ORNIA

When Should a Girl Marry?

DERRINGFORTH

By FRANK A. MUNSEY

VOLUME ONE

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DERRINGFORTH.

I.

"You know I love you, Phil, that I have loved you as you have loved me, ever since we were children, but mama is not willing that I should become engaged for at least a year."

This was Marion Kingsley's answer to Phil Derringforth's proposal.

The color left his face.

"Does your mother object to me?" he asked, unable to conceal his disappointment.

"No, indeed, she thinks the world of you, Phil—you should know that."

"I have always thought so, but now——"

Phil hesitated, and Marion did not wait for him to finish his sentence.

"You must still think so," she said. "It would break mama's heart to know you doubted her loyalty to you."

"Why does she want us to wait, then? Are you and I not old enough to marry?"

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"Mama thinks not, and besides, she wants me to see something of society as a girl."

"And you?"

She looked up at him, and love and tenderness were in her eyes.

"Can't you see — don't you know that nothing in all the world would make me so happy as to be your wife? This love is not new to you and me, Phil. We have been lovers all our lives, and I have always looked forward to the end of my school days, thinking that you and I would then be more to each other than ever."

"And now they have ended we are less to each other," returned Phil.

"No, we are not—don't say that, Phil; it is hard enough for me to yield to mama without your making it harder."

"I don't want to make it harder for you, little girl. I know you love me, but I am so disappointed."

"I'm very sorry for you, Phil, dear—very sorry for myself, but what can I do? You would not have me marry against mama's wishes, I am sure."

"I would not wish you to, and yet it might be best." There was a touch of desperation in his voice.

"Phil!"

"I know, but we can't look into the future; we can't tell what changes a year will make in us. To-day we love each other and are suited to each other.

You have been free up to this time from the flattery of society, and I have cared only for you. How will it be at the end of a year?"

"I should be very sorry to think that in so short a time your love for me would be gone," said Marion, the tears starting to her eyes.

"I didn't mean that," answered Phil tenderly. "I can't imagine that I could ever cease to love you, and yet I have seen enough of life already to be convinced that the more a man mingles with people, the more lovable girls he knows, the less is his devotion to any one of them. The same thing is equally true with women, and what is true of others may be true of you and me, Marion. It is impossible for us to realize it as applied to ourselves, I know."

"But it is different with you and me, Phil. We shall never cease to love each other, and then it is only a year—think of that, dear, and help me to wait patiently—you will, won't you?" There was a sweet, gentle pleading in her tones that Phil could not resist.

"I will do anything to make you happy," he answered, "but this delay is so unnecessary, so unreasonable. Your mother was married at sixteen, and you are nineteen now."

"That is just it. Mama feels that she had no girlhood herself and is determined that I shall not marry without having some of the pleasures that other girls have."

"But what does all that amount to? Hasn't her life been a happy one?"

"Yes, exceptionally happy; but she cannot get over the feeling that she missed something that never can be made up."

"There is such a thing as a girl's getting it all in a very short time," replied Phil sententiously, "and then she has no enthusiasm, no sweetness left in her soul."

"Why, Phil, I never heard you talk so extravagantly before."

"I never had occasion to draw such a picture before, but it is not an imperfect likeness of the blasé girl whose youth and freshness have been dulled by her insane desire to see it all—to miss nothing."

II.

PHIL DERRINGFORTH was two years old when Marion Kingsley was born. She was as sweet a baby as one could wish to see, with bright blue eyes and dimpled cheeks. Phil was a promising boy with good features and strong body. The Derringforths and the Kingsleys were neighbors; they were also close friends. As Phil and Marion grew older they were as brother and sister. The quarrels between them were singularly few. She seemed to realize that his greater age entitled him to superior knowledge. Phil was of the same mind, though for one of his boyish tendencies he was exceptionally polite to his sweet little companion. There is much in the inheritance of a fine fiber — a natural courtesy, a thoughtfulness for others. These characteristics were Phil's, and they had been supplemented by careful training. Marion, too, was equally well born, equally well bred. They were devoted to each other; unhappy without each other. It had been love from infancy. There is nothing sweeter than such love, starting almost with life itself and developing with

the growth of the children, changing its character as they change, but ever strengthening and broadening until it ripens into the deepest sentiment.

Marion learned to like the sports that Phil liked. She cared nothing for dolls. A game of ball with Phil or a dash on her pony suited her best. "Our boys" they were called by their parents, and Marion liked the term. Phil was her ideal. There was no other boy in all the world like him, and to be classed with him as a boy was joy enough for her. She learned to row, to run races, to jump, and to climb trees.

The chase after a woodchuck or the snaring of a partridge gave her no less pleasure than Phil. Many was the tramp they took together across country, gathering wild flowers, hunting squirrels, and robbing the nests of bees for the tiny cells of honey. Often they would get stung, but Marion would bear the pain as bravely as Phil, and they would laugh away the tears that sometimes forced themselves into their eyes. In the winter, when Phil and Marion were in their New York homes, they studied together and played together. They read the same books. Phil liked tales of adventure; so did Marion. The ordinary "girl's story" did not possess enough action to satisfy her healthy nature.

At twelve Phil was sent away to a military school where the discipline was strict and exacting. He did not take kindly to the machine life at first, but in due

time, like most boys, became very fond of it. The separation from Marion troubled him most, but he wrote her many letters and received many in return from her. He became more fond of her during his absence than he had ever been before.

The fall and winter went by; the summer came, and Phil and Marion were together again in the country. He taught her to drill, and the old sports of previous summers, with their ponies and boats and tennis, made the weeks fly by all too quickly. The vacation was over at last, and Phil and Marion were again at their respective schools. The attachment between them was stronger now than a year before, and each season it grew deeper and broader and more mature. Phil had taken excellent rank in school and had risen to be captain of a company. At eighteen he graduated. Marion was present to witness the exercises. Phil acquitted himself well. Marion was proud of him. He was the tallest and handsomest and cleverest fellow in his class, she told herself. Mr. and Mrs. Kingsley shared her pride. They were scarcely less delighted with Phil's achievements than his own father and mother. He was like a son to them, as Marion was like a daughter to the Derringforths. Each family expected, as a matter of course, that some day Phil would marry Marion.

When the summer vacation was over Phil went into his father's office to begin the career of a business man. Marion spent three years more in school,

and then graduated well up in her class. She had developed a good deal of talent for music. Her voice was sweet and well trained, and she played the violin with considerable skill. She was tall and willowy. Her eyes were intelligent and pleasing. The lines of her face were good, and her coloring was exquisite. It was this that added most to her beauty.

With her development into womanhood, developed also the ambition of her mother. The Kingsleys had abundant means, and their position in society was high. There was nothing they could not do for Marion; nothing they did not do that promised to be for her interest. The six months that followed her graduation were spent in Europe with her father and mother. On her return she had a brilliant coming out and was launched successfully upon the social swirl. She was very much admired; very much flattered. All this confirmed Mrs. Kingsley in her decision that Marion should have a year and more of girl life before marrying.

"You are quite as pretty as any of them," her mother told her, "and are far more accomplished. Your singing and playing alone will give you the greatest advantage. You will make friends and social connections that will be invaluable to you. You cannot understand this as I do, my child—you can never know what I missed by marrying so young."

It was only a few weeks after Marion's début that Phil formally proposed to her.

For months before Mrs. Kingsley had been at great pains to prepare her for this. It had been done by clever tact, by delicate suggestions, by examples of social successes. These efforts were not without effect upon Marion. Her ambition had been kindled. She began to take an interest in society matters and in society people. The names and triumphs of reigning belles were now familiar to her.

"Both your father and myself are very fond of Phil, as you know," said the ambitious mother, "and hope to see him marry you some day, but not now. I cannot allow my daughter to lose the best part of her life, as I did, and besides, I do not believe in early marriages for girls. Twenty five is quite young enough."

"Twenty five!" repeated Marion. "You would not expect me to wait six years for Phil."

Mrs. Kingsley was thoroughly sincere. Few mothers ever loved their daughters more than she loved Marion. It was this love that prompted her to urge a late marriage, believing, as many do, that this was the true secret of happiness. But nothing of this sort was ever said to Marion until her school days were over. Mrs. Kingsley had a high appreciation of the value of culture, and had devoted herself to her daughter's interests in this respect. She had read with her, studied with her, and brought such influences around her as would tend to make her more thoughtful, more studious. The best instructors in music and other branches

had been freely employed. Marion showed the effect of this careful training. She knew nothing of the lighter novels. Her reading had been confined to standard authors. Her knowledge of history, biography, and the best fiction was far greater than that of most girls. Her association with Phil, too, had been helpful to her. He was a thoughtful fellow, and she had learned to look at things as he looked at them. Her mental grasp was that of the masculine mind, while in her personality and manner she was as delicate and refined as any of her sex.

When Phil proposed to her she was both very glad and very sorry. It was just what she expected him to do, just what he should have done. She felt deeply gratified; she felt a just sense of pride in receiving an offer of marriage from so fine a fellow. She loved him more than ever.

Phil had been in his father's office three years, and already had an interest in the firm. His income was sufficient to warrant him in proposing marriage. He knew that the girl he loved was worthy of him—the one of all others to make him happy. To have waited longer before asking Marion to be his wife would have been folly. Her heart responded yes, a thousand times yes, to his proposal, but her mother's wishes—she could not go contrary to them, though the disappointment to her was death.

"I understand and appreciate your ambition for me, mama," she said, "but I am sure all the society in

the world could not give me the happiness I have with Phil.

"What is there in society, after all," she went on, "that people should give up their lives to it? Does it make one happier? Does it make one better and truer? The little I have seen of it shows me that it is insincere. The flattery and jealousies and strife—what is there in them? I like books and music, and want to keep up my studies. Phil wants me to do so, and says he will study with me and read with me. We could be very happy together, Phil and I. We could have such a sweet, cozy little home. I am sure, mama, you will regret it if you insist on making us both unhappy. Papa is willing that we should be married at any time—he is very fond of Phil."

"So am I very fond of Phil, my dear—just as fond as your father, and I realize that what you say about a cozy home and happiness is all very true. But your father has no taste, as you know, for society. He cannot understand the pleasures to be had from it or the advantages it gives one. I have only one motive in the position I take, and that is your greater happiness. I am sure it would be a mistake for you to marry now, or even to become engaged. A girl can be young only once in her life. If she misses the pleasures that properly belong to youth, as I missed them, she can never regain them."

"But you have been very happy, mama. Papa has done everything for you, and has been devoted to you.

You have seen the world and society, and have everything that money can bring."

"That is true, my child—no man could do more for a wife than he has done for me; no man could be a better husband. But married life has its responsibilities and cares. I had not finished my education when I was married, and before I was eighteen you were born. The mother, who is the mother that she should be, can never be the light hearted girl, free from care, however young she is. Suppose, instead of becoming a wife at sixteen, I had gone to school, as you have, until I was as old as you are now, and that after that I had had five or six years of girl pleasures, and then had married your father, wouldn't my life have been fuller and more complete?"

"But perhaps you would not have married papa—perhaps he would not have waited for you." Marion said this with a shudder—the thought suggesting that possibly Phil might not wait for her.

"Of course, that is possible," replied her mother; "but a girl's chance of marrying well ought to be better rather than worse if she waits until she is old enough to have some judgment. She will have met many men, and will know better how to estimate their merits and defects. The simple fact that I made so desirable a match at my age does not justify the belief that early marriages for girls bring better husbands. But with you, my dear, it is not a question of a desirable man. Phil is perfectly satisfactory to me, as he is

to your father. It is a question of your managing your life so that you will get the greatest happiness and make it the most useful."

"I cannot see that society is likely to make it more useful or more happy," replied Marion.

"Society certainly broadens one."

"Does it not also narrow one?"

"It may in some ways, but not as a whole. It gives one a better idea of people and human nature in general. Pope, you know, said, 'The proper study of mankind is man.'"

III.

MARION did not enter into society with the enthusiasm her mother had hoped for. She responded very slowly to the flattering reception given her, but responded, nevertheless, manifesting from week to week a deeper interest in the people she met and the doings of the social world.

The fact that she was the only child of the rich Matthew Kingsley made her a very desirable catch. Beaux varying in age from the youth of the insipid order of the "dude" to the old man whose earthly career was nearly finished, paid her devoted attention. Fortune hunters gathered about her, each trying to outdo the other in his efforts to win her hand. She was flattered, admired, sought after, and there was a certain sense of pleasure in all this. No débutante received more attention than she, and few shared equal honors with her. This was a triumph, and delighted Mrs. Kingsley. Her ambition for Marion was certainly growing. She could see a great social success ahead for her daughter, and her heart was filled with pride—a just pride, since she was sin-

cere in the belief that this sort of life would bring the largest measure of pleasure and happiness to Marion.

There was a coterie of antique, fossilized bachelors who had held sway for many years in the social circle to which Marion had recently been admitted. They were assiduous in their attentions each season to the favorite débutantes. Marion received a generous share of their flattery.

One of the most conspicuous members of the coterie was J. Harrington Van Stump, a sleek old man, of full three score, very bald, but otherwise well preserved. Van Stump was worth upwards of ten millions in tangible property, according to popular estimate, to say nothing of his own individual worth. This was regarded as very great in connection with the ten millions. Divorced from the latter there would have been a marvelous shrinkage in the personal value of J. Harrington Van Stump as a factor in the world, and especially as a matrimonial possibility in the world of fashion.

But ten millions plus Van Stump, or, to be more respectful, Van Stump plus ten millions, considered as a whole, was irresistible, viewed from his standpoint or from the standpoint of any girl who would willingly encumber herself with this respectable piece of antiquity for the sake of being a widow at the end of a few years, plus the millions of her late lamented husband.

Van Stump lost no opportunity to impress Marion

with the fact of his riches, and as was his custom he aimed to make her feel that she was his ideal—the one girl he had seen in his life that he could love. This devotion annoyed Marion. "He makes himself so silly," she said to her mother. "What does he think—that I want to marry him for his money? Surely he cannot be foolish enough to imagine I could love him."

"He does not mean anything, dear," answered Mrs. Kingsley. "It is simply his way."

"I think it is a very poor way, and I don't like it. I wish he wouldn't bother me."

"You shouldn't feel so. Everything said in the drawing room is not meant seriously. I hope you will show me that you are too clever to offend Mr. Van Stump simply because you do not fancy him."

"What shall I do—try to make him believe I am in love with him?"

"That would not be clever even if you were in love with him. Simply treat him pleasantly. His position demands that. You cannot afford to snub him—a man who entertains as he does, and who is to be found at every social function of any importance."

IV.

UNTIL the day Phil Derringforth asked Marion to be his wife, his heart had been as light as the clear, sweet air of the mountains. He had known nothing of sorrow beyond the little annoyances that sadden the hearts of children and in an hour are forgotten forever. His career had been without the discipline gained in the severe school of adversity and denial. He was not prepared for the answer that Marion gave him. It was a blow that paralyzed his hopes and purposes.

The idea of a refusal or postponement had never occurred to him. The disappointment was keen. His soul was embittered and gloomy. There was no sweetness in it, only the dregs that poison. A transformation in his nature had begun. The sunshine had taken wings. Character is as susceptible to the influence of a thought or an act as the physical system is susceptible to the presence of a drug.

Derringforth's will had never before been thwarted. The experience was a new sensation to him—a revelation. He was in a rebellious mood, and elements

in his nature that had hitherto been dormant now awoke and began to assert themselves. He exaggerated Mrs. Kingsley's offense—for to him it was an offense for which he could see no justification. He looked at the matter wholly from his own point of view, and shut his eyes to the fact that there might be another side worthy of consideration. He knew simply that he loved Marion deeply, devotedly, madly. He was old enough to marry, and had the means to marry. He did his own thinking and was intolerant of interference. Mrs. Kingsley had taken this office upon herself simply, as he argued, to satisfy a silly fancy—to see Marion flattered and talked about in the social world.

"Rubbish!" he exclaimed in a petulant tone and with a sweep of the hand that spoke volumes.

In this frame of mind he naturally sought to avoid Mrs. Kingsley, but this involved the loss of intercourse with Marion—a deprivation that was like parting with his own heart, for she was to him as his very life. And yet he felt an indefinable resentment against her even. She had not told him of her pleading with her mother. He knew only the answer she gave him, and the thought forced itself into his mind that she had not been so persistent as she might well have been.

He did not like to harbor this feeling, and condemned himself for giving place to the thought. He attempted to force it from his mind, but it came back, and each time was harder to dislodge.

He had no compunctions in placing the blame on Mrs. Kingsley. At first he tried not to think too harshly of her, but now he no longer attempted any restraint upon his feelings. His love for her was gone, but Marion—no, he would not allow himself to accuse her, for with the suspicion that she had fallen short of what he expected of her, came the feeling that the very foundation of things was crumbling.

His disquietude increased as he dwelt upon his disappointment, and he sought relief in scenes that up to this time had possessed no attraction for him. They possessed no attraction for him now, but they did serve to distract his thoughts.

Often his footsteps turned in the direction of the Kingsleys' when he went out from his home at night. Sometimes he called on Marion—sometimes he forced himself to walk resolutely by the house. He found that he was about as likely to see her in the one case as in the other, unless he had previously made a special appointment. It was the height of the season, and her evenings were almost all given to social engagements.

"I would so much rather have you come in, Phil, as you used to," she said in a note to him, "than go at the pace I am going, spending all my time with people in whom I have little interest. But there is no moderation in this life. If one happens to be in favor she must go all the time, or she will offend some one. It is either all or none. I am crowding half a dozen years into this one season, so that mama will be satis-

fied, as I am sure she will be, and then we can marry and have our dear little home and be so happy. I only wish you would go out with me. You would not find society such a horrible bore as you imagine, but I suppose I might as well think of flying as attempt to induce you to do the thing you do not want to do. Come and see me very soon—you don't know how I miss you; you are not a bit neighborly. What has changed you so? I hope no other attachment—no, I won't say it, won't allow myself to think the thought that would make me miserable."

"What has changed me so?" meditated Derringforth, and he took up the letter and read the sentence a second time. "Changed me!" he repeated, with the suggestion of a cloud gathering on his brow. "The change isn't in me."

One rarely sees a change in himself; but, as he changes, his point of view shifts, and then he thinks others have changed—not himself. Marion was yielding to the influence of her new associations. Derringforth was yielding to the influence of the thoughts that embittered his soul, as well as to that of the associations he had recently sought. Each had drifted a little away from the other, and each felt that the other had done all the drifting.

But they were still not far apart. A word, a look, a pressure of the hand might have closed up the gap.

The word was not spoken, the look was not given, the pressure of the hand was withheld.

