becomes a busy Bird. – Merges into a great Raven of the Night. – Gathers together Valuables. – And while a folded Handkerchief lies across the Clergyman's Face, steals away into the Storm and the Night. – Gone! – "Are ye all dead in there?" – Drifting together. – "Don't give the Gal that Ticket!" – A great-hearted Man. – The Rev. Bland officiates at a Wedding. – Competence and Contentment.

A FEW weeks later, one November evening, the first snow-storm of the year came hurrying and skurrying down upon the city. The streets seemed filled with that thrilling, electric life which comes with the first snow-flakes, and as they tapped their ghostly knuckles against the panes of Lilly Mercer's boudoir, the weird *staccato* passed into her restless spirit and filled her mind with wild, reckless fancies. The storm had beaten up against the cottage but a little time until it brought Bland with it.

He came to tell his Lilly, he said, that the cursed church interests would compel him to go to the West, to be absent for several weeks. In mentioning the fact he sat down by the fireplace and gave her some money for use while he was away, and also counted over quite an amount which he had provided for his travelling expenses.

He also told her that he should leave the next evening, and would, after a little time, of course, return for the night, as he could never go on so long a journey without spending the parting hours with his little bird, as he had come to call her.

His little bird had sat remarkably passive during all this, but now fluttered about him with cooings and regrets innumerable, and seemed to still be in a flutter of excitement when he had gone; for, after walking up and down the rooms for a time, she flung some wrappings about her, and quickly glided out among the pelting flakes that hid her among the hurrying thousands upon the streets and within the shops, until she as rapidly returned.

Within the warm nest again, there was a note to be written, and several feathery but valuable trifles to be got together. In fact, Bland's little bird was a busy bird, until when, at a late hour, he came back to its unusually tender ways and wooings, and was soon slumbering beside it.

Then the little bird became a great raven of the night, and stole quietly about the apartments, gathering together, quite like any other raven, everything that pleased its fancy, including even the money that was to have been used in the "cursed church interests," and the gold watch that ticked away at its sleeping owner's head, but not loud enough to awaken him, for he slept with a peculiar heaviness, and, strangely enough, with a folded handkerchief across his face. But the raven of the cottage, in a quiet way that ravens have, never ceased gathering what pleased it, until the early hours of morning, when, kissing its beak to the bed and the sleeper, and flinging upon the bed a little note which read:

*A double exposé if you like.*

*Lilly "Mercer." —*

took itself and its gathered treasures out into the storm and the night.

The storm was gone when the chloroformed man awoke, and the bright sun pushed through the shutters upon his feverish face. Slowly and with great effort he groped his way back to consciousness, and with a thrill of fear reached out his hand for his little bird, and to reassure himself that what was flooding furiously into his mind was untrue, and was but some horrible nightmare that her dear touch would drive away. But the place where she had lain was as cold and empty as her own heartless heart; and as he faintly called, "Lilly! oh, Lilly!" the very realistic voice of Mother Blake was heard in the hall, and her very realistic fists banging away against the door.

"Say, Bland, are ye all dead in there? Lord! it's broad noon!"

All dead? No; but far better so, as the Rev. Mr. Bland with a mighty effort sprang from the bed and saw the gas-light struggling with the sunlight, the dead ashes in the fireplace, and himself in the great mirror, a dishonored, despoiled, deserted roué, drugged, robbed and defied by the simple maiden from the log farm-house by the pleasant river.

The same evening two persons on wonderfully different missions drifted into the depot and transfer-house at Detroit, and mingled with the great throng that the east and the west continually throw together at this point. One was a handsome, apparently self-possessed young lady, who attended to her baggage personally, and moved about among the crowds with apparent unconcern; though, closely watched, her face would have shown anxiety and restlessness. The other was a gaunt, though solidly built young fellow, whose clothes, although of good material, had the appearance of having been thrown at him and caught with considerable uncertainty upon his bony angles. He wandered about in a dejected way, looking hither and thither as if forever searching for some one whose discovery had become improbable, but who should not escape if an honest search by an honest, simple fellow as he seemed to be, could avail anything. By one of those unexplainable coincidences, or fatuities, as some are pleased to term them, these two persons – the one desirous of avoiding a crowd, and the other anxious to ascertain whom every throng contained – approached the ticket-office from different directions at the same moment.

He at the gent's window heard her at the ladies' window say to the agent, "Yes, to Buffalo, if you please;" and he jumped as though he had been lifted by an explosion. He peered through the window and saw her face at the other window, and without waiting to step around to her, yelled to the agent like a madman: "Say, you, mister! – don't give the gal that ticket. It's a mistake. She's going 'tother way;" and shoving his gaunt head and shoulders into the window and wildly gesticulating to the young lady, as the agent in a scared way saw the muscular intruder hovering over his tickets and money-box, he continued excitedly:

"Say, Lil, old gal! Lil Nettleton! – Dick – Dick Hosford, ye know! Ain't I tellin' the truth? ain't it all a mistake, and ain't you goin' the other way – with *me*, ye know – yes, 'long with Dick?"

Lilly Nettleton, for it was no other, nodded to the agent – who returned the money – and quickly stepped around to help Dick disengage himself from the window, and then quickly drew him away from the crowd which the little episode had collected, sat down beside him, and, heartily laughing at his ludicrous appearance, said, "Why, Dick, where under heaven did *you* come from?"

"Lil, gal," said poor Dick, wiping the tears of joy out of his eyes, "I come all the way from Californy fur ye, found ye gone and the old folks all bust and banged up about it. Fur six weary weeks I've been huntin', huntin' ye up and down, here and yon, and was goin' back to Terre Haute, sell the d – d farm I bought fur ye, and skip back to the Slope to kill Injuns, or somethin', to drown my sorrow, fur I told the old folks I'd bring ye back, or never set foot in them diggin's agin'!"

Lilly looked at the great-hearted man beside her in a strange, calculating kind of a way, never touched by his tenderness and simple sacrifice, but moving very closely to him in a winsome way that quite overcame him.

"And I come to marry ye, Lil," persisted Dick, anxiously.

"To marry me, Dick?"

"Yes, and bought ye a purty farm at Terre Haute."

"A farm, Dick?"

"Yes, Lil, a farm, with as snug a little house as ye ever sot eyes on."

"But where did you get so much money? You never wrote anything about it."

"No, I wanted to kinder surprise ye; but I got it honest – got it honest; with these two hands, Lil, that'll work for ye all yer life like a nigger, if ye'll only come 'long with me and never go gallavantin' any more."

"And won't you ask me any questions or allow them – at home, Dick – to ask any, and take me just as I am?"

"Just as ye are; fur better, or fur wus, Lil."

"And marry me here, now, before we go home?"

"Marry ye, Lil? I'd marry ye if I'd a found ye in a – ; I won't give it a name, Lil. I didn't to them, and I won't to you."

She gave him her hand as firmly and frankly as though she had been a pure woman, and said, "I'm yours, Dick. We'll be married here, to-morrow."

She took charge of all the arrangements; called a cab which took them to the Michigan Exchange; sent Dick off to his room with orders to secure a license the first thing in the morning; wrote two notes to a certain person, one addressed to Mother Blake, and the other to *his* post-office box, ordering them posted that night; and went to her room to sleep the sleep of the just, which, contrary to general belief, also often comes to the unjust.

Early in the morning, Dick came with the license and suggested securing the services of a preacher; but Lilly said that she had arranged that matter already, and had got a clergyman who, she was sure, would not disappoint them; and promptly at two o'clock in the afternoon courteously admitted the Rev. Mr. Bland, whom she had given the choice of officiating or an exposure, and who performed the ceremony in a pale, trembling way as the wicked old light gleamed in her great, gray eyes, and the swift shuttles of color played over her curled lip.

That night found the newly-wedded couple whirling back to Kalamazoo, where they arrived the next morning and were driven out to the farm-house, where they were joyfully welcomed, and where Dick Hosford in his blunt way announced that he had "found Lil workin' away like a good girl, had married her and took a little bridal 'tower,' and had come back to have no d – d questions asked."

So in a few days the young couple bade the Nettletons good-by and were soon after installed in the pleasant farm-house near Terre Haute, where the years passed on happily enough and brought them competence and contentment and three children, who for a long time never knew the meaning of the strange light in the eyes, or the swift colors on the lips, of the mother who cared for them with an apparent full measure of kindness and affection.

## CHAPTER VI

Mr. Pinkerton is called upon. – Mr. Harcourt, a ministerial-looking Man, with an After-dinner Voice, appears. – A Case with a Woman in it, as is usually the case. – Mr. Pinkerton hesitates. – An anxious Millionaire.

ONE hot July afternoon in 186-, I was sitting in my private office at my New York Agency, located then, and now, at the corner of New Street and Exchange Place, in the very heart of the money and stock battles of Gotham, pretty well tired out from a busy day's work in carrying to completion some of the vast transactions that had accumulated during the war, and which were in turn waiting for my professional services to unravel.

It had been a terribly hot day, and the city seemed like a vast caldron filled with a million boiling victims; and now that the day's labor was nearly over, I was principally employed in an attempt to keep cool, but finding it impossible with everybody about me, settled myself in my easy-chair at the window to watch the Babel of brokers below.

From such an altitude, where one can look down soberly upon these madmen and see their wild antics, when for the moment they are absolutely insane in their thirst for gold, never halting at the most extreme recklessness even though they know it may compel wholesale ruin, it is easy to realize how isolated cases occur where the whole human nature yields to greed, and sweeps on to the certain accomplishment of crime for its satisfaction.

Just after a particularly heavy "rush" had been made, resulting in a few broken limbs and numberless tattered hats and demolished garments, and the bulls and bears were gathered about in knots excitedly talking over their profit and loss, and wiping the great beads of perspiration, from their lobster-like faces, I noticed an important-looking gentleman turn into New Street from the direction of Broadway, and after edging through the crowds, occasionally halting to ask a question in the politest possible manner – the replies and gestures to which seemed to indicate that he was seeking my agency, which afterwards proved true – this vision of precision and politeness passed from my sight into Exchange Place, and in a few moments after I was informed that a gentleman desired to see me on very important business.

After ascertaining who the gentleman was, and already knowing him to be a harmless sort of an adventurer, and under the particular patronage of a wealthy Rochester gentleman, I admitted him and he was introduced as Mr. Harcourt, of Rochester and New York.

Mr. Harcourt was a character in his way, and deserving of some notice. He was a tall, heavily-built, obese gentleman of about forty-five years of age, impressive, important, and supremely polite. His face was a strange combination of imbecility and assumption; while his head, which was particularly developed in the back part, indicating low instincts that were evidently only repressed as occasion required, was consistent with the formation of his square, flat forehead, which sloped back at a suspiciously sharp angle from a pair of little, gray, expressionless eyes, which from the lack of intelligence behind them would look you out of face without blinking. His nose was straight and solidly set below, like some sharp instrument, to assist him in getting on in the world. His lips, though not unusually gross or sensual, had a way of opening and closing, during the pauses of conversation with a persistency of assertion that had the effect of keeping in the mind of the average listener that great weight should be attached to what Mr. Harcourt had said, or was about to say; and at the same time, as also when he patronizingly smiled, which was almost constantly, disclosed a set of teeth of singular regularity and dazzling whiteness. A pair of very large ears, closely-cut and neatly-trimmed hair, and a whitish-olive complexion that suggested sluggish blood and a lack of fine organization, complete the sketch of his face, but could never give the full effect of the grandeur of his assumption and manners, which were a huge burlesque on chivalric courtliness. As he entered the room his gloved

hand swept to the rim of his faultless silk hat, and removed it with an indescribably graceful gesture that actually seemed to make the hat say, "Ah! my very dear sir, while I belong to a gentleman of the vastest importance imaginable, be assured that we are both inexpressibly honored by this interview!" Nor were these all of his strikingly good points. He was a man that was always dressed in a suit of the finest procurable cloth, most artistically fitted to his commanding figure, and never a day passed when there was not an exquisite favor in the neat button-hole of his collar. When he had become seated in a most dignified and engaging manner, he had a neat habit of showing his little foot encased in patent leather so shining that, at a pinch, it might have answered for a mirror, by carelessly throwing his right leg over his left knee, so that he could keep up an incessant tapping upon his boot with the disengaged glove which his left hand contained; and, with his head thrown slightly back and to one side, emphasized his remarks in a graceful and convincing way with the digit finger of his soft white right hand. Altogether he would have passed for a person of considerable importance and good commercial and social standing; but to one versed in character-reading he gave the impression that he might at one time have been an easy-going clergyman, who had lapsed into some successful insurance or real estate agency that had been unexpectedly profitable; or, at least, was a man who had thoroughly and artistically acquired the science of securing an elegant livelihood through the confidence he could readily inspire in others.

"Ah! Mr. Pinkerton, I am very glad to see you – very glad to see you; in fact, I take it as a peculiar honor, though my business with you is of an unpleasant nature," said Mr. Harcourt, settling into his chair with a kind of bland and amiable dignity.

I saw that he was making a great effort to please me, and told him pleasantly that it was quite natural for people to visit me on unpleasant business.

"Thank you, thank you," he replied in his rich, after-dinner voice, that seemed to come with his winning smile to his lips through a vast measure of good-fellowship and great-heartedness. "I feel that I am occupying a peculiar position, both painful and embarrassing to me: first, as the friend and agent of a wealthy man who is also an acquaintance of yours, and operates on the Produce Exchange, here; and second, in being obliged to ascertain whether you will take our case without your becoming too fully aware of the particulars, in the event of your refusal."

"Well," said I encouragingly, highly enjoying his embarrassment and assumed importance, "if you will give me a general outline of the matter, I will take it into consideration; and, in any event, you can rest assured that our walls have no ears to what our patrons have to say within them."

"Well, then," replied Harcourt with a winning smile, "to be honest with you, Mr. Pinkerton, there's a woman in our case; yes – though I'm very sorry to say it – the case is almost entirely a woman case."

"In that event, Mr. Harcourt, I must plainly say to you that I don't like those cases at all. I have all the business that I can attend to, and even more than I sometimes desire; and I really think you had better secure the services of some other person."

"Pray don't say so; pray don't say so, Mr. Pinkerton. Ah! what *could* induce you to take the case?"

"No sum of money," I replied, "unless I was fully assured that it was all right – that is, had the right on your side. Almost without exception these cases with women in them, where men become jealous of their mistresses, mistresses of their men, wives of their husbands, husbands of their wives, or when the lively and vigorous mother-in-law lends spice to life, and, indeed, all those troubles arising from social abuses, are a disgrace to every one connected with them."

Harcourt seemed quite disappointed that I did not express more avidity to transact the business he proffered, but continued in his blandest manner:

"Still, supposing, although we were not altogether in the right, we were endeavoring to defend ourselves against a vile woman who had manipulated circumstances so that she had us greatly in her power?"

"I should still feel a great reluctance in taking the case. All my life I have had one steady aim before me, and that has been to purify and ennoble the detective service; and I am sure that all this sort of business is degrading in the extreme to operatives engaged upon it."