Deep feeling engenders sensitiveness. It causes one to magnify little matters that would otherwise be passed over unnoticed. Had Derringforth's love been less he would not have entertained for a moment the thoughts that found lodgment in his heart.

V.

DERRINGFORTH'S father started in life as a civil engineer, but he was not the sort of man to continue working for others. He was little more than a boy when he took his first contract to build a short line of railroad. The work did not require large capital, but it involved the expenditure of much more than he possessed. He made up the deficiency by financiering, and in this he was successful, as was also his earliest effort at railroad building.

The first contract had scarcely been completed when he undertook another and a more difficult piece of engineering. In this too he was successful, and at the end of a few years Warren Derringforth became known as a man of energy and daring.

But his merit was his fault.

It was this boldness that had made him what he was; it was this same boldness that endangered his career. He was a heavy borrower, but withal managed his affairs so well that his credit stood high in the market. Paper bearing his name was never refused. Each year added to the extent of his undertakings. They

expanded faster than his capital, but with this expansion came a like increase of skill as a financier.

Some years he made large profits; in others his losses were heavy. In the one case, as in the other, he never wanted for ready money, and no one could have divined from his manner the burden of risk he was bearing.

But there came a time when all this was changed. The firm was now Derringforth & Derringforth. There was a sudden pinch in the money market. For the first time in the history of the house its paper was refused. Money had to be raised to meet maturing obligations, and to carry on the vast enterprises the Derringforths were engineering.

It was merely a question of tiding over a few days, Mr. Derringforth told himself. This must be done at any cost, or the structure of a life's work would fall with a mighty crash. But how should the money be raised? It must be done quietly. The slightest suspicion of weakness and all would be over. The name of Derringforth would be ground to earth, and the hand that had been a power in the world would lose its magic touch.

There was no time to be lost. Relief must be had, and quickly, or it would be too late. Inaction meant ruin. Something extraordinary must be done. What should it be?

Warren Derringforth walked back and forth in his office and thought—thought as a man thinks when

the pressure upon him is crushing out his very life. Presently he stepped to the door and called to his son.

"We are face to face with a crisis, Phil," said he. "We must raise fifty thousand dollars within three days or we are lost. The ordinary channels for raising money are closed to us. There remains but one thing to be done. We must find a Shylock—you must find him."

VI.

J. HARRINGTON VAN STUMP lived alone with his servants in a large, richly furnished house in a fashionable neighborhood in New York.

It was midnight. A narrow chested man with sloping shoulders and sharp features ambled up the steps of the Van Stump mansion and pulled the bell nervously. The house was ablaze with lights. The door was thrown open and the warm air, scented with the odor of flowers and sweet perfume, fanned his cadaverous cheeks. The sound of music and many voices reached his ears.

He hesitated before speaking, and then said timidly:

"I have come—I fear I have come at an inopportune time. I didn't know—you see I didn't know of this party. I will wait—if you please—I will wait in the basement until the fête is over. I have an important communication for Mr. Van Stump."

Among the last of the guests to take their leave were the Kingsleys. Marion had never looked prettier. Her face was flushed with the excitement of the

evening. She gave her hand to Van Stump and said good night, thanking him for the pleasure he had given her. The feeling of her hand within his own, her beauty, and the sweetness of her voice quickened for an instant the pulsations of his heart—a heart that had rarely beaten faster or slower because of the joys or sorrows that move men of warm blood.

His eyes followed her as she passed out of the room. The look was not that of love. It was something akin to that of the miser gazing through a broker's window at a heap of gold coins.

The last guest was gone, and Van Stump threw himself wearily into a chair. He had excelled himself as a genial host. He knew how to entertain, and did it generously—did it as one whose heart is full of sweetness and warmth. An analysis of his nature would have puzzled the philosopher.

The butler handed a card to Van Stump. It bore the name "Martin Strum."

"Strum," said Van Stump, frowning. "What does he want at this time of night? Take him to the library and I will be there directly."

Strum bowed and apologized for intruding at so late an hour. When he had humbled himself sufficiently before this modern Crœsus, in whose presence he felt keenly his own meanness of soul, he then said what he had come to say—that he had clients who must have fifty thousand dollars on the following day.

"Fifty thousand dollars!" exclaimed Van Stump, throwing up his hands in horror.

"It is a big sum," replied Strum timidly.

"A big sum indeed, and money is very tight."

"They expect to pay for the use of it," insinuated Strum.

"Of course, but the demand for money is something to turn one's head. I have never seen anything like it."

"You are quite right, sir, quite right," assented Strum. "I told my clients so."

"You gave them to understand that the loan would cost a snug sum?"

"Indeed I did, sir."

"Did you name any amount?"

"I said I didn't know where it could be raised even if they were willing to pay ten per cent a month."

"And they still wanted you to get it?—their needs must be urgent indeed. But you are too modest, Strum, too modest. The money can't be raised at that price in these times."

"Perhaps they would pay more," pleaded Strum.

"But the security—you have looked into that?"

"There is the pinch, sir. They could raise money on a mortgage, but this is just what they want to avoid."

"I see, h'm, h'm," said Van Stump, with a selfish gleam in his eyes. "What did you say their name is?"

"Here is their card, sir."

"Derringforth!" exclaimed Van Stump. "The Derringforths in trouble?"

His interest was alive now.

"They are carrying on large enterprises, and this pinch has caught them, but they are well rated and the father has a house worth ninety thousand dollars on which there is no lien. Besides this, a great deal of money is due them on contracts partially completed. They have, too, a lot of unlisted securities that they regard as good, but that are not acceptable as collateral in the present state of the market."

"And these securities are the collateral they offer?"

"Yes, sir."

"Securities that would not bring a dollar in the money market?"

"Possibly, sir."

"And they expect you to raise for them fifty thousand dollars on collateral that no bank would take?"

"If the collateral were gilt edge they would not seek money through me, sir. They came to me with their eyes open, understanding that if they got it, they would have to pay for it."

"And you must go to them with your eyes open—wide open. Sift their affairs to the bottom—mind you, to the bottom."

"I will go as far into their affairs as they will allow me."

"Allow you, did you say—allow you?" cried Van Stump, rising in well simulated wrath.

"I hope I have not offended you, sir. I am very sorry—I am, indeed, sorry," apologized Strum, wringing his hands.

"You are too easily frightened, Strum; you lack nerve. I like bold men about me—men not afraid to do as I tell them. The Derringforths want money, and must have it. It is not for them to *allow* anything. They are at your mercy. Flaunt the money in their faces, and they will show you their very souls if you demand it. You are not seeking an investment; they are seeking a loan. But be diplomatic—remember, diplomatic. There may be game here worth the chase."

"Depend upon me, sir, to follow your instructions strictly," replied Strum obsequiously.

"Very good, do so, and keep a sharp watch for a twist, Strum—a twist—you understand?"

"I understand."

"You wouldn't mind making a fee—a modest fee for yourself, I dare say, if they were forced to the wall," insinuated Van Stump.

"I need the money, heaven knows, sir," answered Strum eagerly.

"Keep your wits about you, then, and bring me a correct statement of their affairs. Come to me to-morrow at twelve."

VII.

"It is outrageous, father," said young Derringforth, white with indignation. "I would have thrown the fellow out of the office. He is a robber —twenty per cent a month, two hundred and forty per cent a year, ten thousand dollars for the use of fifty thousand and for only thirty days. Why, it is damnable!"

"So it is, Phil—damnable in the extreme—but we had better pay four times ten thousand than have our paper go to protest," replied the father.

"But the impudence of the cur—think of his prying into our affairs as he did! I could hardly keep my hands off him."

"I feel as strongly as you do, Phil, against him and his class; but we are in his power and must accept his terms or go to the wall."

"Would it not be better to call a halt than to place ourselves in the hands of such a heartless scoundrel?"

"Call a halt? Never so long as the name of Derringforth can be kept afloat, though there be ex-

tortion on top of extortion, and yet extortion on top of that."

The fifty thousand dollars was secured.

The foundation for the "twist" was laid.

The stringency in the money market continued. A week went by, and the fifty thousand was gone. Another loan must be had, or all would be lost. Strum was appealed to again, and again the house of the Derringforths was humiliated. The loan was increased to one hundred thousand, on terms increasingly extortionate. The twist had taken hold.

Matters grew worse with the Derringforths. The market became easier, and still their paper was refused. There was a mysterious something in the manner of bankers that Mr. Derringforth could not understand. He sought an explanation, but was put off with small doses of sugar coated deception. He tried to divine the meaning of all this—to unravel the mystery. Surely all obligations had been met as promptly as ever. Why, then, should he not have, as he always had had, the confidence of financial institutions? Was not the business of the house larger than ever before, and were not its contracts yielding exceptional profits?

But speculation as to the cause of the situation availed nothing. They must have money, money, money, and that quickly, or the herculean efforts he had made to tide over the squeeze would have been put forth to no purpose.

The twist was beginning to be felt.

Strum was appealed to a third time. The money was advanced. The twist took another turn and the Derringforths winced.

A friend came to them and told them it was whispered about that they were in financial trouble—that they had been paying exorbitant prices for money.

"This explains the mystery," said Mr. Derringforth, looking like one who had been betrayed. "It is plain now why our paper has been refused."

But he was at a loss to understand from whence the report issued. "And the motive," he meditated. "Only Strum knows of the loan, and it is for his interest to say nothing."

Van Stump could have enlightened him as to the motive. It was a part of the twist.

VIII.

WITH the advent of Lent, the Kingsleys joined a party that was to go to California. The Derringforths were invited, and Mrs. Derringforth urged her husband to accept the invitation, but he said simply that he could not leave his business.

"I wish, dear, you would not work so hard," she answered. "Your ambition will lead you to the grave. You look worried and worn out."

The husband tried to laugh away his wife's forebodings, but the idea remained with him.

Truth pierces the heart, while words of lighter import glance off without the trace of an impress.

"It would do you a world of good," pleaded Mrs. Derringforth, "to take this California trip, and I should like so much to go myself."

"I should like to go, dear, and especially on your account. It grieves me to think you should miss this pleasure. I wish you would reconsider your decision and go without me."

"I should find no pleasure in the trip without you.

The thought of your working like a galley slave at home would haunt me the whole time."

"But suppose you and Phil go. He has buckled down to business like a veteran, and needs the change far more than I. And besides, Marion will be one of the party. Think of this and make up your mind to go. I shall be happier knowing that you and Phil are happier. Your interests are more to me than money, though you think my ambition will lead me to the grave. It isn't that I am so ambitious now for great wealth. I have reached that age when I would prefer to take it more quietly. But one cannot always do as he would wish. One has a business and it expands beyond his design—almost beyond his control, sometimes. It runs itself in a way, and takes him along with it. But I am going to draw in the lines so that I shall have more leisure for you and for myself."

"I should think you might go with us, Phil—with me," pleaded Marion in her most persuasive way.

"I wish I could, little girl," he said, his heart yearning to say yes. "Six weeks with you would be life again to me, but it is impossible for me to get away."

"Impossible!" she repeated the word. How strangely it sounded as she said it. Her disappointment could not have been more forcefully expressed.

"But there are obstacles," he hastened to say, "that one cannot possibly overcome."

"Love should know no obstacles," replied Marion, almost sharply.

"You question my love, then?" said Derringforth, the hot blood rushing to his cheeks. A few months before he would not have uttered these words, and even now he would have given his right hand to recall them.

Marion flushed—not so much at what he had said as at his manner of saying it. She hesitated before speaking.

"Phil, we mustn't go on in this way," she said sweetly. "Let us avoid anything that would cause us regret," and she extended her hand to him in token of good faith. He took it in his own, and there was love and penitence and hope in the pressure he gave it.

"I am so sorry," he said tenderly. "I am hardly myself."

"You have been hardly yourself, Phil, for a long time. What has changed you so?"

"Can you ask—don't you know?"

"But you promised to be brave and help me wait patiently. Must I help you?"

"I think I need the help more than you." It was his heart that said these words, not his head—a heart distracted by business troubles and crying out in its loneliness.

IX.

THE Kingsleys separated from the party in San Francisco, and went to visit an old friend of Mr. Kingsley, who had a large ranch in southern California—Edwards was his name. Kingsley and Edwards had been boys together in New England a generation before. The one had found his way to the metropolis and the other to the far West. Each had grown rich in worldly possessions, though the Westerner had more to show for his life than the metropolitan, for the number of his children was a round half dozen, while Marion alone was the Kingsley heir.

The oldest of the Edwards children was a young man, twenty four, tall, broad chested, and straight, with light hair worn long, and complexion as fair as a woman's. He was as picturesque a fellow as ever played havoc with the heart of a girl. He was the embodiment of human nature—generous, gay, unrestrained—a natural man with big heart and abounding health. He had grown up in the saddle, and was as perfect a horseman as the most dashing

product of the frontier. He was a child of nature, as sweet as a girl, as chivalrous as a knight of old.

Such was Burton Edwards as Marion Kingsley saw him—such he was in fact. The Edwardses were delightful people, and made the Kingsleys as much at home as if they had been kin of their own. Sallie, the next in age to Burton, was but a year younger than Marion. She had the ingenuous, whole souled, sunny disposition of her brother. Marion was charmed with her, and told herself that she had never before seen human nature in such attractive guise, where such perfect sincerity and childlike freedom throbbed with every pulsation of the heart.

Marion had been with the Edwardses barely an hour when she was "Marion" to every one. Formality had no place in that delightful ranch life, untrammeled by the conventionality of the city that dries up the springs of sweetness and simplicity and makes the heart the abode of cant and artificiality.

As it was "Marion" with Burton and Sallie, so it was "Burton" and "Sallie" with Marion. The three entered into the sports of ranch life with the zest and enthusiasm of children; and children they were in fact, without a care or a thought to mar their happiness. Not a thought—no, that would hardly be true, for Marion had left behind her a lover, the playmate of her childhood, the light of her life. Yes, she had a thought for Phil, poor boy, who was toiling while she was playing, working for her and the home

they were some day to share together. But that home and that some day—how indefinite now, and how real it had been but a few months before!

Her life was crowded with pleasures and intoxicated by the association with two natures that were as a stimulant to her own. She marveled at the things she did, the miles she rode, the tennis she played, the dances she danced.

"You shall ride Dick today, Marion," said Burton when she had been at the ranch a week. Dick was his own horse, a thoroughbred, and the finest in the county.

"Ride Dick! I ride Dick!" she answered. "Nothing would delight me so much—he is such a beauty, but I can't allow myself to take him from you."

"Don't think of that," replied Burton, in his free, generous way. "He shall be yours all the time you are with us—I'll ride Bruno; he is an ugly beast, but I'm in the mood to tame him. We will have great sport now. Sallie's horse is a good match for Bruno. The races we will have will be something to remember when you get back to New York."

"I'm sure they will, but they will not be the only delightful remembrance. I could not well forget the many things you have done for my pleasure; and now to crown all you give up your horse to me."

"That's nothing," laughed Burton. "We are

the debtors, for you are giving us more pleasure than it is possible for us to give you."

"Oh, what extravagance!" protested Marion.

"Not a bit," answered Burton. "I put it not strongly enough, rather than too strongly. It is a rare thing to have a New York girl with us, you know, and it is especially rare to have one who is so congenial, one who enters into our wild life with such enthusiasm as you do."

The days passed by unnumbered, one following another so quickly that there was no beginning, no ending. The Kingsleys had been at the ranch three weeks, and the visit was to end on the morrow.

Burton and Marion went out for their last ride together. Sallie remained at home. Was the cause assigned genuine or counterfeit? Marion asked herself this. At all events she was glad that Burton and she were alone, and yet she was conscious of the feeling that it would be better if Sallie were with them.

Dick had been equipped with special trappings in her honor. She appreciated this. What woman does not love these little attentions? They appeal with peculiar force to the feminine heart. The day was bright and the air was clear and exhilarating. Dick was in fine form and eager for a dash. But there was a feeling of depression that both Burton and Marion shared alike. It was the thought of her leaving for the East on the following day. It hung over them like a cloud, and pursued them whether

the horses were racing in full gallop or walking slowly beneath the spreading branches of the great trees.

Marion leaned forward and patted Dick's neck.

"You shall have him for your own, Marion. I will give him to you," said Burton impulsively.

"Give Dick to me! Oh, no, you don't mean that," replied Marion.

"I do indeed."

"But I could not think of taking him away from you."

"I wish you would. I should be happier in the thought that he was giving you pleasure than in riding him myself."

"I thank you so much. I wish I could make you feel how deeply I appreciate the offer, and your thought for my happiness. But papa would not allow me to accept so valuable a present. It would not be right."

Burton felt that he was not making the progress he had hoped for. The horses were walking now, and he and Marion rode silently on side by side. Neither said anything for a little time. Finally Burton raised his head and turned toward Marion. There was love in his eyes as they met hers, and he spoke softly, tenderly.

Marion felt what was coming, and strove to save him the humiliation. Time after time she adroitly turned the conversation—turned it so cleverly that Burton did not suspect her motive. But the strong,

passionate love that swayed his heart could not be so easily repressed. Again and again he came back to the subject, almost abruptly at times, and as often she led him to a different theme, but always with such gentle tact and perfect skill that he could scarce discern she divined his purpose.

It was will against will, and the will of the woman won. She had saved him, and saved herself the pain of refusing him.

The next day she said good by. He prolonged his hold upon her hand and looked the words he fain would have spoken.

"I shall see you in New York before very long," he said as he handed her into the carriage. There was an attempt to speak lightly, but his voice betrayed his true feelings.

That last look was photographed upon Marion's mind, and as she journeyed homeward it was ever with her.

"I am very sorry for him, poor fellow," she said to herself; "very sorry. I had no idea that he cared for me—that he loved me—until the day we went riding alone. I cannot think it was my fault. How strange it all seems, and it makes me so uncomfortable! Perhaps I am to blame—just a little—perhaps I ought not to have seen so much of him, but I couldn't very well make myself disagreeable, and besides, I liked him. It can't be a crime for a girl to like a man when he interests her; and Burton is such

a delightful fellow. But he shouldn't have fallen in love. I wonder why people do such foolish things. Phil and I never fell in love—and I was there only three weeks. Perhaps, though, I should have told him something of Phil; but what could I have said? Phil and I are not engaged. Mama didn't wish us to be engaged. If we had been, I could have said so, and that would have saved him—I'm not sure, though; sometimes men fall in love with engaged girls. I wonder if he would have done that. Well, he will forget all about me in a little while, and then he will laugh at his folly—yes, forget all about me," and there was a perceptible sigh. Was it an expression of sorrow for Burton Edwards or the moan of a heart pierced by Cupid's arrow?