"Very good, very good. But, Mr. Pinkerton, supposing the person pursued was worth two or three millions of dollars; that after the parties had met in a casual way, and, through a strange and unexplainable feeling of admiration mingled with awe which she had compelled in him, she had acquired a familiarity with his habits, business, and vast wealth, and had from that time schemingly begun a plan of operations to entrap him into marrying her, working upon his rather susceptible temperament through his peculiar religious belief, in order to gain power over him, and then, failing to secure him as a husband, had for some time pursued a system of threats and quiet, persistent robbery, constantly becoming more brazen and impudent, until he could bear it no longer, when he had refused to see her or submit to further blackmail, whereupon she had heartlessly attempted his social and financial ruin, by bringing a suit against him for \$100,000 damages for breach of promise of marriage?"

This extended conundrum flushed Harcout, and his magnificent silk handkerchief came gracefully into use to very gently and delicately absorb the perspiration that had started upon his porous face.

"Mr. Harcout," I still insisted, "I should then require to be unqualifiedly assured that the woman in question was not a young woman who had really been led to believe the promise of some man old enough to be her father, and who should accept the consequences of his indiscretion philosophically."

"Exactly, exactly," responded Harcout, quite uneasily, though with an evident endeavor at pleasantry; "and quite noble of you, too, Mr. Pinkerton! Really, I had not anticipated finding such delicate honor among detectives!" and he laughed a low, musical laugh which seemed to come gurgling up from his capacious middle.

I told him he might term it "delicate honor" or whatever he liked; that I had made thorough justice a strict business principle, and found that it won, too; but that, with the understanding that he had fairly represented the case, I would give it my consideration and apprise him of my decision the next day, giving him an appointment for that purpose; after which, while verbosely expressing the hope that I would assist him, he bowed himself out in a very impressive manner, passed into the street, which was now nearly as quiet as the Trinity Church-yard close by, and immediately went to the St. Nicholas, where he flourishingly reported the interview to the anxious millionaire, who thanked fortune for such a powerful and majestic friend.

## CHAPTER VII

In Council. – Mr. Lyon the Millionaire, with Mr. Harcourt the Adventurer and Adviser, appear together. – How Mr. Lyon became Mrs. Winslow's Victim. – "Our blessed Faith" and the Woman's strange Power. – A Tender Subject. – Deep Games. – A One Hundred Thousand Dollar Suit for Breach of Promise of Marriage. – A good deal of Money. – All liable to err. – A most magnificent Woman. – The "Case" taken.

IN the meantime I had a conversation on the subject with my General Superintendent, Mr. Bangs, in which we weighed the case thoroughly in all its bearings. I held, as I always do in such cases, if further investigation proved that the woman was one whose youth, or even inexperience, was such as to make it probable that she had been met by a man whose position had dazzled and bewildered her, and who, from his wealth and opportunities for exerting the immense influence of wealth, had led her to believe that he loved her, and had had such attention lavished upon her as had awakened in her heart an affection for him which should deserve some consideration, and that finally, after accomplishing his purpose, he had flung her from him, as was an every-day occurrence, it was a case which I could under no circumstances touch; its justice ought only to be determined in the courts.

On the other hand, I argued that if this troublesome woman was grown in years, had arrived at a mature age, and had deliberately planned to secure a certain power over Harcourt's friend in the questionable manner ascribed – had, in fact, used the "black arts" upon him, and in every manner possible fascinated him irresistibly, and wrung from him promises and pledges which no man in his sane moments would give, in order through this dishonorably-gained power to secure him for a husband – or worse, in the event of failing in this, of levying upon his wealth for the dishonor she had herself compelled, it was a case where I had a right to interfere in the best interests of society, as the professional female blackmailer is below pity, ought to be beyond protection of any sort whatever, has forfeited all the actual and poetical regard due her sex, and should be in every instance remorselessly hunted down.

This conclusion was easily arrived at; for at each of my agencies all that is necessary for a decision upon a desired investigation is that my local superintendent shall sift the matter, to prove beyond the shadow of a doubt that the vast power of the detective service under my control shall not, under any circumstances, be prostituted to the assistance of questionable enterprises, or the furtherance of dishonorable schemes.

Accordingly, when Mr. Harcourt wafted himself into my office the next day, like a fragrance-laden zephyr of early summer, I informed him that he could depend on my assistance to discover the history and antecedents of the woman; but that I should have to reserve the privilege of discontinuing the service, should it at any time transpire that my operatives were being employed for the purpose of discouraging a defenceless woman in securing the justice due her.

It was arranged that Harcourt was to call the next day with his patron, the persecuted millionaire, and he also expressed a desire to defer a settlement of the case in detail until that time, which was quite agreeable to me, as I wished to see the parties together and closely observe them, as well as their statements.

The next afternoon Mr. Harcourt's elegant card was delivered to me, with the message that his friend was also with him. I ordered that they should be at once admitted, and in a moment the two gentlemen were ushered into my private office. I immediately recognized the elder of the two as J. H. Lyon, one of the wealthiest elevator owners and millers of Rochester, a quiet, shrewd, calculating business man, who had amassed vast wealth, or the reputation of its possession, and its consequent commercial respect and credit.

He was a short, small-sized man, dressed in plain but rich garments, and wore no jewelry save a massive solitaire diamond ring. His head, which seemed to contain an average brain, was solidly set on a great, heavy neck, that actually continued to the top of the back of his head without a curve or depression. His hair, and beard – which was shaven away from his lower lip to the curve of his chin – had a shaggy sort of look, though generally well kept, and were considerably tinged with gray; while his eyebrows were remarkably long, irregular, and forbidding. His eyes were medium-sized, of a grayish-brown color, and under the heavy shade of the brows somewhat keen and restless. His cheekbones were quite prominent, and below them his cheeks sank away noticeably, which served to more strikingly show the upward turn of his nose and his full lips and broad, sensual mouth, which, with its half-shown, irregular teeth and ever-present tobacco-stains (for he smoked or chewed incessantly), gave him a face quite unlike those ordinarily supposed to be captivating to women. With his broad, bony hands, large, ill-shaped feet, and retiring, hesitating way, as if never exactly certain of anything, he was truly a great contrast to the pompous, elegant gentleman who seemed to have taken him under his fatherly protection.

Lyon slid into his seat in a nervous, diffident way; while Harcourt, who had just drawn his chair between us, as if he desired it understood that he did not propose to yield his office of general manager of this vitally important affair under any circumstances, beamed on his friend reassuringly.

After a few remarks on the current topics of the day, and before they were themselves aware of it, we were getting along swimmingly towards an understanding of the subject-matter – Lyon, who had removed his cigar, fairly eating an immense amount of fine-cut as the voluble Harcourt rattled away about the bold, bad woman who had entrapped him.

"Why, my dear Mr. Pinkerton, it's a terrible matter – an infamous affair! My friend here, Mr. Lyon, is quite nettled about it – I might say, quite cut up. You can see for yourself, sir, that it's wearing on him." This with a deprecating wave of his hand towards Lyon, who nervously gazed out of the window from under his shaggy brows.

I merely said that these things *were* sometimes a little wearing.

"But you see, Mr. Pinkerton, this is a peculiarly cruel case – a peculiarly cruel case. Hem! *I* know what is cruel in this respect, as I was once victimized by very much the same sort of a female, though she was *much younger*. Why, do you know, sir," and here the sympathetic Harcourt's voice fell into a solemn murmur, "that my friend's beloved wife was scarcely at rest beneath the daisies when this Mrs. Winslow began worming herself into the confidence of my somewhat impressive friend here?"

I made no answer, and only took a memorandum of the facts developed, not forgetting Harcourt's statement that he had once been victimized by very much the same sort of a female.

"She came to Rochester as a shining light among the exponents of our blessed faith – "

"And what may your religion be?" I asked.

"We believe in the constant communication between mortals and the occupants of the beautiful spirit home beyond the river."

"Exactly," said I, noticing the remarkable development at the back of their heads and about their mouths.

"And our friend here, Mr. Lyon," continued Harcourt, with his eyes devoutly raised to the ceiling, "met her at one of our pleasant seances."

I made another note at this point.