X.

SPRING melted into summer, summer vanished into fall, and fall faded into winter; and with winter came in a season of unparalleled gayety. Marion was on the crest of the wave.

Phil had seen comparatively little of her since her departure for California. He had not been out of town, and she had spent few days in town. Throughout all the hot weather he had worked with hardly the loss of an hour. It was a struggle for existence, and side by side with his father he strove to avert the crash. They were yet in the toils of Van Stump. Phil showed the effects of the long confinement and the strain he had undergone. His father wore deeper marks of torture. The twist had squeezed him hardest.

Strum was obsequious and snaky. The cold grasp behind him, the hand that turned the screws, was as yet unknown to either Mr. Derringforth or his son. They had succeeded in keeping the knowledge of their distress from the public. Beyond the whisperings—the insinuations that came from Van Stump,

with the purpose of injuring their credit, that he might bleed them the deeper—nothing was known of the heroism with which father and son fought the fierce fight—a hand to hand combat that tried the metal of their souls.

Marion knew nothing of all this. She felt that Derringforth had neglected and avoided her. She had never quite forgiven him for his refusal to go with her on that California trip. He had assigned no cause other than that it was impossible to get away. This did not satisfy her. It should not have satisfied her. She felt that at least she should have his confidence.

"He should have mine," she told herself. "Love should know no secrets." This was her feeling at that time. But did she tell him all about Burton Edwards, of his love for her and the impress he had left upon her own heart, that picturesque, chivalrous son of the West? She had intended to go over it all with Derringforth, to make a clean breast and free her heart from this feeling of guilt, a feeling that clung to her like a black shadow. He too had intended to confide in her the cause of his inability to accompany her, but the conversation took a turn that made this awkward, and she went West with the feeling that he had grown cold and indifferent.

The first time she saw Derringforth after returning to New York there seemed to be no suitable opportunity to unburden her soul to him. She tried to

shape matters so that she could begin the confession without abruptness. But all her efforts were frustrated. He always happened to say the very thing that she did not wish him to say.

With this thought in her mind there was an unnatural restraint about her manner that Derringforth was quick to notice. It had the effect of chilling his spirits. Each experienced a feeling of awkwardness. A cloud settled down upon them, and the evening went by and Derringforth was gone and Marion's heart was heavy.

Once the confession had been put off, the difficulties in making it increased in number and strength. In a few days she had gone to the country. Derringforth never came there to see her, though she was but a few hundred miles away. She felt hurt and would not allow herself to ask why he could not come. He had chosen to stay away, and gave her no reason for doing so, save that he could not take an hour from business. This seemed scarcely credible.

The secret that had haunted her at first was less troublesome now. The black shadow had been dispelled. She was back in New York again. Derringforth was beginning to lose the boyish lines in his face. He seemed a good deal changed—had grown subdued and serious. She speculated over the transformation, and the longer she pondered the more distant he seemed.

He, also, had done much thinking. His heart

ached with an ache that was death to his hopes. The year would be ended in another week—that year that he had been asked to wait. Seven days more and he would go to her and reopen the subject—only seven days. Oh, that a stroke of fortune might free him from the grasp of that cold, bony hand that had him by the throat! Only this and then he could go to Marion with that love that had grown up with him and was his life, fiber of his fiber, soul of his soul.

XI.

MARION sat at her writing desk, deep in thought. A picture of Derringforth stood before her, and beside it lay an open letter from him. She took up her pen to answer it, but there was irresolution in the act. The pen dropped from her fingers, and her head drooped upon her hands. The letter had brought her face to face with a doubt that had haunted her of late, but which she had shrunk from considering seriously. She had drifted towards it day by day, hoping in that indefinite, vague way that women more than men are wont to hope, that some way, somehow the question would be solved for her.

She had had a year of social life since the day she pleaded with her mother for permission to become engaged to Derringforth. Then she saw nothing attractive in society, and prayed for the quiet little home of her dreams, with music and books and the man she loved. Now the gay world throbbed with a thousand pulsations that fascinated her. Her point of view had shifted. Then she was the débutante, uncertain of herself, looking upon social life as

one sees a play. Now she was a part of that life, with confidence and an enthusiasm that was irresistible.

We are too apt to condemn that of which we know little or nothing. There are few strictures one hears more frequently than those on the society of which the speaker's knowledge is extremely limited. There is a tendency to rail at that which is beyond us. Every phase of life has its pleasures, and doubtless those who speak most severely of the inner circle of society would gladly enter it, and once in, would blush at the thought of their previous narrowness. With Marion it wasn't that she couldn't enter it, but rather that she didn't desire to. As she saw it then it was unattractive, insincere—a butterfly life at best. Her thoughts had set in a different direction.

But human nature is malleable. A twelvemonth in the social world, and she liked it. The air was exhilarating and delightful. The people were charming, and there was ever a kaleidoscopic variety of entertainments that precluded the presence of a dull minute. There was a mild intoxication about this that lifted her above the level of the old days.

Her enjoyment then was one of contentment. Now it was one of excitement. Some one was always planning and doing something for her happiness, and she exerted herself to give happiness in return. It was a high pressure life, in which friction was reduced to a minimum, and the hours flew by unnoticed save for

the sweet scented memories that warmed her heart to quicker action—memories of the ball room, of social triumphs, of coaching trips, of riding and yachting, of tobogganing and the music of the sleigh bells, of the opera and dinners and receptions, of the attention she had received, the flowers that had been showered upon her, and the love she had inspired—not maliciously, merely incidentally, yet she was not dull to the pleasures it had brought her. Hers was the heart of a woman, susceptible to stimulant so delicious—a stimulant as insidious in its effect as the opium drug.

She loved Derringforth as a matter of course. The thought had never occurred to her that she could love any one else. But was she quite ready to give up all these pleasures?

"I couldn't go out without Phil if we were engaged," she meditated. "Even if I could there would be no pleasure for me. The devotion that is paid me now would vanish, and I should find myself suddenly grown frightfully uninteresting. There are so many good times I could have this winter," she continued with downcast eyes. "The season is only fairly begun, and it was never so gay, and my engagements run away ahead."

She took up Derringforth's letter and read it over again.

"I hope you can give me next Thursday evening," he wrote. "The year we were asked to wait will have passed. I know you are very busy socially, but the

matter for us to consider means far more to you and me than an evening's pleasure."

"I wish he hadn't added this last sentence," Marion said to herself almost petulantly. "It sounds as if he thinks I care more for a good time than for him and his happiness. He knows that is not so. I'm sure I care for him as much as ever. Simply because I want to enjoy a few more months of girl life doesn't prove that I love Phil any the less. I'm sure it doesn't. If it were necessary I would give up everything for him, and very gladly, but as mama says, there is no good reason for rushing into the cares of married life. A year ago I couldn't think she was right, but I am older now and have had a chance to see something of the world. Yes, mama was right—think of what I should have missed if I had become engaged then, and —suppose I were to become engaged now!" Marion spoke these last words with a little shudder, and in desperation got up from her desk and went to the window and looked out into the street.

A cold east wind was blowing, and snow was beginning to fall. A beggar rang the basement bell of the house opposite. He was thinly and shabbily dressed, and was white with age. He came away from the rich man's door with a piece of dry bread, which he began eating. Marion saw his face as he gained the sidewalk. It was pinched and blue, but withal showed lines of refinement. Her heart ached for him as he toddled along the street,

facing the cold, piercing, wintry wind, and gnawing at the bread as he went.

"It is cruel," she cried, "to let a human being suffer in this way—turning him off with a crust of cold bread on a bitter day like this;" and she flew down stairs and sent the butler after the old man.

Marion met him at the basement door and asked him into the kitchen, where a hot fire was burning in the great range.

"You are very kind, young lady, to send for me," said the beggar, still shivering from the cold that chilled him to the bone.

"I saw you from my warm room," answered Marion; "you are hungry and cold."

Her kind words and soft, sweet voice were too much for the old man. He had struggled to keep back the tears, but now they stole down his hollow cheeks. He brushed them away with the sleeve of his coat, and said, speaking as one who had known something of refinement, "I must ask you to excuse me. This is all so unexpected. I am not accustomed to such kindness, but I am grateful to you, young lady, very grateful."

Marion had a hot meal prepared, which consisted of a sirloin steak, hashed potatoes browned, dry toast, and coffee with cream. This was the beggar's breakfast, and Marion served it with her own hands. Never man ate with greater relish or the expression of more sincere thanks. Every look and act showed gratitude, and Marion learned something of that finest sense of

happiness—the happiness that comes from helping others.

With a heart glowing with warmth she went back to her desk and again took up her pen to answer Derringforth's note. Her irresolution was gone.

"I am glad you want me to save Thursday evening for you," she began. "It shall be yours, and yours only. I shall be at home to no one else. I know I am very busy, as you say, but it is not such a hardship for me to give up an evening to you, Phil, though I miss the greatest event of the season. Come in early, as you used to. You shouldn't be ceremonious with me—we never were ceremonious with each other, you know, and it doesn't befit us."

She ran her eye over the note when it was finished. "There, that is more as I should talk to Phil," she said to herself. "Poor dear Phil!" and she caught up the photograph before her and kissed it with girlish impulsiveness.

At four o'clock Marion began a round of receptions. She took with her a subscription paper and importuned her men friends in behalf of the beggar she had fed. Her father's name headed the list, with fifty dollars opposite it. Whether skirting along on the edge of disaster or hoarding millions with the greed of a miser, it mattered not a whit, none dared refuse her. She told the story of the morning, how she had seen the old man begging a morsel of bread and shivering from the cold wind; told of her sending for him, and of his

gratitude, told of the misfortune that had brought him to beggary—a man who had known the comforts of home and the refining and sustaining influence of a wife.

Some there were who feigned skepticism and attempted to force the laugh upon her, saying that she had been cleverly taken in. But this was a ruse that fell short, and all who had thus sought to protect their gold, made quick to recover the ground they had lost. This bit of strategy, this vile pretense, is the shield behind which meanness seeks shelter; it is the resort of the hypocrite and the miser, the subterfuge of him whose miserable soul knows not the throb of a kindly impulse.

Honest poverty starves and is trampled under foot before the eyes of such men, and never a twinge of conscience ruffles the surface of their cold blood. It is only when forced, in self defense, in sustaining pride or place, that their purse strings unloose to charity. It was pressure such as this that drew from flinty hearts subscriptions to Marion's paper. Cornered beyond escape, they signed their names with excess of pleasure—a bad counterfeit of the feeling of the generous giver—cursing inwardly, meanwhile, the beggar and the fair hand that had filched their dollars from them.

Van Stump was one of these, and curiously enough at the mention of the old man's name he was a good deal startled. Marion saw this, and noted the sudden paleness of his face.

"Why, Mr. Van Stump," she said in a tone of deep surprise, "you don't know him?"

"Know him—I know this beggar?" answered Van Stump. "Well, well, this is good!" and he laughed a forced sort of laugh.

"I was mistaken, I am sure—you will pardon me, I know," replied Marion.

"Certainly," said Van Stump, "and I hope you will pardon me for laughing at your question—the idea struck me as so odd, you know. But to be serious, now, how much money do you wish to raise—a competency for the old fellow to retire on?"

"You shouldn't banter in that way, Mr. Van Stump. I am interested in this little bit of charity, and hope you will help me."

"Certainly I will help you, but you have not answered my question as to the amount you hope to raise for this deserving charity."

There was a stress on the words "deserving charity" that nettled Marion.

"The sum I have undertaken to raise is only three hundred dollars," she answered diplomatically, "and I have a good part of it already. This amount will enable me to get the old man into the Chapin Home for the Aged and Infirm, and once in there there will be no further expense. He will be well taken care of, clothed and fed. Now isn't this a charity worth while?"

"Most excellent," answered Van Stump. "In fact

it strikes me that something of the sort would be a good thing for every man too lazy to work."

"I think you can say the most sarcastic things, Mr. Van Stump. I shall be afraid of you if you go on much longer in this way."

"I certainly could not permit that, Miss Kingsley. But you see it strikes me as so unaccountably odd to see you taking such an interest in this old beggar. Why in this one more than others, and why not give up all your time to beggars?—you are such a charming little—shall I say it?—beggar yourself. No one could resist your appeals."

"How you do like to tease! But I shall not allow you to tease me. The reason I feel a special interest in this old man is that his case is peculiarly pathetic."

"I suppose every beggar thinks his case is peculiarly pathetic," replied Van Stump.

His sarcasm began to be irritating to Marion, and casting a quick glance at him, she said:

"When one gets to a point where he has no faith in any one or anything, I pity him. As for myself, I do not doubt this old man's story. There are sharks in this world besides those of the sea. It was one of these that brought him to be a beggar."

Van Stump winced—merely perceptibly—and with wonderful coolness laughed as if much amused at Marion's earnestness. But he had had quite enough, and lest he might say something he would regret, or

in some way show feeling that would arouse her suspicions, he deemed it wise to cut short the conversation, which he did by putting his name down on her paper for a liberal subscription.

"You are very generous," said Marion, delighted at the amount he had given. "I thank you so much—just think, over two hundred and fifty dollars already—isn't it sweet of everybody to help me so willingly?"

A few more subscriptions were obtained before Marion returned home, and the sum then lacking to make up the three hundred dollars she herself subscribed.

"This world isn't so large after all," muttered Van Stump, when Marion had left him. "Old Hammersly turned up at the Kingsleys'," he went on, his brow darkening, "and of all things that that girl should take him into the house and listen to his woes and then come to me to help him—to me, of all men. There is a fatality in it, upon my head, I believe there is. Well, may the money do the old beggar good—I can afford him this much as an item of interest—the principal he will not be likely to get."

XII.

Mrs. Kingsley dreaded the approaching interview between Marion and Derringforth. A year before Phil was a favorite with her. But now she felt differently. He had changed a good deal, it seemed to her, and for the worse.

She was partially right. Derringforth had changed, and especially towards her. He had never forgiven her for insisting upon the postponement of his engagement. She had forfeited all the admiration he had formerly felt for her. He did not seek to disguise his feelings. Coldness begets coldness, usually. It had done so in this case. There was cordial dislike between them—a lack of respect, even, on his part, for she had become the embodiment of vanity as he saw her—a worshiper of the fetish of society.

Here was tangible cause for his feeling; she was less fortunate in that she could not formulate her objections to him on solid grounds. Feel towards him as she might she must at least respect him. His sturdy character commanded this. But a woman requires less to build a case upon than man. What she lacks

in evidence is made up in indefinite little somethings, as shadowy oftentimes as the mist vanishing before the sun.

Marion was aware of the strained relations between her mother and Derringforth, but she had never until now realized the extent of the rupture.

"So you have canceled your engagement for Thursday evening with the Harburys," said Mrs. Kingsley.

There was that in her manner and in the inflection of her voice that made plain her feeling.

"Yes," answered Marion quietly. "It seemed to me Phil had a better claim upon me."

"And you coolly broke an engagement for that boy, and with the Harburys—of all people the Harburys."

"Yes," answered Marion, resenting in her manner the reference to Derringforth as "that boy."

"You have made such a mistake," sighed Mrs. Kingsley, "such a mistake. The Harburys will never get over it, and they entertain so generously."

"There are some things for one to think of besides entertainments," returned Marion. "When Phil asked me to be his wife you wanted the engagement postponed for a year. The year will be up Thursday."

"Did I say one year, only one year?" replied Mrs. Kingsley, an expression of alarm coming to her face.

"I think Phil would be justified in feeling that a year was meant; not more."

"Didn't I say 'a year at least'? I took particular note of what I said. No one would be warranted in construing that as simply one year. I felt then, as I feel now, that a girl should not be married before she is twenty five. You know something of social life now, and are in a position to enjoy yourself. You have made a good impression, and your second year in society should give you a good deal more pleasure than the first. Have you not enjoyed it?"

"I have enjoyed it very much," answered Marion.

"I am sure you have, and I cannot imagine that you would wish to give up all the good times you can see ahead," continued Mrs. Kingsley, placing her arm affectionately around her daughter as she spoke.

"I should like a few more months of such pleasure if it were not for disappointing Phil."

"But you would give up all these pleasures for him?"

"That would be right, wouldn't it?" said Marion, lifting her eyes so that they looked straight into her mother's.

"Do you think he would be as generous with you?" responded Mrs. Kingsley, evading the question.

"Yes, I believe he would. Phil would do anything for me."

"Suppose, then, you put him to the test and ask

him to wait a while longer. This would require much less sacrifice on his part than you would foolishly make for him. What has he done for your pleasure during the last year? Is it from him you have had the most attention? He couldn't even come from New York to see you this summer, while Burton Edwards came all the way from California. You cannot afford to be blind, Marion—blind."

Mrs. Kingsley continued this line of argument for a while and then took the matter up in a personal sense. She was careful now not to say anything that would arouse Marion's antagonism, but, proceeding cautiously, worked on her sympathy, gradually bringing to bear her own feeling against Derringforth.

Marion was bewildered with conflicting emotions. The dread of disappointing Phil on the one hand, on the other her duty to her mother, and the array of girl pleasures stretching far out in dazzling attractiveness. The following day the matter came up again, and now Mrs. Kingsley promised Marion a year abroad if she would refrain from binding herself to Derringforth just then. This was a telling argument, for Marion had set her heart on revisiting Europe. Her mother enlarged upon the benefits and pleasures of such a trip.

"We will sail with the beginning of Lent," she said, "only a few weeks off now. Your father promised me last night that he would go if you would.

He needs the change, and it would do us all a world of good."

In the midst of this discussion matters were complicated by the unexpected arrival of Burton Edwards. He came in with that breezy, inspiring way of his, flooding the room with sunshine. His was a nature that was as buoyant as the crisp autumn air, and all about him felt the stimulus of his presence.

"So glad to see you—a delightful surprise—how well you are looking—are you right from home?—why didn't you let us know you were coming?" and like utterances, a dozen or more, were flung at Edwards in quick succession by Marion and her mother.

He was powerless for a minute to get in a word edgewise.

"Yes, right from home," he said, when a break in feminine enthusiasm came. "Couldn't stay away any longer—Jove, how good it looks to see you both once more."

"And how good it seems to see you," was the answer in concert. "Come, sit here beside me," added Marion, her face beaming with pleasure, "and tell me all about yourself. Take this chair, mama. How is every one at home?"

To Mrs. Kingsley Edwards' opportune coming was as the hand of rescue stretched forth from out that realm impenetrable to human eyes. She saw in him an argument more effective with Marion than all the force of her own reasoning and pleading. This was

the chief source of her delight, though she was genuinely glad of an opportunity to entertain him at her home, and at this season of the year when New York was at its best.

In this respect Marion's pleasure at his coming was no less than that of her mother. But there was something beyond this. The impress that Burton Edwards had left upon her heart had not yet been effaced. His sudden appearance thrilled her with that delicious sensation he had at first inspired. It was as unlike the feeling she had for Derringforth as the smooth flowing stream of deep water is unlike the mountain torrent, leaping, tumbling, laughing as it dashes from crag to crag. The one was a quiet, restful, rational emotion; the other was turbulent, stimulating, exhilarating.

The sentiment that bound her to Derringforth had begun with the beginning of intelligence. Its growth had been gradual, natural, healthful. Entering the heart thus, it had never caused her to experience that intoxication that comes from a sudden burst of passion. And what is there that so thrills the soul of a woman—so completely transports her to the acme of delight—as the love making of a strong, chivalrous man, whose very nature throbs with impassioned sentiment? This is the sort of man that Marion met on that California ranch—the sort of man that had suddenly appeared before her at a moment when she was debating with herself whether to yield to her

mother's appeal or to make glad the heart of Derringforth.

"Phil has the better claim on me," she reasoned. "It wouldn't be right to disappoint him a second time, though, as mama says, the postponement was not limited positively to one year. 'One year at least,' that isn't really one year—no, Phil couldn't claim that, and he wouldn't, I know he wouldn't. Phil would never charge me with bad faith without good cause. But I wonder—I half feel that he would have cause. I thought myself that a year was meant, but I can see mama's way of looking at it. I remember her words. They were as she says. But then, I talked to Phil as if I thought a year was meant, and really I did think so. Oh, dear, I don't know what to do! I cannot feel that I should disappoint mama—she lives only for me. And then there is so much going on, and my engagements—such a lot of good times! I don't think I ought to be asked to lose them all. Phil might be a little reasonable. I wonder if he would really give up as much for me as I would have to give up for him. Mama says I ought to put him to the test. But I don't need to put him to the test. I know that Phil would do anything for me. I won't allow myself to think of him in any such way, poor fellow. I wish we had been engaged last year, before I ever tasted the pleasures of society. Then I wanted to marry him, and would have been content, but now—well, I want to marry him yet—

of course I do, but — if it could only be postponed a little while longer on mama's account—I cannot get over her foolish prejudice against Phil, and he blames her—the idea, when mama is doing so much to make me happy! Phil should think of this. Well, I suppose it will be all right some time—some time." She repeated the words with a sigh that expressed the depth of her perplexity.

XIII.

THE current that had set so fiercely against the Derringforths could not be turned back by any ordinary means in the space of seven days. They had struggled with it month after month and had barely kept their heads above water. But these seven days meant more to young Derringforth than all the three hundred and odd in which he had been buffeted by the breakers. He had kept up bravely throughout the year, his mind centered upon that day when the enforced postponement of his engagement to Marion would be over. It had been a bright beacon to him, cheering him in the darkest hours of the firm's distress. Viewing its approach while yet a great way off, there was abundant hope in his youthful heart that long before its coming he and his father would have reached smooth water.

With this conviction he counted the days as they passed, impatient at their slow tread. Would that long hoped for hour never come—that hour when all would be brightness and joy? The weeks continued on in their measured way until one day Derringforth

found that but one remained. Then it was that he awoke in the agony of his soul, realizing that time, in its steady march, so slow to his impatient eyes, had outstripped him.

He was not ready. The hand of Shylock still held the house of Derringforth in its relentless grasp. How simple a thing it had seemed to him, with yet many months to spare, to unloose and hurl forever from view these hated fingers of the money lender! Youth is ever thus hopeful. That "some way," that "somehow," indefinite and vague, had been no less an illusion to him than to Marion. Until now he had never felt so keenly the torture of his position.

"Only seven days," he said, and in the words, as he spoke them, there was the cry of an aching heart, the despair of hopelessness.

He lighted a cigar, put on his overcoat, and went out into the street. He had no definite object beyond seeking diversion of some kind—anything to take his thoughts from himself. It was nearly nine o'clock. He had been walking for perhaps fifteen minutes when he ran up the steps of the Kingsleys' and pulled the bell. He had passed by the house once before with the resolve not to call, but now he did call, and only to find that Marion had gone to the opera. He felt more dejected than ever, and yet in a way he was glad that he did not see Marion.

"What should I have said to her if I had seen her?" he asked himself. "She would have discov-

ered that something is troubling me, and she must not know—not yet. I cannot make a home for her, and she shall not make one for me. It is I who shall have to request this time that the engagement be put off or—I had almost said, given up—but I won't say it—I can't—it shall not be;" and Derringforth pressed his hand to his throbbing head.

He was walking rapidly down Fifth Avenue. The cold, crisp, wintry air and the invigorating exercise began to act as a tonic to his nerves. His pace quickened, and with the accelerated motion came additional activity of the brain. "There yet remain seven days," he said to himself finally. "Isn't it possible for us to free ourselves in this time from that accursed Strum? Then I could go to Marion the happiest fellow in the world. If I could only do this," he exclaimed—and the thought in its inception was to him as a spark of light flashed upon one groping in darkness. It gave him a thrill of hope. He turned it over and over in his mind. His face lost its despair. He was warming to the idea, and his soul burned with enthusiasm.

"I will do something worthy of the girl I love," he said to himself. His cheeks were flushed and there was in his eyes the fire of determination.

"I will have no more of this miserable drifting, like a helpless child," he went on almost fiercely. "There is yet time for me to prove myself a man. I'll force the fight, and win or perish. This slow

death is not the death for me. There is no courage, no bravery in it. I wonder men in these days ever win the love of women. Time was when they dared anything for love, and they were right. The race has degenerated. I hate this helplessness—this waiting from day to day and from week to week for relief. And matters are all the while getting worse with us—our very life blood is being squeezed out by a Shylock. Better make one final effort and let the worst happen that can happen. Anything will be preferable to this hideous nightmare; this hovering over the verge of a precipice."

This was the utterance of a mind intoxicated by a sudden hope, an outburst of desperation. It was either give up Marion and acknowledge to her the financial distress of his father and himself, or by some master stroke free themselves from the octopus that was dragging them to their doom.

An hour later Derringforth had returned home. The fire in the library grate burned low. Except for a little spot in the center there was no ruddy glow—nothing to cheer the eye. He drew up closer to the expiring embers and stretched his hands out over them to catch the little warmth that arose. His father and mother had gone to bed. He was alone. The wind struck the windows and went whistling around the corner. Derringforth shivered, and walked across the room and looked at the thermometer. The temperature was fifty seven.

"I thought it felt chilly," he said to himself, rubbing his hands together. He went back to the fire, and, leaning forward over the grate, stirred the coals aimlessly with the poker. His mind had begun to react. The mental intoxication had spent itself. The castle was breaking up before his eyes. He watched it intently, and as one part after another fell away from the main structure deep shadows settled upon his face. The poker fell listlessly from his hand, but still he sat there, bent forward as before, his eyes not fixed upon the dying embers but peering into space.

His spirits had sunk to the lowest ebb. It was the rebound from the heights of a little while before. Marion had never seemed so far from him as at this instant. The thought of giving her up was torture to him. A strange sensation came over him. It was not faintness, but something akin to it; something infinitely worse. He inhaled long breaths, but the pressure upon his heart remained like a thousand pound weight. In all the years he had known Marion not once had she been so sweet to his eyes as now. He longed to go to her and clasp her in his arms and tell her of his love, and to talk of the home that had been their dream.

But even as he thought a shadow arose before his vision, hiding the face of Marion. He started back with a shudder. It was the shadow of Strum. It had stolen in upon Derringforth like a thief in the

stillness of the night, and there it stood cringing before him in all its hideousness. He saw the sharp, cadaverous features, the thin, uncanny hands, the narrow, shrunken chest, and the uneven shoulders, one drooping far below the other.

Derringforth turned his eyes from the abhorrent sight, and with an unconscious gesture of the hand, as if to bid the accursed shadow leave him, rose and walked back and forth in the room. The great clock in the corner struck the half hour. The hands were crawling on towards twelve. The wind still beat against the windows, and baffled, shrieked madly as it sped away. He took his watch from his pocket and began winding it. He was standing now beside the library table. An evening paper lay upon it. His eyes fell listlessly upon the printed words, but he saw nothing. The winding of the watch continued mechanically. The end of the spring had been reached, and Derringforth was about to turn away when suddenly his attention was fixed upon a single headline—"A Fortune Made in a Day."

He took up the paper and read the item eagerly. It was the story of a man who but a few months before was bankrupt. Wall Street was the scene of his dramatic triumph. A vivid account of his dealings was given in detail. Derringforth's heart beat fast as his eyes ran down the printed column. His breast began to heave with hope. His fingers twitched nervously, and when he had finished the

account, he exclaimed, almost shouted, the words, "This is the way out for me—*this is the way out!* What one man has done, another can do."

He went to bed that night and into the land of dreams. He was in the arena. The clash of bull and bear in their mad struggle held him spell bound. The music of the exchange's thousand voices thrilled him, and as he slept a smile hovered on his lips and the light of hope was in his face.

XIV.

"HERE is something I wish you would read, father," said Phil the following morning, and he held up a cutting from a newspaper.

Mr. Derringforth put on his glasses. "Oh, yes, I saw that last night," he replied indifferently, and turned to his mail.

They were at their office. Phil felt a chill pass over him.

"Don't you think it wonderful that any one could recover so quickly from bankruptcy?" he ventured.

"Yes, rather wonderful," answered the father, running his eye over a long statement of account.

"Wall Street seems to be the place to make money. Did you read this list of names of men who have come up from nothing and are now worth millions?"

"Yes, I saw them—twenty three thousand dollars," he went on, his brow knit. "It doesn't seem possible that it can be so much. Here, Phil, I wish you would run over these figures and see if the footing is correct."

Young Derringforth took the statement, but he was

in no mood for addition. He was annoyed at his father's lack of interest. His brain was burning with the desire for speculation—for something more dramatic than the usual dig, dig, dig, with figures and correspondence. He ran half way up one column and forgot his count. He began again, and then stopped suddenly.

"Why didn't you go into Wall Street instead of this business?" he said, turning again to his father.

"Why do you ask this question?" replied Mr. Derringforth, looking up quickly from his desk.

"I asked thinking perhaps your name might have been among the millionaires in the list."

"These men are the exceptions. The chances are a hundred to one, and more, that I would have lost everything had I ventured into Wall Street. I have made a great many mistakes in my life, but never the mistake of dabbling in stock speculation."

"Don't you think this is a good year for exceptions?" asked Phil, ignoring the latter part of his father's remarks.

"Well, hardly, if you mean millionaire exceptions. But what has got into your head, Phil? Why are you so interested in Wall Street all of a sudden? I'm sure you can't think of going into speculation with the burden we already have on our shoulders."

"Isn't Wall Street the place to get rid of burdens such as we are carrying?"

"I hope you are not serious," answered Mr. Derringforth, amazed.

"Yes, I am serious. The beauty of speculation is that one doesn't have to wait a lifetime to find out if he is rich or poor. While we have been struggling along here a hundred fortunes have been made in the Street."

"And how many fortunes do you suppose have been lost there in the same time?"

"I don't know. Some men will lose money anywhere and in anything. But this is a pretty good list of successful operators."

"Yes, so it is, but as compared to the list of wrecks it would be as a foot rule to Bunker Hill monument."

"Isn't that putting it rather strong?" replied Phil incredulously.

"No, not a bit. The comparison is not a distortion of facts."

"Why isn't something said, then, of this Bunker Hill list?" asked Phil.

"You will find as you grow older," said Mr. Derringforth, "that people like to read of successes—not failures, unless there is something startling in them. The papers follow public taste. They do not try to form it. A man makes a fortune, and it is talked of forever—printed and reprinted. He is always prominent in the public eye, whereas his neighbor, whose business came to naught, is forgotten, and nothing is ever reprinted to keep the fact alive. It is well that

it is so. The brighter the world is made the better. Let the gloom be forgotten, but do not be misled, Phil—do not think any more of Wall Street. It is no place for you. We are gaining ground, and in a few months more shall be all right. I am not surprised that you have become uneasy. It has been a long, tedious pull, and you have worked like a veteran with never a murmur. I have watched you, and your application has been a reward to me for the siege I have been through."

"I have tried to do my best," answered Phil, "but it is pretty hard to drag along as we have been dragging, seeing every dollar that comes in swallowed up by that miserable shark. I can't endure the sight of him much longer. I feel like choking the life out of the cringing cur."

"You must not speak that way, Phil," his father cautioned him.

"I can't help it, and I don't know that I want to help it," answered Phil feverishly.

"What has come over you to produce this recklessness?" replied Mr. Derringforth, regarding his son anxiously.

"I'm simply desperate. I can't endure this drifting any longer. I feel like overturning everything; smashing everything. Last night, when I read the account of these men who had made fortunes in Wall Street in a day, I thought I saw a way out for us—a way to get out of Strum's grasp; and now you throw

cold water on the whole thing. I don't want to seem unreasonable to you, father. I see that my words pain you, and I am sorry, but as I said before, I am fairly desperate. You don't know what it all means to me; you can never know."

"It pains me, Phil—pains me very deeply, to see you in this mood," said Mr. Derringforth, and he spoke in subdued tones, trying to hide the wound his son's words had made.

"Forgive me, father," said Phil. "I did not realize what I was saying. I am simply worn out, tortured almost beyond endurance."

"I am very sorry for you, my son," said the father tenderly. "I wish you had come to me before with your burdens. I knew something was troubling you, but you gave me no chance to speak to you about it. I think now that I understand you. It should have been plain to me before. The loss of my own property is nothing compared to my regret for you. But it may come out better than you think, Phil. Marion is a sensible girl, and will do as you wish. A few months more and we shall be all right, I trust. Then you can go to her as you would go to her now, and all your hopes will be fulfilled. We must be patient a little while yet. Everything will come out right in the end."

XV.

DERRINGFORTH plodded through the day, turning off in a perfunctory fashion the work that fell to his hands. But there was no spontaneity in his movements, no sense of satisfaction over a task well done. The reassuring words of his father had for a time warmed him to better feeling; but they meant so little, compared with his disappointment, that they were soon buried deep beneath the gloom that possessed him.

It was Saturday, and on the coming Thursday he was to go to Marion. What possible move yet remained? Why had he waited so long, he asked himself in bitterness of soul? The last chance of escape seemed closed to him. And after all, was his father right about Wall Street? Had he not done wrong in going to a Shylock for aid? Had he not seen relief just ahead throughout an entire year, and was it not as far off now as at the beginning?

"I did not believe in the first place in borrowing money at a ruinous rate," went on Phil. "I said so at the time. If we had stopped then, we should

be all right now. We could have paid our debts long before this, and there would have been a fortune left. Now everything is tied up, and we are in the clutches of a robber. The profits of a year's work, and the best of all our securities, have gone to him and still the hideous cry rings in our ears, more, more, more. Instead of getting out we are getting in deeper all the while, and yet father tries to persuade himself that we shall be all right in a few months. He is as likely to be mistaken about Wall Street as about his own business. I can understand his dread of a crash. I know his pride and sensitiveness. He has never met defeat and he is trying to do the impossible, thinking that he will finally triumph. But we have been bled too much. If there were any really good foundation for believing that three or four months more would save us, I should feel more like going to Marion. She would wait patiently, I am sure, but there is no ground for hope. I will not mislead her as we have misled ourselves. It would not be manly; would not be right. She would not respect me, and I should not respect myself."

The seed of distrust had lodged in Derringforth's heart. He had never before questioned his father's judgment in just this way. To be sure, he had said that he did not believe in borrowing money at exorbitant rates. But these words were spoken without the responsibility on his shoulders of maintaining the credit of the house. Up to this time he had

seldom seriously questioned his father's judgment. But today he was more unsettled. The mistakes that had hitherto seemed merely the natural outgrowth of existing complications appeared in a somewhat different light. He was looking at them from another point of view.

In the evening he strolled up to the Windsor Hotel, where Wall Street men were wont to congregate at the end of the day and discuss the why and the wherefore of things speculative. This custom is still kept up, and a lively market brings together many brokers, operators, and financiers. The atmosphere of the lobby is fraught with speculation, rumors, predictions, and forebodings dark and ominous.

Derringforth had been in the hotel but a few minutes when a young man came up and spoke to him.

"Isn't this Phil Derringforth?" he said, extending his hand.

"Yes, but you have the advantage of me. I cannot place you."

The other laughed. "You ought to remember an old schoolfellow."

"Burrock?" ventured Derringforth.

"Right you are—the same, and I'm devilish glad to see you, old man. I've intended to look you up, but have been so busy—you know how it is yourself."

"Have you been in town long?" asked Derringforth, holding himself rather stiffly.

"Oh, yes, over two years—lively town this—one can't get round much to hunt up anybody, but I'm right glad to see you, old chap—rich as ever, I s'pose?"

"I fancy I could stand a trifle more of prosperity without its turning my head."

"I should think so. Nothing would ever turn your head. I remember the way you used to do us up at school, and—I say, I haven't forgotten the time you came to my rescue, that night out on the Riggs road. Geewhiz, weren't those fellows going for me! I'd have been jelly in five minutes more—a great fight, wasn't it? I must do something for you, old man—a good turn deserves its reward. Can't I give you a pointer on the market?—everything is jumping, going up, up, up—never saw anything like it—made five thousand today myself—excuse me a minute, there is a man I want to speak to," and he rushed away unceremoniously and up to the new arrival with the air of one who had millions at stake.

Derringforth walked to one side of the lobby and stood there almost like a statue, dumb with amazement. There was Burrock before his eyes talking in the most enthusiastic, self possessed, and impressive manner imaginable. Presently a small man came in—small in stature, but evidently very great in the

eyes of the Wall Street hosts. He was no other than Jay Gould. Derringforth recognized him, and a minute later was astounded to see him speak to Burrock as he passed by.

"And this is that scrubby little Burrock," Derringforth mused, hardly believing his own eyes. "Hank Burrock, as the boys called him, *en rapport* with the kings of the Street, a devil may care fellow like him!"

Burrock had not enjoyed the good opinion of the students at the academy. His scholarly attributes were thin of fiber compared with his assurance. Serious study and he were strangers. In his third year he was dropped for an act of grave misconduct. And now apparently he was a bigger man than any one of the school. Derringforth could only wonder at what he saw. When Burrock introduced himself he was disposed to hold him at a distance, but now he began to feel a sudden interest in renewing the acquaintance.