"To be frank – 'hem! it's my nature to be frank – " then turning his face to me and raising his eyebrows inquiringly – "I suppose, Mr. Pinkerton, it is quite desirable that I should be so?" To which I responded, "Necessarily so," when he resumed: "To be frank, then, Mr. Lyon was wonderfully interested in her. In fact, the woman *has* a strange power of compelling admiration and even fear – shall I say fear, Mr. Lyon?"

"Guess that's about right," said Mr. Lyon tersely.

"Admiration and fear," repeated Mr. Harcourt, as if thinking of something long gone by, while Lyon chewed more fiercely than ever. "Indeed, Mr. Pinkerton, she's a superb woman – a superb woman; but a she-devil for all that!"

I noticed that Harcourt's fervor seemed to have come from some similar experience, and I noted both it and his heated estimate of Mrs. Winslow, although he remarked that he had never met her.

"Well, my friend here was irresistibly drawn to her, and he has told me that for a time it seemed that he had found his real affinity. You felt that way, didn't you, Lyon?"

Lyon nodded and chewed rapidly.

"But for a long time the more my friend endeavored to secure her favor, the more she seemed to draw away from and avoid him, though constantly making opportunities to more deeply impress him with her most splendid physical and mental qualities. My friend recollects now, though he gave it no attention at the time, that she shrewdly drew from him much information regarding his family affairs, habits, business relations, and wealth; and as she was, or pretended to be, a medium of great power, at those times when he sought her professional services she worked upon his feelings in such a peculiar manner as to completely upset him."

Here Mr. Lyon offered an extended remark for the first time, and said: "The truth is, Mr. Pinkerton, this is a subject that I am particularly tender upon. I think under certain circumstances I could really have made the woman my wife;" then turning to his agent, he said, "Harcourt, cut it short."

"But," Harcourt protested, "we can't cut it short. Mr. Pinkerton wants facts – he must have facts. Well, at one time Mr. Lyon felt a real affection for the woman, which does him honor – is no disgrace to him; but after a time began to suspect, and eventually to feel sure, that Mrs. Winslow was playing a deep game; indeed, had originally come to Rochester for that purpose; and while he still regarded her highly on account of her fine qualities, refrained from seeking her society, which at once seemed to awaken a violent and uncontrollable passion for him in her heart. She sought him everywhere and compelled him to visit her frequently, lavishing the wildest affection upon him, which he delicately repelled – delicately repelled; and, as she represented herself in straitened circumstances, charitably assisted her just as he would have done any other person in want – any other person in want; but, you see, Mrs. Winslow presumed upon this, accused him of having broken her heart, and was now cruelly deserting her after he had taught her to worship him."

Mr. Lyon's nervous face presented a singular combination of pride at his own powers, chagrin at his predicament, and a general protest that the tender privacies of a millionaire should be thus disclosed.

"In this way," continued Harcourt, "she so worked upon his kindly feelings that he really gave her large sums of money – large sums of money."

"A good deal of money," interrupted Mr. Lyon.

"But finally," pursued Harcourt, "my friend saw that he must discontinue his charity altogether, and through my advice – hem! through my advice, he did. Mrs. Winslow then became very impudent indeed, and annoyed my friend beyond endurance, until he was forced to refuse to recognize her, and gave orders that she should be denied admission to his office. But, being a very talented woman – "

"She *is* talented," said Lyon, with a start.

"She has found means to continue her operations against him incessantly, demanding still larger sums of money, and has engaged counsel to act for her. Hem! – under my advice, quite recently Mr. Lyon, by paying her five thousand dollars, secured from her a relinquishment of all claims against him, rather than oblige a public scandal. But now Mrs. Winslow claims that this was secured by fraud, and after making another fruitless demand for ten thousand dollars, which – hem! Mr. Lyon resisted through my advice, last week began suit against him for one hundred thousand dollars for breach of promise of marriage. And a hundred thousand dollars is a big sum of money, Mr. Pinkerton."

"A big sum of money," echoed Lyon.

"But of course," continued Harcout, inserting his thumbs in the arm-holes of his vest and looking the very picture of injured virtue, "Mr. Lyon cares nothing for that amount. It is the principle of the thing. It is the stain upon his good name that he desires to prevent – and these juries are confoundedly unreliable."

"Confoundedly unreliable," repeated Lyon, chewing nervously.

"Therefore," said Harcout, "really believing, as we do, that we – hem! that is, Mr. Lyon, of course – is the victim of a designing woman who really means to wrongfully compel the payment of a large sum of money and ruin my friend in the estimation of the public, we are anxious that you should set about ascertaining everything concerning her for use as evidence in the case."

After asking them a few questions touching facts I desired to ascertain, the interview terminated with the understanding that Harcout should act for Mr. Lyon unqualifiedly in the matter, and call at my office as often as desirable to listen to reports of the progress of my investigations into the life and history of Mrs. Winslow. I was satisfied that not half the truth had been given me, and I was more than ever convinced of this fact when Lyon called me to one side as the lordly Harcout passed out, and said to me hurriedly:

"Don't be too hard upon the woman, Mr. Pinkerton. You know we are *all* liable to err; and – and, by Jupiter! Mrs. Winslow is certainly a most magnificent woman – a *most* magnificent woman," and then chewed himself out after his courtly henchman.

## CHAPTER VIII

The Case begun. – Mr. Pinkerton makes a preliminary Investigation at Rochester. – Mrs. Winslow, Trance Medium. – A Ride to Port Charlotte. – Harcourt as a Barnacle. – Much married. – Mr. Pinkerton visits the Mediums. – Drops in at a Washington Hall Meeting. – Sees the naughty Woman. – And returns to New York convinced that the Spiritualistic Adventuress is a Woman of remarkable Ability.

AS the interview related in the previous chapter occurred on Friday, and I could not attend to the matter at once, I was obliged to wait until the following Sunday evening, when I quietly took the western-bound express, which brought me to Rochester the following noon, where I engaged rooms at the Brackett House under an assumed name, and immediately began a preliminary examination on my own account, having directed my New York Superintendent to inform either Lyon or Harcourt, in the event of their calling at the agency, that I could not be seen regarding their matter for a few days, as I had suddenly been called South on important business.

My object in doing this was to look over the ground at Rochester myself, and get an unbiased idea of the whole matter, so that I could properly proceed with the work, being satisfied that this was the only way to secure a basis to operate upon, as I was sure that I had not got at the bottom facts in the late interview. I invariably insist on having all the facts, and always take measures to secure them before any decided move is made.

As a rule, however, in cases of this kind, it is almost impossible to secure what the detective absolutely needs from the parties from whom the information should come; as it is a principle of human nature possessed by us all, to be very frank about our merits, and quite careful about mentioning anything that might be construed into either a lack of judgment or principle.

I found that the New York papers were already publishing specials concerning the matter, with solemn editorials regarding the perfidy of man, the constancy of woman, and the general cussedness of both; and that at Rochester the knowledge of the commencement of the suit had just got into the papers, and consequently, into everybody's mouth; and was creating a great sensation, as Lyon was known to the whole city as one of its richest citizens, "though a little off on Spiritualism lately," as the talk went; and Mrs. Winslow had also become quite notorious from her magnificent figure and winning manner, her equally notorious mediumistic powers, and through her prominent connection with the more *material* believers in spiritual phenomena; or, to be plain, that vast majority of so-called spiritualists whose only visible means of support are in excellently humbugging their brethren or sisters, or any other portion of the gullible world with whom they come in contact.

Nearly every Rochester paper contained the advertisement of Mrs. Winslow, trance medium, and I concluded that either the lady had been unusually successful in her trance business, or that her levies upon Lyon had been remunerative – perhaps both – to pay for such extensive advertising.