"Made five thousand dollars today," he repeated to himself. "Everything is jumping, going up, up, up. If I could only make five thousand dollars I could go to Marion happy as a king. Am I not as smart as Burrock—little Burrock, who never had a lesson, and if he can make money in Wall Street, why shouldn't I?"

XVI.

DERRINGFORTH did not derive much spiritual food from the preached word the following morning. Around and about him were a dozen sleek, self satisfied looking millionaires whose money had been made in Wall Street. Derringforth felt a trifle envious. Why should these men have so much and he be in distress?

But this thought soon gave place to quickening ambition. He forgot his surroundings, forgot that he was in the house of God, and heeded not the admonitions that fell from the preacher's lips. His mind was in Wall Street. He was constructing schemes for speculation and figuring out his profits. As his gains accumulated, his mind warmed to the theme. The machinery of his brain moved faster and yet faster. His plans grew apace, until finally he saw himself, at the end of a few months, among the most active operators of the exchange.

Burrock, the boy he had looked upon at school as an undesirable acquaintance, had suddenly grown to larger stature. Then his clothes fitted badly and he

was generally a fellow of the second order. But now he was a power. He had been in Wall Street two years, and lived like a Crœsus—had bachelor apartments, lavishly furnished, drove a spanking tandem, and spent money right and left.

Burrock was a bull of the fiercest type. The market was with him, and he saw millions in the air. His enthusiasm was infectious. Derringforth had spent an hour with him the night before in his luxurious rooms, and had caught the infection.

It is not surprising that the words of the pulpit did not reach Derringforth's mind. He was not in a receptive mood for Bible truths, or anything in fact that did not vibrate with a dramatic thrill. He called on Marion in the evening. He had not intended to do this. She did not expect him. His soul was on so lofty a plane that he hesitated at nothing. There was no reason why he should not spend an hour or two with her. In fact, it was the natural thing for him to do. But he had been in an unnatural mood. He had seemed to fight shy of her. She was too proud to coax him to call, and he remained away—with a heartache.

Marion was in the parlor with Burton Edwards when Derringforth entered the room.

"I am glad to see you," she said, extending her hand cordially, and introduced him to her guest.

Derringforth was at his best—chatty, genial, and entertaining. Brought face to face with Burton

Edwards, he seemed the superior man. Marion noted this, and in the depths of her heart she was glad. She had wondered if he would not suffer by personal comparison, but the test had been made and with the odds on his side.

She listened to his conversation in amazement. He had never been so delightfully clever before, and she blessed him from the sincerity of her soul for drawing attention from herself. Her position was painfully awkward. She was paying the penalty of concealing what she ought to have told. Derringforth knew nothing of Edwards, and Edwards knew nothing of Derringforth. She had not mentioned either to the other. But here they were face to face, and each seemed to be on the most intimate terms with her.

"Marion completely captured our hearts while she was with us on the ranch," remarked Edwards, in the course of conversation.

"You mustn't believe him, Phil," said Marion, her cheeks burning; and turning to Edwards she added, with a pretty little gesture of protest, "You are so extravagant in your praise, Burton."

"Who is this fellow that presumes to call her Marion and whom she calls Burton?" said Derringforth to himself, paling as if pierced by an arrow.

"Who is this fellow that Marion calls Phil with such familiarity?" thought Edwards, the fire darting from his eyes.

XVII.

It would have required a far cooler head than Marion Kingsley's to withstand without embarrassment the look that both Derringforth and Edwards gave her. She was conscious of the blush that proclaimed her discomfort. The struggle to appear natural was unavailing. Her self possession deserted her.

Had she been thirty instead of twenty, and well skilled in the ways of the world, schooled by the experience that hardens, she would have found less difficulty in maintaining an unruffled front. But her life had been singularly free from deception, beyond her double dealing—as she now regarded it—with the two men before her. The thought flashed across her in all its ugliness. She felt like flying from the room to escape from them, to escape from herself if possible.

It seemed to her that the silence of an instant had lengthened into an hour. Would no one ever speak—say something, anything that would draw attention from her? In desperation she raised her eyes to Derringforth in mute appeal. His face was white as death. He had never before known the torture of jealousy,

but that one word "Burton" from her lips, in connection with what he saw and heard, was enough. No dagger thrust could have been sharper or more sudden.

But he had not the heart to let her suffer. He saw her embarrassment, and understood her. The thought that she had been deceiving him—that she was in love with Edwards—even this was not enough to steel his heart against her. When her eyes reached his with a look that seemed to cry for help, he felt that she had turned to him, not Edwards, and a deeper sense of love than he had ever felt before went out to her. With masterful control over himself he said:

"Pardon me for my absent mindedness. I met an old schoolfellow last night—the oddest specimen in the world—and he keeps coming into my thoughts. It's a strange confession to make, I know, but it will account for my being dumb. I'll promise to do better from now on, Marion, so do not look at me as if I were an enigma. That fellow Burrock is the cause of my inanity. He was the last boy in school that promised to amount to anything, and now here he is in New York cutting a wide swath, making heaps of money—five thousand dollars only yesterday—and lives like a king. I wish you could all see him as I remember him, and contrast his appearance as a boy with the dash and style he carries now."

The silence was effectually broken, and Derringforth made it seem that he was responsible for it all. What he had said of Burrock quickened the curiosity of

Edwards, and Derringforth told, with spirit, many amusing incidents of the youthful Napoleon of finance.

Marion almost forgot her own discomfort in admiration of Derringforth. His generosity, at a time when she felt he must hate her for her duplicity, idealized him in her eyes. She noticed the quaver in his voice when he first broke the silence, and understood its meaning. Her heart ached for the pain she had caused him. She had intended to tell him all about Edwards.

"If I had only done this," she said to herself, "I should not feel like a culprit now. I did not realize that concealing the knowledge of each from the other was really wrong. It never seemed so ugly to me before. Both Phil and Burton will think I have intentionally deceived them, but I have not. I have never intentionally deceived any one."

Edwards had less cause to feel jealous than Derringforth. He had no claim on Marion. She had never given him to understand that she cared for him with any feeling more warm than friendship. It was not necessary for her to do so. His love for her needed no such quickening. In the summer at her country home she had entertained him delightfully, but had cleverly kept him from saying the thing that filled his heart, even as she had on the day of their last ride together at the end of her visit to the ranch, now nearly a year ago.

He had often puzzled his brain to divine her purpose in keeping him at a distance, while seemingly

enjoying his presence. There was every reason to believe that she liked to have him with her, but beyond a certain line he could make no advancement. The thought had sometimes occurred to him that perhaps she loved another, and yet he saw no evidence of this. She was usually surrounded by a dozen admirers, no one of whom seemed to be favored so much as himself.

This in a way was gratifying, but it was also disappointing. His summer visit had only served to increase his passion for her, without bringing him the assurance his heart craved. Sometimes he fancied that by an act or a look she betrayed love for him, and his soul glowed with happiness. Why she should be so strictly on guard was a mystery, since there was no one else to whom she seemed devoted. But whenever he approached the subject of his love for her she always managed to turn him from it. She seemed to understand him perfectly, while he could not divine her motives. He felt annoyed with himself at his repeated failures. He could not well be vexed at her. She was always charmingly agreeable, and seemed utterly unconscious of his purpose.

The summer visit had finally ended. He left her more deeply in love than ever, promising to visit her again in the winter. She had baffled every attempt to tell her what he had come three thousand miles to say—what he had resolved he would say, even if it had to be said abruptly. And now after the lapse of a few months he had come again with a like

resolve. Continents are nothing for love to traverse. It knows no distance, no obstacles—the sort of love that burned in the breast of Burton Edwards. Marion's evident delight at his coming made him very happy, and the happiness had grown upon him every hour until Derringforth suddenly appeared before him. There was something in the greeting she gave Phil very different from her manner towards the young men whose attention was so assiduous to her during the summer. Edwards felt an odd sensation come over him at the first sight of Derringforth—a sort of premonition that he stood between Marion and himself.

It is not an easy matter for a man with the heart-ache to talk as Phil talked, rising above his feelings, and giving a zest to the conversation for the remainder of the evening. He felt a satisfaction in restoring serenity, and was in a way gratified at his success in making it seem that he alone was responsible for the embarrassing pause in the conversation.

Happiness always follows a generous act; but Derringforth's happiness was comparative merely—not actual. He was glad to get away and be by himself, where he could think, and yet it was with the utmost reluctance that he tore himself from Marion, leaving her with a man who loved her—whom perhaps she loved. The sensation of jealousy rankled in his soul, but the thought that Marion had turned to him in her distress was a source of com-

fort. He loved her now as it had never seemed to him he could love, and more than ever he felt the torture of the poverty that would compel him to ask that the engagement be postponed. And now what might not be the result of a postponement with a rival in the field, and such a rival as Burton Edwards?

"If I had only gone to California with her," he thought. "Perhaps she never would have met him. It would have been different, any way, if I had been with her. But I couldn't go. A Shylock had me by the throat. I should have told Marion; then she would have understood me. This concealing things from one who has a right to know always makes trouble. It has made trouble for Marion as well as myself. She ought to have told me about Edwards. She always used to tell me everything. Perhaps I am to blame. I haven't told her anything about our trouble, and I didn't even go to see her all last summer. It was plain enough to me why I didn't go, but I begin to understand that it was not plain to her. I know how it seems now to realize that the one I love has concealed something from me. Marion may have felt as I feel, and a girl has reason to notice such things more than a man."

XVIII.

DERRINGFORTH spent a sleepless night, and on Monday morning went to the office in bad temper. There was no sunshine anywhere. He was half sick and in a more fretful mood than ever before in his life. To make matters worse, his father was called over to Philadelphia. This compelled Derringforth to remain at the office and dig into figures with a splitting headache and a worse heartache. It cut him out of another day, and there were only three remaining. Even with Burrock's help he could accomplish little in so short a time.

"Four days," he reflected, "would give me a better show, and I promised to meet Burrock and lunch with him at one, but now father is away. Everything is working against me."

At this juncture Derringforth's train of thought was interrupted by the sudden appearance of Martin Strum.

"Good morning," said the latter, bowing very low in a beggarly way. "I hope I am not intruding."

"I can see you if it is necessary," answered Derringforth shortly.

"Thank you," returned Strum obsequiously. "It is desirable that I should see you. In fact, my client instructed me to come to you several days ago, but I have hesitated, knowing that—er, believing that you would send for me when—er, whenever it was convenient for you to see me. But my client—you know how impatient some men are, Mr. Derringforth." He stroked his thin, bony chin with his yet thinner hand as he spoke, and his cringing, crawling, apologetic manner sent a chill through Derringforth.

There was a pause. "I had expected to see your father," continued Strum, "but—you are a member of the firm, I believe. Am I not right—you are a member of the firm?"

"I am," answered Derringforth curtly; "but perhaps you would better wait to see father."

"Will he be in soon?"

"He is out of town."

"Out of town?" repeated Strum, raising his eyebrows in feigned surprise.

"Yes."

"It is unfortunate. I should have come before; my client will blame me," said Strum, speaking very low, as if talking to himself.

Derringforth took up a letter and began reading it. Strum stood by, apparently in deep thought. Der-

ringforth did not take in the meaning of the letter. His contempt for Strum was getting the mastery of him. He took up his pen and wrote a note to Burrock, saying that he should not be able to lunch with him. He called the office boy and sent him out with the note. Strum still stood by meekly waiting the pleasure of Derringforth.

The telephone bell rang. Derringforth answered it. He returned to his desk and went through the motions of writing. His nerves had been unstrung by the strain upon them during the previous evening, and by the lack of sleep throughout the night. He felt that he could not endure much longer the presence of Strum. "If he would only say something," he thought, "curse me to my face, even, it would be a relief. Then I could throttle the miserable cur."

The silence had become unbearable when at length Strum spoke.

"I fear I am trespassing on your time," he said apologetically. "Shall I wait outside until you are more at leisure?"

"If you have any business with me the sooner it is over the better," answered Derringforth almost fiercely.

Strum moved back a step and if possible assumed a more obsequious manner than ever. "It is about the collateral I have come—the collateral your father offered me."

"Well," said Derringforth.

"The securities are not satisfactory to my client. I think myself that they are good, perfectly good, but as his attorney what can I do? I have urged leniency, but I am sorry to say he is firm, very firm, sir. I have done my best in your interest. I hope you will look upon it in this light, sir—in this light."

"Go on," said Derringforth.

"I was about to say—I had started to say, that the securities for the proposed renewal of the twenty thousand dollar loan are not satisfactory to my client. He says he must have the money. I have urged him to reconsider, but as I have already said, he is firm, very firm, sir. But I am not without hope—no, not yet without hope. If you could go over your affairs with me—could give me the assurance of improvement, and could strengthen these securities in some way, by the addition of others, perhaps, or an indorsed note, or maybe a mortgage—your home is clear, I believe—no lien on it. I understood your father to say there was not."

"If my father told you so, sir, you would do well not to question his word," replied Derringforth, boiling with indignation.

"I am sure you are right. I am very sorry you should impute to me motives that I would not harbor —not for a minute. I knew how it would be, and told my client, but he would not listen to me. He commanded me to come to you and investigate your affairs."

"Well, you can't investigate our affairs, and you may tell your client so," said Derringforth decisively. "And furthermore," he went on, "you may say from me that he has got about all the blood out of this house he will get."

This utterance frightened Strum, who feared that the Derringforths were on the verge of collapse. The absence of the senior partner strengthened the suspicion. He had come to the son to pry into affairs, having learned that the father had gone out of town. And now, after hearing these reckless words from the young man, he was determined to make good his errand.

"I am sorry you feel annoyed. I was afraid you would, but I am sure you can't blame me," he began. "I must act for my client, and he has advanced large sums of money, and money is very tight, you know—very tight. Of course one wants to feel safe. My client has relied upon me largely, but now he wants additional facts—he must have them, or the renewal, I fear, will not be made. Mind you, he says it will not be made, but I am working in your interest—in your interest, sir. Your father asked me to get the loan renewed. The note falls due tomorrow. I suppose your father thinks the matter has been arranged, but I regret to say, I am very sorry to say, it has not. In view of these facts, regarding your father's wishes, I am sure you will not be hasty. A moment's reflection will show you that I am work-

ing in your interest—in your father's interest. My client is a stubborn man—a very stubborn man. I would not dare tell him what you have said. He would be unyielding—unmerciful even; but handled right he is kind hearted. I am sure he can be brought to see that it is for the interest of all that the renewal of the loan be granted. I will undertake to guarantee that myself, if the statement he asks for can be had—not a formal statement—just a knowledge of things, that is all I need, so that I can assure him everything is all right. He relies on me, you see, very largely."

"Then if he relies on you, what more do you want?" said Derringforth. "You say you are yourself satisfied. Your stories don't hang together. I understand you through and through. You are a cowardly sneak, trying to pry into our affairs, and placing all the responsibility on some one else. I have seen enough of you, and detest you. You can do your worst—I don't care."

"But your father," insinuated Strum. "You would not want to see him humiliated by a crash. He is in the power of my client, you know—you are in the power of my client. You would do well not to make a mistake, Mr. Derringforth."

Strum was a trifle whiter than usual, but beyond this showed no feeling at Derringforth's denunciation. He was there for a purpose, and his blood was too cold to be inflamed into anger.

His very coolness exasperated Derringforth. "I

don't ask your advice," he said defiantly. "Let the worst happen that can happen—anything will be preferable to being bullied and bled by a pair of cringing, contemptible Shylocks like you and your client, whoever he may be."

Even this did not warm Strum. He had no sense of dignity—no feeling. Words could not penetrate his thick skin. His cringing manner and utter disregard of abuse maddened Derringforth. Strum continued his effort, snake-like and cunning, to worm out of him the information he sought, till at length Derringforth, exasperated to the last degree, made a dash for him, and catching him by the nape of the neck and the slack of his trousers threw him headlong from the office.

"Never show your miserable face in here again, you beggarly parasite!" he said, as Strum turned a couple of summersaults and doubled up in a heap.

XIX.

"I'm glad I did it," said Derringforth to himself later in the day when his temper had cooled down. "It's done and over with. It had to be done sooner or later. The conviction has been growing on me that I couldn't keep my hands off him much longer. I felt it in my bones. A man can stand only so much and no more. I feel better, come what will. It's a good thing to give a cur his deserts. I don't know what father will say. It's done, any way, and can't be undone."

The subject thus dismissed, Derringforth settled down to steady, rapid work, and turned off correspondence and manipulated figures in a way that would have made a veteran accountant envious. There was no trace now of the blues of the morning —no headache, no heartache. He was keyed up to too high a point.

In the evening he called on Burrock at his apartment.

"I've done a heap of thinking since I saw you," said Derringforth.

"Good," returned Burrock in his off hand way. "What are your conclusions?"

"In a word, that I want to make some money."

"Natural—why don't you?"

"But how?"

"I only know one way—you know another."

"You mean Wall Street?"

"Sure."

"And you think I have made a lot of money with my father?"

"Everybody thinks so—haven't you?"

"No. This is confidential."

"Certainly—go on."

"There isn't much to say, only that we have had a hard year."

"And are short of money?"

"Yes."

"I know how it is myself—devilish uncomfortable—been broke myself twice—high and dry, fairly on my uppers."

"And now you are on the top wave?"

"Yes, things are going my way now."

"And all this has happened inside of two years?"

"Yes—no place like Wall Street to get up and get down—makes a man's head whiz sometimes, but it's life—nothing like it—just suits me—some go to it—always dramatic—no stagnation—why don't you try it?"

"That's the very thing I want to talk to you about."

"I'm your huckleberry—glad to do anything for you, Derringforth—you are my kind—by the way, can't you go out for a spin with me tomorrow afternoon?—say four o'clock—sleighing is fine."

"I'll try," replied Derringforth, his wonder increasing the more he saw of Burrock. "But what interests me most," he continued, "is Wall Street. I must make some money. I'm not on my uppers, but in a way I'm worse off. It's a crisis in my life. Burrock, I'll make a confidant of you. I'm in love. I shall lose the sweetest girl in the world. I'm half crazy—been tortured to death by a Shylock."

"You interest me—I know how you feel—I've already lost the sweetest girl in the world."

"I'm sorry for you, indeed I am," said Derringforth, and there was deep sympathy in his voice.

"Well, it's all over—can't be helped—broke me up for a time—men have a way of surviving, but it hurts—what can I do for you?—perhaps I can save *you*."

"I don't know what you can do. I want to do for myself. Maybe you can start me right, but I'm afraid you can't. I have no money to start with. I couldn't draw it from the firm. Father doesn't believe in speculation. I don't like to go against his wishes, but he may be wrong."

"I understand—men are sometimes wrong, and why not fathers as well as others?"

"I have thought of that myself, and then—well, it is so urgent. If it were not for this pinch I should be

engaged in three days more—just think, Burrock, only three days, and the girl of all others in the world! I'll tell you about her some time—not now—we may see her tomorrow if I go sleighing with you—you will agree with me. But what can I do?"

"I understand—you either become engaged or miss your chance."

"I am afraid so," faltered Derringforth.

"And your father can't do anything for you?"

"No, I would not allow him to, with the load he is carrying. The fact is we are being bled to death. Some bold move must be made to get out of the clutches of a robber."

"A good idea. I like your thought—of course I know how you feel about speculating against your father's wishes. I don't want to be held responsible, but if you don't draw on the firm for money, and attend to business, doing the usual work you have to do, I can't see wherein you would do anything very dreadful to take a flier in the market now and again."

"That's the way it seems to me, but the how of the thing——"

"I understand—'tis tough, starting without anything, but I've done it twice—it can be done, and it feels good, devilish good, to pull yourself up by your boot straps, as it were."

"I should think it would. I should like to try the experiment."

"It's a great act, but you can do it—I'll help you

a bit—let's see, what shall it be?—St. Paul Preferred, strikes me, is a sure thing for a couple of points' advance—had a tip on it tonight—yes, old man, I think we will call it a go on St. Paul Preferred—how much shall I buy for you?"

"Now you have me," answered Derringforth. "In the present state of my finances I think one share would be taking great chances."

"But I'm going to help you—s'pose we call it a hundred shares—I'm going to buy for myself a thousand—you can't lose much on a deal of this size—I'll put a stop order on your purchase, so that the stock will be sold at a decline of one point—this makes you safe."

"How much would I lose?"

"Hundred dollars and brokerage—that's all—I'll trust you for that, and if you get knocked down the first time I'll trust you for a second flier."

"You are too kind, Burrock. I ought not to allow you to take chances on me."

"Nonsense—you are good for a hundred—if you are not I better find it out—I can't waste my time on a fellow that's not good for this much."

"I don't think I should allow a debt of this size to go unpaid. A hundred dollars isn't much for a man to earn at day labor."

"No, not when he doesn't have to earn it by day labor—when he does, it's another thing—I know what work is—don't I? Geewhiz, if you'd only fol-

lowed me on the farm—but I know when I have done enough—I know what suits me—you will be daft on speculation—nothing like it to make a fellow's blood jump—you will make a couple of hundred on tomorrow's flier—mark my word, and just for luck I'll bet you a box of cigars—go me?"

XX.

TUESDAY opened big with possibilities for Derringforth. There was his venture into Wall Street, and a probable crash in the firm's affairs. Moreover, he must tell his father of the unceremonious method he employed in getting rid of Strum. All in all it was no ordinary morning. So many things were crowding in upon his mind that even Marion was forgotten for a time.

Shortly after the market opened he received a note from Burrock, saying: "Bought your stock, St. Paul Preferred, sixty eight and a quarter—a great purchase —advanced an eighth already—it will go to seventy today—may be more—the girl will be yours yet!"

Derringforth's heart bounded. "This is something like it," he said, with difficulty restraining his enthusiasm. "I only wish there was more time. I should have struck out for myself before, but perhaps it isn't too late. If I have good luck now, I can go in heavier next time. Burrock buys a thousand shares — two points' advance would give him two thousand dollars against my two hundred, and all

made in the same time. I wish I had taken more—gone up an eighth already—two thousand dollars—if I could only make as much I'd take the chances and not ask Marion to wait—two thousand, that would give me a good capital to work on."

"Well, Phil, how is everything—averted a crash while I have been gone?" said Mr. Derringforth, coming into the office with a brisk step. "Couldn't get away last night—didn't fix up the deal with Braddocks until after midnight."

"Then you got the money?" said Phil eagerly.

"Yes, have a certified check in my pocket."

"Good. We are saved. I'm glad it turned out as it did."

"Glad what turned out—what are you talking about?"

"Strum. He came here yesterday, and finding you were away, began in his sneaking fashion to pry into our affairs—said his client wouldn't take the security you offered him—wanted a mortgage or something equally good. I began to get hot. I couldn't bear his impudence, and finally when he said he had you in his power, and talked of a crash and all that, I picked him up and threw him out of the office head foremost—that's all."

"Phil, I'm proud of you," said Mr. Derringforth. "I've wanted to throw the miserable parasite out myself a dozen times—I'm glad you did it, now that it is over; let a crash come if it wants to."

"You have relieved my anxiety," replied Phil. "I was afraid you would blame me, but I couldn't help it. Any one with spirit would have done as I did, I think."

"You did just right. I do not regret it in the least, and I doubt if it does any harm. Fortunately we can meet the payment that comes due today, and we will not worry about the others, not just now."

It was a rare thing for Derringforth to get away from the office before the close of business hours, but today he took a little time off. Burrock had out his pair of blacks, with a showy sleigh and handsome bear robes. The air was crisp and keen, the sun was bright, and the sleighing excellent. The horses were alive to the sport, and flew over the frozen snow at an exhilarating pace.

"This is great fun," said Burrock, hanging on to the lines; "gives a man new life — nothing like a sleigh ride after all—glad you could come with me—Jove, don't these horses pull?—never saw them feel so well."

"I'm glad to be with you, you may be sure," replied Derringforth. "This is a great treat for me—first sleigh ride I have had this year."

The east drive of Central Park was brilliant with showy turnouts and gay with handsome women. The wealth of the metropolis was out in force, enjoying to the utmost the brief season of winter pleasure. Burrock and Derringforth were in the best of spirits, and

chatted in light vein as they sped along, now admiring a pretty face, a pair of prancing horses, or a novel sleigh, and again criticising and commenting with the freedom of young New Yorkers.

They drove up as far as Macomb's Dam Bridge, and turned back towards the Park. Seventh Avenue from One Hundred and Fifty Fifth Street to One Hundred and Tenth was, and is even now to a considerable extent, used as a speedway. Burrock had given the blacks the reins, and they were skimming over the frozen snow at a pace that seemed almost like flying. The jingle of bells and the array of bright faces were inspiriting. Every one looked happy. The sidewalks were lined with people who had come out to watch the brilliant scene on the avenue.

A clump of racers were a little way ahead, each struggling for the lead. Burrock had his eye on them, and sent the blacks in hot pursuit. They understood him, and laying back their ears sprang forward. In scarcely the space of a breath Burrock and Derringforth were among the racers. Over the glib, smooth snow the horses flew on and on in their mad rush till the blacks were in the lead.

Derringforth felt the blood dance in his veins. Burrock was white, but in his face there was the look of proud triumph. The thunder of hoofs was still just behind. The glory of the race was not yet secure. Almost before he knew it the great, gaunt, angular form of a pacer stole up beside him. That insidious

amble that breaks the heart of an honest horse was every instant sending the awkward, ugly beast nearer to the front. The blacks heard him coming, and shot forward at a tremendous gait. Burrock steadied them with the lines, and urged them to greater speed. Every tick of the watch sent them faster and yet faster. All eyes were turned upon the racers. It was neck and neck, hoof and hoof, till at length the endurance of the pacer began to fail. The blacks, white with foam, seemed to gain momentum as they dashed onward, and soon the road was theirs again—the pacer was a length behind.

Derringforth took a long breath. Burrock was even whiter than before.

"Glorious!" exclaimed Derringforth, so excited that his words were scarcely audible.

"Great!" ejaculated Burrock, almost jerking out the word as he pulled with all his strength on the lines.

On the other side of the street a string of gay turnouts was bounding northward. Derringforth's nerves thrilled with excitement and delight. "It's worth a thousand dollars," he said. "I wouldn't have missed it for the world."

"I didn't know it was in them—whoa, Tom; whoa, Jerry—left everything behind."

"Yes, everything ever——"

The sentence was never finished. Derringforth had an instant before caught sight of a showy pair of high

stepping horses, with a handsome Russian sleigh, and now he saw something that fairly froze the blood in his veins. It was Marion in the act of calling Burton Edwards' attention to the fiery blacks.

Edwards was on the inside of the sleigh, with his head turned towards hers. With a sudden impulse she took her hand from her muff and placed it on his arm, saying, "Oh, Burton, see, see!"

She was gone in an instant, and every breath widened the gap between her and Derringforth. He turned to look after her. Burton Edwards was again gazing into her eyes, with his head bent towards hers as before.

XXI.

If the fires of Hades burn with a flame so fierce as the fires of jealousy, God will never allow man, his own creation, to suffer an endless torture so merciless and cruel.

Derringforth no longer found any comfort in the fact that Marion had turned to him for help instead of to Burton Edwards. This very act now began to loom up against her. He saw in it a trick to deceive him. The thought of deception in connection with Marion was one that had never till now entered his heart. It hurt him almost as much as the torture of jealousy. He lived over again that Sunday evening, and saw with different eyes every look and gesture of Marion's—heard anew every utterance from her lips. There could be but one interpretation of it all. Marion was in love with Burton Edwards; Marion had sought to deceive him.

His brain reeled with agony and despair. There was no longer any hope—nothing to live for. The very substance of life was dissolving. With Marion false to him, what remained that he could cling to—

what was there to sustain him? The moan of his own heart frightened him. How strange and awful the sound! He groped about as one in darkness, almost feeling his way. He dare not trust his eyes, his ears —everything was weird, strange, horrible. He shrank even from himself—from the dead, cold soul within him—hopeless, wretched.

The next morning among Derringforth's mail was a letter from Marion. One glance at the superscription was enough to send the blood coursing through his veins. He tore open the envelope eagerly, almost fiercely. He drew out the letter, and suddenly shrank from reading it. A fearful thought shot through his mind—the thought that Marion had engaged herself to his rival.

He crushed the note in his trembling hand, and walked back and forth in pitiable agony. The fact itself could have been no more painful. His imagination had given reality and substance to the thing he dreaded.

For a few moments everything became blank. The room whirled around about him. He seized a chair as it flew past and threw himself into it. He put his hand to his head and tried to steady it—tried to stop the throbbing of his brain; and there he sat pale, almost ghastly, hopeless, heartless, and in despair. Finally he was roused by the butler, who came up to say that breakfast was awaiting him.

He staggered to his feet, dropping the letter list-

lessly upon the table. A glance at his white face in the mirror frightened him. He had never seen himself look so badly. He wondered if he were not ill. He felt his pulse. He could scarcely detect it. There was a sinking sensation in his stomach that robbed him of all his strength.

He was upon the point of throwing himself upon the bed with the conviction that he was actually ill, when the thought of Wall Street came into his mind. There was his speculation, and Burrock had invited him to luncheon. No, he could not give up. He must try to show some life—try to get some blood into his cheeks.

He went to the washstand and splashed his face with cold water and rubbed it vigorously with a coarse towel. He went back to the mirror. The artificial glow had taken ten years off him, but it had not removed the ache from his heart or stilled the tremble of his hands. He put on his coat, took up Marion's letter, and, putting it in his pocket, started to leave the room.

He had taken perhaps three steps when he stopped. His hand stole into his pocket. The letter came forth. It ran thus:

DEAR PHIL: —

I have been trying to write you ever since Sunday night, but with a guest to entertain I have hardly had a minute to myself. I have wanted to tell you how much I appreciated your kindness. You were perfectly

lovely, and you are the dearest boy in the world. You must think very badly of me, Phil, for not telling you about Burton Edwards. I could read your thoughts. It was, oh, so embarrassing to me! I felt like a culprit. I want to tell you all about it. We have drifted a little away from each other, Phil. I have not felt free to talk to you the way I used to. I shall never forget how generous you were in coming to my relief as you did—taking all the blame upon yourself. I didn't know that even you could be so unselfish, and you did it so cleverly as to almost mislead me.

It is midnight. Every one else has gone to bed. I have taken this time to write to you to thank you as I have thanked you in my heart a thousand times, and I want to write about something else, too. I hardly know how to begin it. I don't want you to misunderstand me, and I am afraid you will. It is about your coming to me on Thursday evening I want to speak. When I wrote you that I would reserve the evening for you, I knew nothing of this visit from Burton Edwards. What I want to ask you is, would it not be better for us both if you would postpone coming until he has gone? It will only be a matter of ten days or so now. It would be so awkward for me to seclude myself from him for an entire evening, and I want the entire evening with you, as I promised you. You won't misunderstand me, will you, Phil? I know you won't. Write me and say that it is all right. I wish you could have been with us this afternoon. I had the most delightful sleigh ride—Mr. Edwards took me out. It was such perfect sleighing, and such a brilliant scene—every one, it seemed to me, was out enjoying the sport except you, and you, poor boy, I suppose, were as hard at work as ever.

You are making a perfect slave of yourself. I wish I could ask you to come to see me tomorrow evening, but we all go to the theater.

As ever,

MARION.

TUESDAY, midnight.

There was a sudden rebound in Derringforth's spirits. The artificial glow of his face was amply sustained now by the quickened action of his pulse. He straightened himself up, and threw out his chest. The sickening sensation was gone. He was a man once more, and all the love of his heart was alive again.

There were two thoughts that flashed upon his mind as he read Marion's letter, and only two. The one was that she still loved him; the other that the additional ten days would give him time to go further into speculation and make the money that he so much desired. There seemed to him now something almost providential in the visit of Burton Edwards.

"I wonder if God does bring these things about?" he meditated. "Sometimes it seems as if He did. He must despise me for being so foolish this morning. I am ashamed of myself, but the thought that Marion had turned from me was so real, and it was so cruel, that I couldn't help it. I suppose God has some purpose in working in His mysterious ways, but I don't see why it wouldn't have been just as well to make a short cut of it. If He had kept us out of a Shylock's clutches, then I should have had plenty of

money. It's all very puzzling when I stop to think about it. If I hadn't gone to the academy I should not have met Burrock, and then it was by the merest chance that I ran against him here in the city; and strange to say he seemed ready and glad to help me. It looks as if between him and Edwards I may come out all right after all—that is, I have a chance to, and if that is what God really means, I shall, of course; but perhaps it isn't, and perhaps God isn't doing anything about it. It may be all chance. If it is—but I can't think it is. It seems as if there were something more than chance when I look back over the strange things that have happened even in my short life."

These views of Derringforth's were not very decided, but they served to give him some satisfaction, and the pangs of jealousy were allayed for a time. He wrote Marion a very cordial, reassuring note, saying that she had done just right in suggesting a postponement—that he understood her fully and appreciated the position she was in with a guest to entertain. "Ten days or even more will make no difference," he said. "We are not likely to change much in so short a time."

But Derringforth was not quite so sure of this a little later on. He was not so confident that he could see God's hand in sending Edwards into Marion's very home. He was not altogether satisfied that he had written the best letter to Marion

that could have been written. He had some doubt, even, about an overruling power having had anything to do with bringing him and Burrock together.

A second reading of Marion's letter had produced this change in him. It was not quite so reassuring as he had at first thought. There was no evidence that she did not care deeply for Edwards. In fact she had spoken of the delightful sleigh ride she had had with him. This brought back the scene vividly to Derringforth's mind. He recalled the look of love in Edwards' face as he gazed into Marion's eyes. There was a reawakening of the old jealousy, and that always gives a different shading to everything. What if Marion had sought this additional time for her own convenience? Might it not be possible?

"I wish I had not consented to the postponement," he sighed. "It may be all right, but I don't like the look of things. I don't like to think of that fellow in the same house with her, and they are together all the time—going to the theater tonight. Why didn't Marion ask me to go with them? Well, as I said, it may be all right, but—I don't know; I've thought so much and worried so much and tried so hard to make money that I can't think straight any more. One time I think one thing and then again something else, but I don't know that this sort of thing is peculiar to myself. I fancy that other people look at things with varying moods pretty

much as I do. If not, then there is something wrong with me. Well, I've agreed to wait at least ten days, and I'll do it without murmuring any more, and in the mean time I'll see what I can do in Wall Street."

XXII.

TOWARDS noon Derringforth received a note from Burrock inclosing him a check for two hundred and eleven dollars and thirteen cents. "This is your net profit after deducting brokerage," he wrote. "Not a bad go for the first—gives you something to operate on—couldn't wait till lunch—knew you were in the dumps—knew this check would brace you up—nothing like something you can take hold of—you'll get there—a boom is on—must rush—see you at one, and talk over another flier."

Derringforth gazed at the check with admiring eyes—almost with a look of amazement. It was difficult to realize that he had made this money without the investment of a penny or the turning of a hand. But there it was, and all the profit of a single day.

"It will not take me long at this rate," he said to himself, his imagination swinging loose, "to pile up a few thousand dollars. Burrock has made over twenty one hundred on this single deal. I wish I had gone in heavier—I will next time. It doesn't do for a man in Wall Street to be weak kneed. I

might just as well have a thousand dollars now as two hundred. It was a sure thing; Burrock said it was. I wonder if he has any more sure things? It was too bad to let such an opportunity slip by without making the most of it. I'll never do it again, that's one thing certain."

Derringforth went to bed that night with an anxiety so keen, so deep, that it overshadowed for the time all other interests. Burrock had bought for him five hundred shares of Western Union. The stock was very active. There was a powerful bear combination trying to force it down. But the ground was contested inch by inch by the bulls. Burrock had confidence that the stock would advance, but it was a guess at best. He had advised Derringforth to take only a hundred shares. "I think it is a good purchase and may be a great one—it's a wonderfully active stock—bobs up and down like mad, but I'm going to buy a thousand shares and take my chances. I wouldn't be surprised to see it jump up ten points inside of two days—sure to do it if the bulls get away with the bears—ought to go to a hundred—paying regular dividends."

Derringforth had in mind the loss he had made on St. Paul by his timidity, and said he would have the courage of his convictions this time, any way.

"I like your nerve," replied Burrock. "You are the kind that gets there—no use to be afraid."

"That's what I think," answered Derringforth, with a tinge of pride.

An hour later he had grown a trifle more conservative. Western Union closed weak. It had dropped off over half a point since his purchase. He met Burrock in the evening, and together they saw a number of brokers and speculators. The consensus of opinion was that Western Union would be forced down further yet. There were ominous rumors afloat that looked ugly.

Derringforth went home with some uncertainty as to whether his temperament was exactly suited to Wall Street. With two hundred of winnings in his pocket he was convinced that it was. With his profit wiped out and another hundred gone with it, and all the work of an hour, he began to have serious doubts.

He was highly wrought up. "As Burrock says, there is a delightful excitement about it all," he admitted—"delightful if one likes just that sort of excitement, but I'm not so sure that I do. Three hundred dollars gone already and may be five," Derringforth groaned. "Perhaps even more," he went on dubiously.