After dinner I took a stroll and found that the lady occupied very luxurious apartments on South St. Paul street, near Meech's Opera-house, a location well adapted for her business. I also ordered a carriage and drove out to Port Charlotte – a magnificent drive through a lovely country dotted with fine farm-houses and the splendid suburban residences of wealthy Rochester citizens – and, as a casual stranger, inspected Lyon's warehouses and elevators, the largest and most expensive at the Port, returning to the Brackett House in time to eat a hearty supper.

After supper, without any effort, and without disclosing my identity, I got into conversation with the genial landlord of the house, who gave me – as a part of my entertainment, I presume – a rich account of Lyon's business relations, and particularly of his personal habits, painted in entirely different colors than by the blarneying tongue of Harcourt; and also spoke of the latter as "a d – d barnacle," who had in some unexplainable way fastened himself upon Lyon and was living like

a prince off the "old fool," as he called him. He also told me confidentially that he believed Mrs. Winslow to be a woman of questionable character; as, when she first came to the city, she had stopped at his hotel, and had advertised her mediumistic powers so largely that it had brought a class of men there whom he thought, from his personal knowledge of their habits, to be more interested in inquiries into the mysteries of the *present* than of the hereafter, until he had become so anxious as to the reputation of his house that he had informed the lady of the preference of her absence to her company; whereupon she had raised such a storm about his ears that he was only too glad to compromise by letting her go, bag and baggage, without paying her bill, which was a large one and of a month's standing.

I also gained from him the opinion that she had been married a half-dozen times, or as often as had suited her convenience; and that he had only a day or so previous conversed with a gentleman from some part of the West, who had told him that somebody in Rochester had assisted her in procuring her a divorce from her husband. I made a note of all these points after I had retired to my room, and felt quite satisfied with the day's work.

The next day, with a gentleman at the hotel with whom I had become acquainted, representing myself as a person of means who might possibly make an investment at Rochester, I visited Lyon's mills, and incidentally became quite well informed as to his financial and social standing.

The latter was a little peculiar. His wife, a most estimable lady, had died a few years previous, and it appeared that during her life the Lyon family were among the aristocrats of the city; but at her death, and Lyon's subsequent dabbling in Spiritualism, they had been gradually dropped from the visiting lists, and nothing remained of the former home circle save a gaunt, grim mother-in-law, who vainly waged war against the loose habits, laxity of morals, and general degeneracy that had come with the new order of things.

I also secured the addresses of all the professional mediums, fortune-tellers, and astrologers of the city, and during that day and the next visited their rooms, claiming to be a devoted believer in Spiritualism, having my fortune told at various places, and picking up a good deal of information regarding the fascinating Mrs. Winslow, which tended to prove her a remarkably talented woman, capable of not only attending to her mediumistic duties, but also of carrying on litigation of various kinds in different parts of the country. My investigations also showed that these different "doctors" and "doctresses," claiming to perform almost miraculous cures and their ability to foretell the fates of others through the aid of this supernatural spirit-power, were quite like other people in their bickerings and jealousies, and, as a rule, they gave each other quite as bad names as the public generally gave them; and that Mrs. Winslow could not have been considered exactly the pink of perfection if judged even by those of her own persuasion, as one vaguely hinted at her having played the same game on other parties. Another was sure she had been a camp-follower during the war. Another assured me that she had similar suits at Louisville, Cincinnati, and St. Louis. Still another was quite certain that she was only a common woman. Altogether, according to these reports, which were easily enough secured, as her case against Lyon was the engrossing subject of the hour at Rochester, it appeared that the ravishing Mrs. Winslow held her place, such as it was, in the world more through her supreme will power, and the respect through fear she unconsciously inspired in others, than through any of the tenderer graces or a superabundance of personal purity.

From cautious inquiries and the wonderful amount of street, saloon, and hotel talk which the affair was causing, I also ascertained that Mrs. Winslow had made her appearance in Rochester some years before; some said from the east, and some from the West, but the preponderance of evidence indicated that it had been from the West; that she had at once allied herself with the spiritualists of the city, and Lyon had first met or seen her at one of their seances or lectures; that he had at once yielded to her charms, and begun visiting her for "advice," as it was sarcastically reported, continuing the visits with such frequency and regularity as to hasten the death of his wife, after which event he had given his new affinity nearly his entire attention until she had come to be commonly considered as his

mistress; that she had frequently boasted among her friends that she was to become Lyon's wife, and was even by some called Mrs. Lyon, to which pleasant designation she made no murmur; that she had made a common practice of visiting Lyon at his offices in the Arcade, where she had been treated with considerable deference and respect by his employees; and that during this period Mrs. Winslow had made several trips to the West, evidently at Lyon's instigation, and through his financial aid.

I found also that she was as truly a believer in the farces others of her profession enacted for her benefit as she was in the mediumistic power she had persuaded herself that she possessed, and was consequently a regular attendant at all the meetings and seances held in the city; and as there was one to be held that evening at Washington Hall, I decided to attend for the purpose of getting a good view of the lady with whom, for a time, we should be obliged to keep close company. Accordingly, at half-past seven o'clock I found the hall, which is but a few blocks above the bridge on Main Street, and after purchasing a ticket of a sleek, long-haired individual with deft fingers and a restless eye, passed into the room, where there was already quite a number of the faithful, all bearing unmistakable evidences of either their peculiar faith, or the character of their business.

As the exercises of the evening had not yet begun, those present were gathered about the hall excitedly discussing the great sensation of the hour, which was particularly interesting to them, as the parties to it were both of their number, and from what I could gather they were about evenly divided in their opinion as to the merits of the case – the male portion of the assemblage warmly espousing the cause of Mrs. Winslow, and the female portion as eagerly sympathizing with "poor dear Mr. Lyon," and roundly condemning the naughty woman who had ensnared him and was so relentlessly pursuing him.

I was sure the naughty woman had now arrived, as there was a sudden twisting of necks and buzzing of "That's her – that's her!" "There's Mrs. Winslow!" and "Yes, that's Mrs. Lyon!" and the females that had given Mrs. Winslow such a bad reputation a few moments before, now pressed around her with sympathizing inquiries and loud protestations of regard, quite like other ladies under similar circumstances. But the lady appeared to be quite unconcerned as to their good or ill feeling towards her, and swept up the aisle with a regal air, taking a seat so near me and in such a position that I was able to make a perfect study of her while apparently only absorbed in the wonderful revelation that fell from the trance-speaker's lips.

She appeared to be a lady of about thirty five years of age, and of a very commanding appearance. She was not a beautiful woman, but there was an indescribable something about her entire face and figure that was strangely attractive. It was both the dignity of self-conscious power and the peculiar attractiveness of a majestically formed woman. It could not be said that there was a single beautiful feature about her face, though it attracted and held every observer. Her head was large, well formed, and covered with a wavy mass of black hair marvelous in its richness of color and luxuriance. Her complexion was a clear, wax-like white, singularly contrasting with her hair, delicately arching eyebrows, and long, dark lashes, which heavily shaded great gray eyes that were sometimes touched with a shading of blue, and occasionally glowed with a light as keen, glittering, and cold as might flash from a diamond or a dagger's point, which seemed to work in sympathy with the rapid movement of her thin nostrils, and the swift shuttles of crimson and paleness that darted over her curled upper lip, which, notwithstanding this singularity, touched the full, pouting lower one with a hint of wild and riotous blood.

Although Mrs. Winslow was a woman who, being met in the better circles of society, would have wonderfully interested every one with whom she came in contact, in the circle within which she moved, and which, unconsciously, seemed to be far beneath her, she surely commanded a certain kind of respect, with a touch of fear, perhaps; and in any circle of life was undoubtedly one in whom the ambition for power was only equalled by the remorseless way with which she would wield it after it had been gained.