Burrock had told him to keep up his courage, urging that the deal would yet come out all right in the end.

"That's all well enough for Burrock," mused Derringforth. "He has the money to carry the

stock for a turn, but I haven't. I shall be sold out —sold out with a loss, and just when I need money so much."

Derringforth's reflections in the preceding chapter reveal a phase of his character. At one time he was disposed to regard the presence of Burton Edwards as providential; at another he exhibited a considerable doubt. But the burden of his reasoning tended towards a belief in the overruling power of God. He had before now invoked in a half hearted way the aid of Heaven when feeling most keenly the pressure of the Shylock's hand. But these appeals lacked directness. They were mere breathings toward Heaven—a vague wish that aid might come from that indefinite source.

He had never been quite able to satisfy himself whether there was any response to these modest appeals or not. Once or twice he thought there was; once or twice he thought there was not.

Under ordinary circumstances he would not have resorted to the experiment again. But this was an extraordinary circumstance. His own hands were tied. He was neither a bull nor a bear. He was utterly powerless to influence the price of Western Union the one way or the other. He sat on the side of his bed and thought. It seemed to him that God alone was equal to the emergency, but would God have anything to do with Wall Street? There was serious doubt in Derringforth's mind on this point.

"If it were only something a little more respectable there might be some hope," he reasoned. "I'm afraid that gambling isn't in very high favor in heaven, but the Bible says, 'Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' That is plain enough. I can't see why it should not apply to Wall Street as well as to any other place. I fancy there are more men there that are weary and heavy laden than anywhere else on this earth. Unfortunately I am one of them, but I am going to get out. Heaven knows I wish I were out now. If I only had more faith I would ask God to help me. It's the only thing I can do. Perhaps the fact that I wish I had more faith would count in my favor. It can do no harm, any way, to ask for aid, and there is an odd chance that it might be just the very thing."

But Derringforth felt that there was a marked difference between asking aid from Heaven in the case of a Shylock and in the matter of speculation. He had not hesitated in the one instance, but now his conscience was very sensitive. He wondered if it would not seem blasphemous in God's sight. He shrank from doing anything wrong, but the case was so urgent that he could not dismiss it from his mind. He reasoned a long time with himself, and then somehow before he realized what he was doing he was reasoning with Heaven.

XXIII.

WHILE Derringforth was in his room, feverish with anxiety and imploring Heaven's aid, Marion was breathing in delicious draughts of love. She and Burton Edwards were alone. It was towards midnight. They had been to the play, but came away at the end of the second act. Mr. and Mrs. Kingsley had gone up to the library.

This was the opportunity Edwards had prayed for. Marion sat on the sofa. He was in a chair a little way from her. He wished he were beside her, but just how to get there was the question. He could hear the ticking of the clock in the foyer, and knew that the precious minutes were vanishing. There were so many things to say and so little time to say them in, that he found a beginning difficult.

He felt a restraint that was akin to awkwardness. This feeling was intensified by the fancy that sly laughter lurked in Marion's eyes. His cheeks took on a deeper red, and his conversation was painfully aimless. He could not understand himself. Had he not rehearsed a thousand times the words that

now filled his soul to bursting? Why should they form a jam just at this time and clog the flow of his heart? His dreams could not have been more perfectly mirrored so far as scene and time were concerned. There was no third party present to chill his spirits. The cozy room with its soft silken hangings, and yet softer lights, the glow of the cheery fire in the grate, the midnight hush that was broken only by their own voices—all contributed harmony to the surroundings.

"Won't you play something, Marion?" he said in desperation at last.

"Yes, if you really wish me to," answered Marion; "but are you quite sure you do?"

"Quite—I'm in just the mood for music," he replied, saying to himself at the same time, "May the pardoning angel have mercy on my soul!"

"It's a rare mood for you, surely. I thought you disliked the piano."

"That depends upon who plays it."

"Then I am sure you will not care to listen to an amateur."

"Oh, yes, I shall. Whatever you do gives me pleasure."

Marion blushed, protested, then tripped lightly across the room to the piano.

"What shall I play?" she asked, drumming carelessly on the keys.

"Anything that interests you."

"But I would prefer to interest you."

"You are sure to do that whatever you play," he answered, throwing a good deal of feeling into the words. "That's something like it," he said to himself. "This little scheme will put me at my ease."

Marion began playing bits of the latest airs. There was a good deal of expression in her touch, but it was not quite natural to her own ears. It betrayed an emotion that she dreaded to recognize—one that both delighted and frightened her.

Edwards watched with admiration the graceful fingers as they flew over the keys, but the music did not reach his soul. He had but one thought, and that one was embodied in Marion. He stood beside her and turned the leaves of the music.

"Here is something you know," she said, beginning the accompaniment of a love song that had caught the town. "Shall we sing it together?"

"Yes," answered Edwards eagerly. "It's the very thing to pave the way for me," he said to himself as his voice blended with hers.

The love of his soul was poured out in the words of the song. It thrilled Marion. She was powerless to resist the spirit that permeated the very atmosphere. She looked up into his eyes. That look set his soul on fire. All the passion of his strong nature was aflame. The mad impulse to clasp her in his arms, and kiss her, was a delirium. He had never known what consuming love was until now. He realized

that a false move would be death to his hopes, but to restrain himself was torture. He broke away from her side, leaving the song unfinished, and walked quickly to the other end of the room. He went to the window and looked out into the night. There, as everywhere, he saw only Marion.

He came back to the sofa and threw himself upon it. Marion still sat at the piano. There was intoxication in her playing. She was transported beyond herself—was under the spell of a strong man's love, and was powerless to tear herself away.

She knew why Edwards had left her side so suddenly, and blessed him for going, and yet she was sorry. She did not know just why she was sorry. She did not know herself even. There was something in his nature that drew her towards him ; there was something that made her fear him. His influence over her was unlike that of any other man. She was conscious of enjoying the love that he breathed upon her ; she was conscious of almost hating him for tempting her own love.

He watched her from where he sat, and wondered what her thoughts were—wondered that she kept on playing.

"If she were like other girls," he said to himself, "I would not be at a loss to know what to do. If she were like other girls I should not care for her. There is something in her manner that says to me 'so far and no farther.'"

His mind wandered back to the Sunday evening when Derringforth had fallen like a meteor upon his vision. The hot blood burned in his cheeks. The pangs of jealousy pierced him. His eyes were still fixed upon Marion. The sway of her graceful figure was poetry. The thought that possibly she loved Derringforth was torture. He wondered if she would never cease playing. He looked at his watch, opening and shutting it so that it would not attract her attention. It was almost midnight. He grew impatient and raved at himself for the fiasco he had made.

"Why did I ever ask her to play?" he groaned. "People never know when to stop when they sit down at the piano." The love of a few moments before was becoming nullified. He found himself getting provoked. It seemed to him indifference, even rudeness in Marion to neglect him as she was doing. He was upon the point of remonstrating when she turned to him and said in her sweetest way:

"Now are you not sorry you asked me to play?"

One look from her eyes melted all his indignation, but not soon enough to remove the traces from his face before she saw it.

"No, certainly not. Didn't I tell you that I was just in the mood for music?"

"Yes, but I can read your feelings better than you think."

"How do you interpret them?" asked Edwards, coloring.

The blush was reflected upon Marion's face.

"I won't try to read beyond your dislike for my playing. I have been very rude—won't you forgive me?"

"I would forgive you anything, but really there is nothing to forgive."

"Oh, yes, there is—you can't deceive me, but I'll promise never to do so any more. I wonder if it isn't very late? I forgot all about time while I was playing."

"Her coolness freezes me," groaned Edwards inwardly. "No, it is not so horribly late," he answered. "I don't feel like going to my room. Won't you sit here a little while yet with me?"

There was a tender pleading in his tones that was love to Marion. She knew she ought to tear herself away from it. She knew that she was powerless to do so. She did not want him to propose to her; she did not want to check the delicious draught of nectar.

He got up and walked to the piano, leaned over it and looked down into her eyes.

"You have not answered me," he said softly.

"Do you want me to stay very much?" she said, turning her face towards his.

"More than you can realize, Marion," he replied, with a feeling that was unmistakable.

She swung a little away from him on the piano stool, and looked down irresolutely.

"Come and sit here beside me," he said, taking her hand and leading her to the sofa.

There was love in that touch. Edwards felt the warm blood bound through his veins. The beating of his heart, the emotion of his whole nature, choked his utterance for a moment. The stillness was broken only by the ticking of the clock. The fire in the grate had burned low. The soft light sifting through the silken shade intensified Marion's beauty. She sat in graceful attitude at one end of the sofa. Her head rested upon her hand. She was the perfect picture of delightful irresolution. A dainty foot protruded from beneath her gown. Edwards sat a little apart from her.

"Marion," he said, and with the utterance of her name he unconsciously moved closer to her, "Marion, I——"

The sentence was suddenly cut short. A sharp ring at the door bell startled them. Edwards felt the cold perspiration start out upon his brow. The bell rang again, and yet again.

XXIV.

THE energy behind the door bell was a devil may care telegraph messenger. He liked to startle people in the dead of night, picturing to his imagination, with a profane grin, the look on their frightened faces. He fancied that he could pull a bell so that it would ring a more horrible ring than could be produced by any other messenger on the force—a weird, dreadful ring that would carry terror with it.

It was a peal of this sort that sent consternation to the heart of Burton Edwards. There was something strange and ominous in the sound as it broke upon his ears. He knew as surely in the first instant as a minute later, when a telegram was put into his hand, that something had happened at home.

He tore open the envelope with trembling fingers. His face was white.

"Mother is very ill. Come first train. Father." Edwards spoke the words aloud as his eye ran over the telegram. He handed it to Marion and turned away silently.

"I am so sorry," said Marion softly.

"It must be serious," answered Edwards. "Father would not have sent such a message otherwise."

"I hope it is not so bad as you fancy. Your father might have been suddenly frightened, and telegraphed you on the impulse of the moment."

"No, he would not have done that. I am sure that he has kept back the worst."

"I am very sorry for you, Burton. I wish I could say something that would comfort you."

Edwards raised his eyes to hers. They were full of tenderness and sympathy. He took a step towards her and stretched out his hands as one imploring rescue. She gave him both of hers, with childlike trust. Her wish was to comfort him. It was a generous, kindly motive. She had no thought for herself. But the pressure upon her hands awakened the sense of danger. The impulse to tear herself from him was paralyzed. She could not escape. He drew her closer to him and bent his head towards hers.

"What has happened, Marion?" called her father at this instant from above stairs. He had hurriedly dressed and come from his room to learn the meaning of the frantic ringing of the bell.

"It's a telegram," answered Marion in trembling voice. "A telegram," she repeated, as she ran towards him like one escaping from some frightful danger.

Burton Edwards was not alone with her again. He took the early morning train for California. When

he was gone Marion went to her own room. How big and empty and gloomy the house seemed! Her head ached from a sleepless night; her heart ached from emotions that had stirred it to its depths. She stood by her window and looked out into the cold, gray morning.

The dim light was sifting in through the darkness. The fog hung damp over the housetops, settling down in the streets and sending a chill through the early pedestrians. Marion had never been up at this hour before; had never felt such a sense of depression before. She turned away with a shudder, and threw herself wearily upon her couch.

The furnace sent an abundance of hot air into her room, but it did not warm her. She drew a rug over her shoulders, and tried to forget herself in sleep, but the funereal atmosphere was too depressing for slumber. She opened her eyes and glanced aimlessly towards her writing desk. There was Phil looking down upon her from his silver frame. She turned her face away and buried it beneath the rug.

She had seen the picture a thousand times before, but she had never seen it as she saw it now. There was an expression in the face that sent a shudder of self condemnation to her heart. It was not a look of accusation, but rather one of surprise and pain. Kindness and love were in the eyes; sorrow and gloom were about the mouth.

The tears stole down Marion's cheeks. She could

not choke back the sobs. Her heart ached with an anguish that was deeper and keener than before. The sense of loneliness had yielded to a different feeling. She knew she was doing wrong in breathing the atmosphere of love as she had on the previous night. She did not do it in defiance of her conscience. She felt an impulse to fly from Burton Edwards. She would have given anything to be safely beyond his influence, and yet there was a fascination so strong, so subtle in the nature and quality of his love—it was so deliciously intoxicating, so sweet to her young life, that she yielded for another minute and sipped of the nectar of the gods—just another minute, and just another minute, until she had drifted almost into the very arms of passion.

The rug could not hide Phil's face from her eyes. She could see him looking down upon her, and the expression of pain and sadness, of love and kindness, burned into her very soul. It was the most severe reproach to her sensitive nature. She saw herself as she had never seen herself before. She recalled Phil's words when she told him that the engagement must be postponed.

"We can't tell what changes a year will make in us," he had said.

"The year is up today," meditated Marion, "and we have changed—Phil has changed—I have changed more than he. I have wanted to do right by him; I have wanted to care only for him, but our

lives have drifted a little apart, and I have been so completely under influences that have led me away from him. This does not justify me, I know, but in a way it palliates the offense. It is not so easy to do always the same under different circumstances. If I had never gone into this gay life I should not have cared for it. I should have known nothing of admiration and flattery. It is a life by itself—a life of excitement and intoxication. I must either be one thing or another. I can't be half society girl and half—half something else. A compromise between the two would make me half wrong and half stupid. I can't adjust my conscience to both. Looking at myself in one way I feel guilty; in another I feel that I have done no wrong. If girls in society didn't accept attention and admiration—if there were no little flirtations there would be no society—there would be nothing in it."

This line of reasoning began to bring relief to Marion's conscience. The expression in Phil's eyes was softer. It no longer pierced her heart with so keen an edge.

"It would not be so very terrible to be a little Puritan with puritanical surroundings," she continued, "but in this age and in the metropolis and in society life—no, no, it can't be done. The Puritan would be a dismal failure. I couldn't be a wall flower—I wouldn't. I'd rather belong to the Salvation Army. There would be enthusiasm there at

least, and anything would be better than the heart-ache, and that is just what a girl has, out of tune with her surroundings. After all, I can't think I have done so very wrong. This is my play day—my outing before I settle down. One always has more latitude on an outing—does things that would—that would—well, that would make very nice old ladies raise their eyebrows in a terribly suggestive way. So then, looking at it in this light, I think I ought to be allowed just a little *abandon*—ought to have all the good times I can—in a proper way, of course.

"But there is the question—what is proper? I'm sure of one thing, and that is that I am not required to be a Puritan in these days, in society, any way. I suppose that a real little Puritan, if she had been in my place last night with Burton Edwards and he had looked into her eyes as he looked into mine; if he had breathed the love upon her that he breathed upon me; if he had taken her hands in his as he took mine in his, I suppose—no, I'm not so sure—I more than half believe that she wouldn't have been a Puritan at all. I sometimes wonder if there isn't a good deal of humbug after all about this unnatural goodness that we read of and that is held up as the correct standard. It's an insipid sort of life, it seems to me. It may be well enough for exhibition, but if there is no more nature and impulse in it than we are led to believe—if the inner life is as colorless and placid as the outer, then it must have been too stupid for any-

thing. But I can't believe it. Human nature is human nature. Without its impulses and fancies and passions it would be as flat as a prairie ; as uninteresting as a Puritan Sunday."

By this time Marion had justified herself to an extent that effectually soothed her conscience. She no longer tried to hide her face from Phil's eyes. There was nothing in them now—nothing about the expression of the mouth to harrow her feelings.

"Things are much as we see them," she meditated. "Fancy has so much to do with everything."

Her face was turned towards Phil's. She saw nothing of the look of half an hour before. "He is the same dear boy he always was," she said to herself. "I suppose he would think it very wrong, though, if he really knew. He would have a right to be jealous—I should be horribly jealous myself if he were flirting with some other girl. This is as much as to say I was flirting with Burton, but—I don't know. I didn't think of it in that way. He was visiting us and I—well, I just lived in the atmosphere of his love. I couldn't be rude to him. I didn't try to make him care for me ; I didn't want him to care for me, but somehow I closed my eyes and drifted—and such drifting !

"But I wonder if Phil could see it in this way. It almost seems to me that I can argue myself into believing anything is right. Perhaps I am wrong—perhaps

I have done very wrong, but the more I reason the more I justify myself. Perhaps this is the way with every one who does wrong. I wonder if it is. If so, I can see how many who want to do right and intend to do right, do wrong. Oh, dear me, it is all very puzzling. I suppose I ought to tell everything to Phil. If he doesn't reprove me then I've no need to think any more about it.

"But it would be pretty hard to tell Phil, and after all, would it do any good? It might make him unhappy, and if I really have done wrong, telling him would not undo it. It would simply make matters worse. Still, he has a right to know—I should want to know. Perhaps there are some things he has not told me. Well, so long as I don't know them I shall not worry—it's foolish to think of such a thing about Phil—he is simply old gold. I can't imagine him caring for any one except myself; he never did. I'm glad he hasn't gone into this gay life. If he had—no, no, I won't think of it."

But she did think of it nevertheless, and her heart beat heavily as she pictured to her imagination scenes not unlike that of the previous night between Burton Edwards and herself, but in which Phil and some other girl were the participants.

Now that Edwards had gone, Marion had no longer any excuse for delaying the hour of Phil's call. It seemed to her that she ought to write him and say that she was alone and would reserve the evening for him.

"I wish the engagement had never been postponed," she said to herself once more, looking as one peering into the future. "It would have been better in every way. Mama thinks I shall do as she wants me to; Phil thinks, I fancy, that I shall do as he wants me to. I can't please both, that is one thing certain. Whatever the result is, I shall not act meanly—I shall write Phil to call tonight. I don't know how it will come out, but that makes no difference just now; right is right, any way."

XXV.

DERRINGFORTH had been at his office perhaps an hour when a messenger brought him a note from Marion. It said in effect that Edwards had been suddenly called home and that she was now free for the evening.

"I hope you have no engagement," she added. "It has been a long time since we have had a whole evening to ourselves."

"This is a devil of a fix," said Derringforth, still holding the note in his hand. "I don't know what to do; I don't know where I stand—maybe I'm bankrupt for all I know. But I'm glad, any way, that Edwards has gone; that's one thing sure. I shall feel a heap more comfortable, even if this Wall Street business breaks me. I wonder how the market will open!"

Derringforth took out his watch mechanically, looked at the time and saw nothing. His face wore an expression of perplexity. The exchange had not yet opened. His anxiety was painful, but withal he felt a sense of happiness that made his heart lighter.

The messenger still waited for an answer. His presence increased Derringforth's nervousness. The watch came out again. It wanted fifteen minutes to ten.