Not once during the whole evening did she by any movement of her person or motion of her features give any further indication of her character; and I could only leave the hall and return to my hotel, and from thence immediately to New York, with the thorough conviction that Mrs. Winslow was a remarkably shrewd woman; had systematically fastened herself upon Lyon with the view of becoming his wife, or compelling him to divide his immense wealth with her; would give us plenty to attend to, and had easily gained a wonderful power over Lyon; which, even after her repeated piracies upon him, and the evident knowledge he possessed of her villainous character, was yet strong upon him.

## CHAPTER IX

"Our Case." – Harcout's Egotism and Interference. – The strange Chain of Evidence. – A Trail of Spiritualism, Lust, and Licentiousness. – Superintendent Bangs locates the Detectives. – A pernicious System. – Three Old Maids named Grim. – Mr. Bangs baffled by Mr. Lyon, who won't be "worried." – One Honest Spiritualistic Doctor. – The Trail secured. – A Tigress. – Mr. Bangs "goes West."

ON my return to New York I found that the splendid Harcout had been using the interim in a succession of heated rushes from the St. Nicholas Hotel to the Agency, where he had given my superintendents and clerks voluminous instructions as to how the investigation should be conducted, and, in explaining his idea of how detectives should work up any case, permeated the entire establishment with his fragrant pomposity. He was also quite impatient that nothing had been done in "our case," as he termed it, and I could only pacify him by assuring him that it should be given my immediate attention.

As soon as I could dispose of Harcout I held another consultation with my General Superintendent, during which the information I had secured at Rochester was analyzed and recorded, and which, with some other facts already in possession of the Agency bearing on the case, we decided to be sufficient to warrant a conclusion that Mrs. Winslow was not Mrs. Winslow at all, but somebody else altogether, and had had as many *aliases* as a cat is supposed to have lives. It was also quite evident, the more we looked into the matter and searched the records, that certain other cities of the country had suffered from the much-named Mrs. Winslow, and in many instances in a quite similar manner to that of the Rochester infliction.

Running through all the strange chain of evidence that the records of our almost numberless operations gave, there were also found items which told of a female not altogether unlike Mrs. Winslow, and there were in them all traces of a woman absolutely heartless, cold, calculating, cruel; now here under one name and in one guise, now there under another name and in another guise, but forever upon that unrelenting search for power and with that remorseless greed for gold, and also showing as truly a trace of spiritualism, of lust, and of licentiousness.

Of course the result of it all was only a question of time; only a question of duration in villainy and shrewd human deviltry; a mere question of how long supreme depravity would wear in a constant war upon fairness, purity, and the conscience of society. It never wins – it always loses, and, as certain as life or death, good or evil, reaches its sure punishment here, whatever may be the result in that undiscovered territory of the future which the preachers find happiness and good incomes in quarrelling over. But as my long experience with crime and criminals had proven to me the fact that one desperately bad woman brings upon society vastly more misery than a hundred equally as bad men, and being equally as certain that Mrs. Winslow was an exceptionally bad woman, I felt no regret whatever in becoming her Nemesis, and even experienced a peculiar degree of satisfaction in inaugurating a crusade against her as a pitiless, heartless, dangerous woman, utterly devoid of conscience, and without a single redeeming trait of character.

I accordingly detailed two of my operatives, Fox and Bristol, to proceed to Rochester in charge of Superintendent Bangs, whom I gave instructions to locate the men so that they could keep Mrs. Winslow under the strictest surveillance, and make daily reports in writing to me concerning her habits and associates, and operations of any character whatever, using the telegraph freely if occasion required. I also instructed him, after the men were located in Rochester, and he had followed up the clue I had got for him as to Mrs. Winslow's western exploits, to proceed to the West, taking all the time necessary, and ascertain everything possible favorable or unfavorable to the woman; as I held it to be

not only a matter of utmost importance to thorough detective work, but also a principle of common justice, that any suspected person should receive the benefit of whatever good there is in them.

For these reasons I have always fought against the system of rewards for the capture and conviction of supposed criminals. There could be nothing more absolutely unjust. Under that system, through a combination of circumstances, an innocent party is often deemed guilty of crime, and the detective, anxious to secure professional honor and large remuneration for small work, begins with the presumption of guilt, and industriously piles up a mountain of presumptive and circumstantial evidence that times without number has sent innocent persons to the felon's cell or the hangman's noose.

On arriving at Rochester the following Monday, Bangs took rooms at the National Hotel, opposite the court-house – a house more a resort for persons in attendance at the courts, and people visiting Rochester from neighboring towns, than for fashionable people or commercial travellers; while Fox settled himself at a little hotel nearly opposite Mrs. Winslow's rooms on South St. Paul street, and Bristol found a home at a little saloon, restaurant and boarding-house, kept by three old maids named Grim, who were firm believers in Spiritualism – probably from never having got any satisfaction out of life from any other religion – under Washington Hall, on East Main street, a place given up to variety shows, masked balls, sleight-of-hand performances, seances, and other questionable entertainments; so that they were all within easy communication, and could work to advantage. It was also arranged that the reports of Fox and Bristol should be put in Mr. Bangs's hands, by a mode of communication which would prevent their being seen together, before being forwarded to me, so that their observations might be of assistance in his securing necessary information for his western tour.

While Bristol and Fox were watching the movements of the gay madam, familiarizing themselves with the city, and getting on an easy footing at their boarding-houses, Mr. Bangs set to work to ascertain if possible in what part of the West Mrs. Winslow had operated.

He first visited Mr. Lyon at his office in the Arcade, introducing himself as Mr. Clement, one of my operatives, not giving his correct name, as the newspaper reporters were flying around at a great rate for items, and the appearance of a man so well known by reputation as Mr. Bangs would have given their overcharged imaginations an opportunity to flood over several columns of their respective papers. After being seated in Lyon's private office Mr. Bangs, as Mr. Clement, began the conversation:

"Mr. Lyon, I am directed by Mr. Pinkerton to ascertain if possible from you whether Mrs. Winslow has ever informed you of having at any previous time resided in the West?"

Lyon gave Bangs a cigar, lighted one for himself, and after puffing away vigorously for a little time, replied: "Mr. Clement, I think she has done so, but I can't recollect what the information was."

"Couldn't you call to mind anything that would be of some little assistance to us, Mr. Lyon?"

"No," he nervously answered; "no, I think not. I have put this whole matter away from me as much as possible."

"We have positively ascertained," continued Bangs, looking searchingly into Lyon's face, "that she recently secured a divorce from a former husband. We also know that some one here in Rochester rendered her substantial assistance. That person found, tracing her history would be comparatively an easy matter."

Lyon moved about uneasily, and finally through the clouds of smoke about his head puffed out, "Indeed!"

"Yes," replied Bangs, "and, Mr. Lyon, if we could get at the exact truth about this part of it, I am sure it would not only greatly facilitate our work, but also greatly lessen the expense of the operation."

Lyon sat for a little time twisting his shaggy gray whiskers, and finally said: "Mr. Clement, I insist on not being worried about this business; perhaps Harcourt didn't make that point quite clear."

Harcout *is* a little flighty, but a noble fellow though, after all. I don't hardly know what I would do without Harcout, Mr. Clement; he takes the whole thing off my shoulders, as it were."

Bangs saw that Lyon could have given him just what information he needed, and also saw with equal certainty that he had fully decided to throw the matter off his mind entirely, and compel us to gain whatever necessary by hard work. He was also now satisfied of the truth of my conviction, that Lyon had assisted Mrs. Winslow in this divorce matter, and had been very much more intimate with her than he even desired us to know. So he bade him good-day, returned to his hotel, and telegraphed for instructions. I directed him to go ahead and use his own judgment altogether, also suggesting that he should visit the different clairvoyants and mediums, with a view of getting further information which might be secured from their almost ceaseless chatter upon the subject.

As Rochester is as full of mediums as a thistle of thorns, this was a kind of investigation which necessitated the expenditure of considerable time, and three days had elapsed before any information of a satisfactory nature was secured. He had expended quite a little fortune in having his "horoscope cast," his fortune told, and his fate pointed out with such unerring certainty by male and female seers of every name, appearance and nature, that if any two of these predictions had borne the slightest possible resemblance to each other, he would have been horrified enough to have taken a last leap into the surging Genesee like poor Sam Patch. But he persisted in the face of these terrible revelations until he had found a certain Dr. Hubbard, who proved to be one of the jolliest of the profession he had ever met. The Doctor was a pleasant gentleman, and proved more pleasant than ever when Mr. Bangs informed him that he did not desire any fortune-telling, predictions or horoscopes, but was interested in the subject of Spiritualism, and had been directed to him as one likely to give some information that could be relied on, for which he would liberally remunerate him.

As Mr. Bangs had some choice cigars, which he divided with the Doctor, and the Doctor had some choice brandy, which he divided with Mr. Bangs, they at once became easy together, and taking seats at the window overlooking Main street, while watching the crowds below, were soon chatting away quite unlike two people very badly affected with spiritualistic tendencies.

After a little time, however, the Doctor looked pretty sharply at Bangs, and suddenly asked: "Well, who are you, anyhow?"

"Who am I?" returned Bangs smilingly, "well, to be frank, I am Professor Owen, of the Indiana State University." Bangs never blushed at the libel on the kind old man bearing that name and title, and continued, "It is our vacation now, and I am travelling a little in the East investigating this subject. My brother is an enthusiastic believer in it, but I wished other testimony."

The Doctor seemed to think that the Professor took to the brandy and cigars quite too familiarly for an educator, but the explanation satisfied him, and he asked: "Professor, you want the whole truth, don't you?"

"Nothing but the truth," responded Bangs.

Doctor Hubbard blew out a long series of rings and expressively followed it with "Humbug!"

"It can't be possible," persisted Bangs.

"It oughtn't to be possible," urged the Doctor, "for a man of your probable talent and position to be engaged in investigating what one visit to any one of us should show to be the most infernal fraud ever practised upon the public!" said the Doctor heatedly.

Bangs expressed himself as surprised beyond measure.

"Well," continued the Doctor earnestly, "you came to me like a man, didn't you?"

Bangs assured him that he was quite right.

"And you came fair and square, without any ifs and ands, didn't you?"

"All of that," responded Bangs.

"And," continued the Doctor helping himself to the brandy, then excusing himself and pushing it towards Bangs, who partook sparingly, "you didn't want any fortune told, or predictions, or horoscopes, or any other nonsense?"

"Exactly," said Bangs.

"And you said you'd pay me liberally for information, didn't you?"

"Yes, and I'll be as good as my word," replied the assumed professor.

"Well, then," continued the Doctor in a burst of good feeling, brandy and honesty, "you see in me an unsuccessful physician, a disciple of Æsculapius without followers. I graduated with high honors, hung out my sign, sharpened my tools, moulded my pills, drank a toast to disease, but waited in vain for patronage. As this became monotonous," continued the Doctor, taking another pull at the brandy bottle, then wiping the mouth and passing it to Mr. Bangs, who excused himself, "I glided into a 'specialist.' It required too much money to advertise, and the papers slashed me villainously besides. *Then* I became a Spiritualist – it's the record of every one of us. You can see," and the Doctor waved his hand towards the cosy appointments in a satisfied way, "I am pretty comfortable now."

"Yes, quite comfortable," said Bangs, wondering what the Doctor was driving at.

"So I am an enthusiastic Spiritualist," resumed the happy physician, "for its profession has provided me with necessities, comforts, and even luxuries."

"Do you really effect any of the marvellous cures you advertise?"

"Most assuredly," he replied.

"And may I ask how?" interrogated Mr. Bangs.

"In the good old-fashioned way – salts, senna, calomel, and the blue-pill," said the Doctor, laughing heartily.

"And is not the aid of the spirits essential to your cures?"

"A belief, or *faith*, that such an agency is used, does the whole thing, Professor."

"And is there no such thing?" persisted Bangs.

"Just as much of it as there is faith in it; no more and no less."

"Then the whole thing's a humbug, as you say?"

"Just as thoroughly as is that woman," said the Doctor stoutly, pointing to Mrs. Winslow, who at that moment was seen in the street below, being driven towards the suburbs in a neat phaeton.

Bangs, becoming suddenly interested, though repressing himself, carelessly asked, "Who is she?"

Here the Doctor executed a grimace which might mean a good deal, or nothing at all, and said tersely: "She's a bouncer; don't you know her?"

"No."

"Why, that's Mrs. Winslow, old Lyons' soothing syrup; and old Lyon's one of the children – 'teething,'" added the Doctor with a hearty laugh. "But she's a tigress!"

Mr. Bangs leaned out of the window, took a good look at the tigress, and then, as if endeavoring to recollect some former occurrence, said: "I believe I have seen her somewhere before."

"Quite so, quite so; undoubtedly you have."

"And I think in the West, too," replied Mr. Bangs, trying hard to remember, and handing the doctor a fresh cigar.

"Exactly – Chicago, St. Louis, Cincinnati, Louisville – everywhere, in fact. One might call her a social floater, and not be far out of the way either. She used to live at Terre Haute."

"Terre Haute? Why, of course! I knew I had seen her somewhere."

"Yes, she lived a few miles out, up the Wabash river, for years. Her husband's name was Oxford, or Hosford, or something of the kind."

"Yes?" said Bangs.

"Yes," replied the Doctor; "I didn't know her personally, but I knew *of* her there. That's where she first went off the hook – and – and became one of us."

"Is she a remarkable character?" asked Mr. Bangs.

"A remarkable character? Why, sir, she's a wonderful woman – a perfect Satan. I wouldn't have her get after me," said the Doctor, shaking his head protestingly "for ten thousand dollars! Why, sir, that woman has ruined more men and broken up more families than you could count."

"And is *she*, too, a spiritualist?" asked Mr. Bangs.

"A spiritualist? Why, of course she is; and, what is more, I sometimes think she really believes in her own mummeries."

"What has become of her family?" asked Bangs.

"Oh, gone to the devil, I presume, just like everybody she has had anything to do with – just as old Lyon is certain to do, too."

"Then this Oxford or Hosford is not living at Terre Haute now?"

"Couldn't tell you that," replied the Doctor; and then, suddenly returning to the subject and putting the brandy-bottle into a little closet with a slam as footsteps were heard coming up the stairs, "can I be of any further service to you?"

Mr. Bangs thought not, handed the good Doctor a five-dollar bill while remarking that he would call again, both of which evidences of good feeling pleased the latter immensely, and took his departure quite well pleased with the result of his inquiries into the wonderful subject of modern Spiritualism.

## CHAPTER X

Rochester. – A Profitable Field for Mrs. Winslow. – Her sumptuous Apartments. – The Detectives at Work. – Mrs. Winslow's Cautiousness. – Child-Training. – Mysterious Drives. – A dapper little Blond Gentleman. – Two Birds with one Stone. – A French Divinity. – Le Compte.

WHILE Superintendent Bangs is on his hunting expedition in the West, we will follow the fortunes of Mrs. Winslow in the beautiful city of Rochester.

There is hardly a city in the country better adapted for either the pursuit of pleasure or wealth than Rochester. Everything combines to make it so. It nestles in one of the most beautiful valleys in the world, like the nest of a busy bird in a luxuriant meadow. There is the sound of pleasant waters, the roar of a mighty cataract, the din of two score busy mills, the music of the spindles, the cogs and the reels, the clash and the clangor of the factories, the thunderings of the forges, and the footfalls of a hundred thousand happy, contented people who have wrung competence and even luxury from the hard hand of necessity and toil.

From the summit of Mount Hope Observatory, an elevation of nearly five hundred feet above the lake, there is a grand picture whereon the eye may rest. At your feet, and to the north, lies the busy city with the noble Genesee winding rapidly through it, lending its half-million horse-power force to the needs of labor, then plunging a hundred feet downwards, eddying and rushing onward, plunging and eddying again and again, until it sobers into a steady current northward towards Ontario through a deep, dark gorge, looking like an ugly serpent trailing to the lower inland sea where can be seen the city of Charlotte, formerly called Port Genesee, the port of Rochester, beyond which, on a clear day, may be seen countless dreamy sails, and steamers with their trailing plumes of smoke, and still beyond appears the dim outlines of the far-off Canadian shore. To the east, as far as can be discerned, lies a country of the nature of "openings" – beautiful groves of trees, magnificent farms, with the almost palatial homes of the owners, who have become rich from the legacies of their ancestors with the added thrift of scores of fruitful years. Southward for a half hundred miles, stretches the beautiful valley of the Genesee, dimpled by lesser valleys and a hundred sparkling brooks, and dotted by field and forest and numberless groups of half-hidden houses, with outbuildings full to bursting with the fruitage of the fields; while to the west along the lake are low ranges of sand-hills, and south of these extending nearly to Lake Erie is a beautiful prairie country, while with a glass can be traced the ghostly mist perpetually hovering above Niagara.

If this scene be inspiring to the looker-on, the intrinsic beauty of the city, its unusual life, its fine public buildings, business houses, and splendid private residences; its clean macadamized streets and broad, brick walks, shaded with the trees of half a century's growth as in many of the famous Southern cities; its numberless little parks or "places," owned in common by the proprietors of the handsome residences which surround them, and filled with rare shrubs, flowers, beautiful fountains and costly statuary; the vast *parterres* of flowers in the suburbs, sending in upon every summer wind an Arabian wealth of exquisite fragrance; the large summer gardens, where beer and Gambrinus reign supreme; the enticing promenades, and the splendid drives in every direction from the city – would give any one not completely at war with every pleasant thing in life a genuine inspiration of pleasure and a more than ordinary thrill of enjoyment.

It is little wonder, then, that Mrs. Winslow found Rochester a profitable field for operating in her peculiar double capacity of a dashing adventuress and a trance medium. She found there not only men of vast wealth, but of vast immorality, as is quite common all over the world, and hundreds of firm believers in spiritualism, which was a special peculiarity to Rochester. Among the first number there were many who sought her for her charms of figure and manners, which were certainly powerfully

attractive, and which yielded her an elegant income without positive public degradation, as no man of wealth and position feels called upon to make known his own peccadilloes for the sake of exposing the sharer of them, even though she be a dangerous woman; and consequently there was only that universal verdict of evil against her which society quite generally, and also quite correctly, pronounces on forcibly circumstantial evidence.

Her apartments were elegant, and even sumptuous; and though there was a quite general understanding of her character among the epicurean gentlemen of the city, she held them aloof with such freezing dignity that they seldom presumed upon her acquaintance, and were even possessed of a certain respect for her unusually rare shrewdness in preserving her reputation, such as it was; so that her rooms, so far as the public were able to ascertain, were only frequented by those who believed her to be able to allay their sufferings, or open the gates of the undiscovered country to their anxious, yearning eyes.

A large amount of money had been paid her by Lyon to prevent a scandal. The last sum was known to have been five thousand dollars, and it was quite probable that if there had been an intimacy so ripe as to have warranted the payment of this amount, still larger sums had doubtless been expended in maturing so tender a relation. In any event it was ascertained by Bristol and Fox that Mrs. Winslow had for some time been living in elegance, though at the same time carefully, being given to no particular excesses, and it was a matter for considerable speculation whether she was now in the possession of much money or not.

Fox affected the quiet, well-bred gentleman, expended sufficient money among the boarders to make them talkative, and even confidential, and in this way learned a great deal about the madam's habits and peculiarities that was afterwards useful, though of no particular moment at that time; while Bristol, who was a florid, well-kept Canadian gentleman of about forty-five years of age, of a literary and poetical turn, and with an easy habit of falling into the manner and brogue of an Englishman, Scotchman, or Irishman, made himself immensely popular with the old maids under Washington Hall, who in turn were enamored with his good physical parts and blarneying tongue, and were at any time ready to confide to him all they knew, and, in fact, a great deal more; so that, as he professed to be an ardent Spiritualist, he was enabled to become well informed concerning the leading persons of that persuasion in the city, of whom he forwarded a complete list, with something of a history of each; and while not becoming known to or personally familiar with any one of them – which would have destroyed his usefulness, he was yet able to keep track of nearly all that was said or done within the charmed circle; as after each lecture, or seance, the economically-built and antiquated maidens would retire to a little snuggerly behind the restaurant, to which they would invite the sympathetic Bristol, who was old enough to protect them from scandal, and then and there, while easing their by no means ravishing forms of portions of their garments preparatory to the night's virtuous repose, over strong toast and weak tea would rattle on in such a bewildering way about the events of the evening and the good or bad characteristics of the faithful, that Bristol figuratively, if not in fact, sat at the feet of a trinity of oracles.

His reports showed that while Mrs. Winslow was accepted among their number without question, still there was but little known about her previous history. I felt satisfied that this was true, and had only stationed Bristol and Fox at Rochester for the purpose of keeping me informed of her every movement, knowing well enough that after Bangs had got a good start he would follow up her trail in the West as remorselessly as I myself would have done.

Mrs. Winslow seemed to be absolutely without associates, either from a confirmed habit of suspicion of everybody which she seemed to possess, or from a resolve to maintain as good a character as possible until the Winslow-Lyon case should be heard in court, so that her evidence, and particularly her reputation, might not be impeached or broken down; and it required the constant attention of both Bristol and Fox to discover in her anything of even a suspicious character, as the nature of her

mediumistic business – allowing as it did scores of visitors daily access to her rooms, only one being admitted to the trance-room of her apartments at a time – gave her a vast advantage over them.

It was evident that she had in a measure persuaded herself that she had a genuine cause of action against Lyon; or, that if she had not, she had fully determined to make a big fight under any circumstances, as both the prestige secured by the presumption of some shadow of a claim which the mere pressing of it in court would give, and the assistance to her which even a tithe of the damages she claimed would be, would not only give her a degree of importance and respectability which would greatly assist her in future operations, but would also yield her the means for future comfort, without this terrible continued struggle for gold and the happiness it is supposed to command.

How vain such a hope! and how strange that, with the bitter reminder of countless never-realized ambitions before them, the adventurer and the criminal will go on and on, still clinging to the shadow of a hope that by *some* exceptional freak of fortune in their favor they may gain the peace and quietness they so agonizedly long for, but which is just as irrevocably decreed to be forever beyond their reach as were the luscious fruits to escape the touch and taste of the condemned and tortured Phrygian king.

And right here, were I a preacher – being only a *doer*, however – I would show the criminal neglect of parents, teachers and preachers in forever warring for reformation, and never battling against the numberless packs of little foxes of pride and covetousness of society, which drive weak natures into a constant struggle to excel in power and display, eating away at the vines until the life, like the fields, is left barren and desolate, or is only a vast waste of thorns and noxious weeds. My records are full of lives wrecked upon the glittering rocks built by false pride and vanity and the greed for gold which society, and even the aristocratic systems of modern religion compel. Whatever may be preached, all this cursed assumption of what is not possessed without years of honest, sturdy toil, is practised in the pulpit, the pew, the palace, and the poverty-stricken hovel, permeating every stratum of business, society and religion, until honorable action is at discount, dishonesty commands a premium of gain and lachrymose sympathy, and the whole world is being swiftly driven into a surging channel of fraud, crime and debauchery that will require generations of something besides splendid hypocrisy and luxurious cant to restrain and purify.

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