"I don't know what to say," reasoned Derringforth. "I want more than anything else to spend the evening with Marion, but ten days would give me a chance to put myself in better shape. I wonder why Edwards was called home so suddenly! I almost wish he had stayed. No, I don't, either," he added, jerking out the words almost savagely.

After ten minutes of vacillation Derringforth sent the messenger away without an answer, and in a very little time sought a consultation with Burrock.

Western Union had opened within a quarter of a point of the closing price, but that quarter was against Derringforth.

"Don't feel alarmed," said Burrock. "It is holding up splendidly—bears are hammering it with a vengeance, but I think we shall see a turn in our favor."

"I hope so," replied Derringforth. "I never needed money so much in my life as I do at this minute," and he told Burrock of Marion's note.

Burrock raised his eyebrows and emitted a shrill little whistle. Derringforth looked at him interrogatively.

"What shall you do?" asked Burrock, with a shrug of the shoulders.

"What should I do?"

"I don't mind advising you in the matter of speculation, old man, but—well, I'm too conservative, I fancy."

"I don't understand you."

"Simple enough. See—I go into the market and buy a thousand shares of stock—five thousand, perhaps—it is all chance—I know it, but on the size of the chance I can give a good estimate—I know what is liable to happen. But beyond this I am conservative—understand?"

"Nonsense, Burrock—you are cynical, and you are in a more cynical mood than usual."

"Perhaps so, but—well, I've told you the way I feel. What can I do for you?—anything but advise you where woman enters into the problem—the complications are too many, too great—chance runs riot—that's all—excuse me, old man, excuse me—think it out yourself and leave this stock deal with me. I'll stand by you."

Derringforth was inclined to be amused at first, but the unusual seriousness of Burrock impressed him with a strange feeling. He had never thought of woman in this sense. The conception sent a little shudder through him.

"You will change your mind, Burrock," he said, "some of these days, and then you will be sorry you ever deluded yourself with such ideas."

Burrock smiled. It was a smile that seemed to say, "You poor, simple boy, I pity you."

Derringforth colored and felt uncomfortable. He did not like this attitude in Burrock, but there was no time for argument now. He had slipped away from his office to learn something of the venture that meant happiness or misery to him. His decision as to whether he should spend the evening with Marion depended wholly upon the state of the market. With a good profit in sight he would not hesitate, but with a loss in view he would skirmish for more time. Now that Edwards was no longer with her, Derringforth did not regard the delay of a few days as so serious.

Burrock was called aside and Derringforth stepped up to the ticker and read the quotations. His fingers trembled slightly as he held the tape in his hands. The market, as a whole, was strengthening. He watched with anxious eyes for a quotation on Western Union. His time was up. He had already been away from his office too long.

He turned to go. Burrock called to him to wait a minute. He stepped back to the ticker. Western Union had advanced an eighth. He felt a thrill of excitement—only an eighth, but it meant so much to him.

"I told you it would come out all right," said Burrock, always cool.

"You are a prophet, old man," returned Derringforth.

"On the market," suggested Burrock with a look

that awakened an indefinable sense of repugnance in Derringforth.

Presently he went back to his office and telegraphed Marion that he would answer her note later in the day.

Western Union climbed up a little during the afternoon, but did not reach the point of Derringforth's purchase. The market closed with good feeling, however, and Burrock, as well as all the bull clique, looked for better prices on the following day.

"I'm better off by a quarter of a point, any way, than I was last night," said Derringforth to himself, noting the closing quotations. "But I don't like this frightful anxiety. I wonder what I should say to Marion. Perhaps tomorrow will bring me out all right—perhaps it will ruin me. I must have another day at least. If I were to go to her tonight I should have to ask that the engagement be postponed. If I could only have ten days more and a rising market—but I have no excuse for asking for the delay as she had."

He compromised by asking for one day, saying he was very sorry, but that he had a matter on hand that would make it impossible for him to call that evening.

He did not offer any explanation; he simply stated the fact. This was a way he had. It was a fault of his; it is a fault of too many people. A matter is clear to them. It should be. They know all the attending circumstances, see it in its various shad-

ings, its various lights. They state the bare fact and expect others to see it as they see it, and then wonder at the stupidity of the world. A little more attention to details, a little more effort to make things clear—to bring out the feeling, the intent, the spirit, would rid life of a wonderful amount of friction —would bring happiness to many a gloomy home, would bring sweetness and sunshine to many an aching heart.

"I shall be free tomorrow evening," wrote Derringforth in closing his note, "and will call on you then, providing of course that you have no engagement. I wish I could see you tonight. I'm sure the time seems no longer to you than it does to me since we have had an evening together."

XXVI.

MARION had been at some social function. It was nearly six o'clock when she returned home. Derringforth's note was awaiting her. She had received his telegram and had wondered that he could not tell when he sent it whether he was free for the evening or not. She had thought a little about it ; speculated a little about it.

She could understand that there might be several reasons why he could not answer, at the time of telegraphing, definitely whether he could or could not spend the evening with her. But she wished that she knew just what the cause was. The thought kept coming into her mind, though she banished it a hundred times.

She tore open the note with rather more eagerness than she liked to display. Her mother saw this—saw the color that flashed to her cheeks. Marion looked up and caught her mother's eye. She felt annoyed that she should have shown any feeling, and went quickly to her own room.

There were traces of disappointment in her face as

she saw herself in the mirror. She read the letter again, and repeated the words, "I have a matter in hand that will make it impossible for me to call this evening."

"He might as well not have written the note. He could have said in the telegram that he wasn't coming. I should have been quite as wise—something that he doesn't want me to know, perhaps—more diplomatic to telegraph and then write—looks as if he had made the effort to come but could not arrange to do so."

Marion threw off her wraps and tried to throw off the disappointment that held her in its depressing grasp, but she could not free herself—could not help feeling hurt that Phil should treat her so indifferently. She remembered the readiness with which he had assented to the suggestion in her note that his call should be postponed. It seemed very generous of him at the time, but now it appeared in a somewhat different light. The shading was not the same. Many unhappy fancies flitted through her mind, each leaving a sting.

She was not accustomed to suffering. While Derringforth had learned to bear the grasp of a Shylock's hand—had learned to know the ache of a burdened soul, Marion had been flattered and entertained and courted. She had had all the pleasures that wealth and society and adoration could give. It was a new sensation to be treated with what she re-

garded as indifference, and it hurt. She did not bear the pain as one accustomed to disappointments. The depression clung to her until it was gradually crowded back by the feeling of resentment.

"I have not been used to such indifference," she said to herself. "I offered to give up the evening and tried to be nice to him, and I'm simply informed that it will be impossible for him to be with me. He owed me more explanation than this. I would not have treated him as he has treated me. I wish I knew where he was going. I have foolishly flattered myself that he never went anywhere; I have thought of him as a sort of saint, but one can't tell much about a man, any way. I should have kept closer to him. I have been blind and have worried like a little idiot, thinking I was not doing right by him. How many good times I have lost! I wish Burton were here; he would not treat me in this way. Phil has changed so. He isn't a bit as he used to be. I can't understand him; he doesn't help me to understand him. Maybe he doesn't understand me, and feels a restraint that makes him appear as he does."

At the last minute Marion decided to go to the Harburys'. It was to be a brilliant party, but she was not in the mood for social festivities; and yet she could not endure the thought of remaining at home alone. A year before she would have liked the prospect of such an evening. But books did not interest her

now as they did then. They lacked the stimulant that she had learned to crave.

Mrs. Kingsley was exceedingly glad when she learned that Derringforth was not coming and that Marion was to go with her to the Harburys'. She had not been blind to Burton Edwards' admiration for her daughter, and she saw with much satisfaction that Marion enjoyed his society. There was a sense of safety in this to Mrs. Kingsley's mind. The presence of Edwards, she argued, would tend to wean Marion from Derringforth. It would at least cause her to see less of him. And then there was always the possibility of some complication that would bring about unlooked for changes. Delay was the thing to fight for, she told herself. In it her hope lay.

Had the suspicion occurred to her that Marion was upon the point of falling in love with Edwards, she would at once have regarded him with an utterly different feeling. Her object was to keep Marion from marrying until she was at least twenty five. So far as Edwards aided her in this purpose, just so far he was especially welcome at her house. She liked him. Her regard for him was genuine, and so long as he did nothing more than win Marion *towards* him—not *to* him—she encouraged the association.

It was a disappointment to her that he was so suddenly called away. She expected as a matter of course, now he was gone, that Marion would give up

the evening to Derringforth. The day had been fraught with anxiety. She could not quite believe that Marion would ignore her wishes entirely and engage herself to Derringforth, and yet there was the possibility that she would.

Marion surveyed herself in the mirror when she was dressed. "I never looked so jaded and old before," she thought. "It must be dreadful to grow old and ugly—to feel that the power to attract has gone—that the younger and prettier faces have all the attention and admiration. My cheeks are faded out; my eyes look as if I had had no sleep for a week. Oh dear, I wish I were going to stay at home! I'm tired and disappointed and unhappy. I shall be as stupid as anything, I know. If Phil had only come we could have had a quiet evening. I wonder what is keeping him away? What would he think of me if he should see how jaded I look? Would he want to marry me now, I wonder?—it was just a year ago tonight—how happy I was—I would give the world to be as happy now—to feel that he loves me just as he did then and to have him tell me again of his love as he did then."

XXVII.

It is said that the unexpected usually happens in Wall Street. Derringforth had spent the evening in company with Burrock and they had talked with a number of speculators. The consensus of opinion was that there would be a strong, active market on the following day. He went home buoyant with hope and eager for the night to pass.

The sun came up and hid itself behind a leaden sky. Derringforth looked out from the window of his room. The dull light, the bleak wind, and the thought that it was Friday awakened a feeling of anxiety. He knew that the nerves of Wall Street men lie close to the surface—knew how susceptible they were to the influence of little things, even to the state of the weather and the day of the week, if the day happened to be Friday. But, true to the predictions of the night before, the market opened firmer. Burrock was early on the scene. He fancied he could trace the hand of a combination trying to force prices, and satisfied himself that the apparent strength was artificial and would not last.

He concluded to unload a portion of his holdings, and with the sale of his stock sold three hundred shares of Derringforth's. The price obtained was slightly below the cost, netting the latter a loss, with interest and brokerage, of a trifle over ninety dollars. An hour later the stock had sagged three quarters of a point. The market finally became dull and weak, and remained so throughout the day.

Derringforth was thankful that the three hundred shares of his holdings had been sold. At the closing price of Western Union he could dispose of the two hundred shares he still held at a loss of something over two hundred dollars. This, together with the loss on the shares already sold, would make the transaction show a net loss of a trifle over three hundred. This was the status of his second Wall Street venture at the end of the day, and it did not furnish a highly gratifying outlook with which to go to Marion. But this was not the worst phase of the situation. Van Stump had given another turn to the twist.

After picking himself up, on the morning when Derringforth threw him out of the office, Strum lost no time in acquainting his master with all that had occurred at the Derringforths'. Van Stump was white with anger.

"They shall pay dearly for this," he said, bringing his fist down upon the library table in a way that emphasized his words. "I will bring that young

dog to his knees—he shall learn what it means to insult a representative of mine!"

"It was very humiliating to be thrown in a heap," sniveled Strum, rubbing his smarting knee.

"It's exasperating—people I have been trying to help, too—I'll show them what is what. I'll crush them to the earth—yes, to the earth, the beggars! I'll take the conceit out of that young whelp. He carries his head too high—too high, Strum. You will see his nose in the dust. I have wanted to get my hands on him, and now the time has come. I have another reason, too, for humbling the young upstart."

Had Strum succeeded in his effort to see the books of the Derringforths, Van Stump would have known exactly where to strike. It is one thing to get into a rage and threaten to do a thing; it is quite another matter to do it.

But Van Stump's anger was aroused. He was usually too cold to be moved outwardly. It was not his regard for his agent in this instance that stirred his wrath. Had it been some one other than Derringforth who had thrown the sycophantic Strum out of his office, Van Stump's coolness would have been unperturbed. He knew of the relations between Marion and Phil. Since she had become a favorite in society he had acquainted himself with her history. The fact that Derringforth's name was so closely associated with hers caused him to feel a sense of power over her, since his hand was at Derringforth's throat.

Van Stump, like most bachelors of his type, was not sensitive. It made little difference to him what people said of him. He was Van Stump, in his own consciousness—Van Stump, the millionaire. What need he care about the opinions of envious poverty or the feelings of striplings, as he called young men, whom he was wont to brush aside with an air of indifference to their existence?

His money was a great big fact. He knew its power and made use of it. The smile of a scheming mother or the love glances of her fawning daughter amused him. He liked all this, and talked the sweet nonsense of youth. He knew that his money was the target for aspiring poverty.

He always saw two faces—the one fair and ingenuous, in which the soul of true, sweet womanhood shone with a look of trust in him—of admiration for him; the other artful, cunning, cold, selfish—an expression that seemed to say, "You old fool! how I am humbugging you, but your gold is well worth the sacrifice. It will be but a year or two, and you will be under the sod, and the money once in my hands the world will be mine."

But this did not affect Van Stump. His philosophy was greater than his cynicism. "It is all a game of bluff," he had said to himself many times, "and woman is not the only one that can play at it."

He liked to be with girls who had the beauty and freshness of youth. For those who were begin-

ning to drop back into the second tier he had no time. They did not interest him. His object was simply to be amused. He had no motive other than this. There was no sentiment in his soul that reached beyond the present. He had no attachments. One life meant to him little more than another. The girl who interested him most was the one from whom he could get most. Persistence was a notable characteristic of his. He did not know the meaning of the word rebuff. His assurance fitted him perfectly for the part he played.

"If the striplings think me rude what need I care?" he said to himself. "If some one yawns mentally and wishes me at the bottom of the sea what need I care? If a girl amuses me I talk to her and spend money on her. But I am not concerned as to whether I interest her or not. That is her affair, not mine. If she avoids me, what is the odds? There are hundreds of others—every year an army of débutantes is let loose upon the world—and the clink of gold hath charms. With ten millions in my pocket I shall never grow old. I may totter on my staff and yet shall I be an Apollo. Money is always in its prime, and since in a sense I am money, I am and ever shall be in my prime."

Van Stump reduced everything to a basis of mathematical calculation. There was no impulse—no soul in his nature. He never devoted attention to any one without getting a *quid pro quo* for the time

and money spent. New faces—new affairs alone interested him. There was no stimulant—no intoxication in old associations. Whenever he began to weary of a girl he dropped her. He felt no compunction in doing this.

"She would do the same by me," he told himself, "but suppose she wouldn't, what is the odds? I am not in this thing for charity. I pay for all I get. I buy whatever suits my fancy. The transaction is cash. I run up no bills—place myself under no obligations—keep no books. One day a certain temperament suits my mood; at another time a different one gives me most pleasure; that is all there is of it."

Van Stump was not an anomaly. There are others whose god is this same philosophy—men who take girls to the play, lavish flowers upon them, and entertain them regally—not because of any deep admiration for them, or any innate desire to give them pleasure, but because some such association is essential to their own enjoyment. There is no generosity in this. It is merely a cold business transaction—an investment of time and money that brings profitable returns.

Van Stump saw much in Marion to admire. He liked her bright face. Her conversation was clever and sparkling; there was laughter and mischief in her eyes.

He had annoyed her with his attention ever since

her début in society. His persistence, when a sense of decency should have told him that he was *de trop*, exasperated her. Her dislike grew finally into detestation, but her diplomatic mother had steadily urged the desirability of hiding her feelings. She had obeyed the injunction and made herself discreetly agreeable to Van Stump. But the fact of his power over Derringforth added to his boldness, and made him even more persistent with Marion than with other girls.

He felt that he had a right to command her time, and he made himself more offensive in his attention than usual. Marion at length rebelled and declared that she would not be tormented by him. "He is the worst old boor," she said to her mother, "and is so rude. No matter who is talking with me he crowds his way up and simply monopolizes conversation with his stale compliments and threadbare, sentimental rubbish. I am tired of it, and will not submit to it any longer."

"I hope you will not be hasty, my dear," replied her mother with a persuasive smile. "It is always well to be discreet."

"Discretion isn't to be thought of any longer in his case," returned Marion. "He doesn't know the meaning of the word himself, and I shall not know its meaning again where he is concerned."

She was not quite so brave at first as she thought she would be; yet true to her purpose she did snub

him, and in a way that would have settled a man of finer fiber. But it had no effect on Van Stump. He laughed at the feebleness of the effort and pressed his attention with malicious persistency. He had laughed too soon. He did not know the spirit of the girl he was tormenting. He made the discovery a little later—too late for his peace of mind. He had regarded himself as too indifferent to be annoyed by any girl, however she might choose to treat him. Van Stump, in his estimation, Van Stump, the millionaire, was impervious to any shafts of satire that a woman might send at him. He could coolly laugh at her fuming—could enjoy as a mild joke the harmless sputterings of her rage.

But he learned that there are exceptions—learned the smart of humiliation; felt the sting of anger as it burned into a consuming blaze.

Marion had tried to make herself understood by gentle means, but she soon saw that diplomacy was of no avail and determined to fence no further.

"I will not allow him to annoy me any more," she told herself with a flash of fire in her eyes, and then she told him the same thing. She spoke the words coolly, but with a decision that was a revelation to Van Stump. He had never met a girl before who had the spirit to turn upon him, and for a minute he was nonplussed. Then he began to laugh as if it were a great joke, but her words rankled within him and

he felt the tremor of anger forcing the perspiration from his pores.

"Whenever you have finished laughing," she said in a cuttingly satirical tone, "I shall make myself even plainer. We have misunderstood each other quite long enough, Mr. Van Stump."

One remark led to another until Van Stump had seen a picture of himself that he could scarcely recognize—a picture that portrayed him as a consummate boor—a character so utterly selfish that he could barely contain himself. All his boasted coolness and indifference deserted him. The bitterness of his heart was stirred to its depths and the dregs were poisonous.

XXVIII.

It was shortly after the occurrence of this spirited scene between Marion and Van Stump that Strum sought during Mr. Derringforth's absence to learn from Phil the exact state of the firm's affairs. The interview did not end quite as he had hoped—hardly as Van Stump had hoped. A somewhat lucid account of the manner in which it terminated only served to intensify Van Stump's anger. He had been thwarted in his first move—a move which had for its ultimate purpose the humiliation of Marion.

Van Stump had made a careful survey of the situation, and so far as he could discover, the ruin of Derringforth was the only possible point of attack on her. Her father was very rich, and her social position was unquestioned. She had been exceptionally discreet, and no word of scandal had ever been spoken against her.

"There is but one way to humble her," he said to himself, "and that is to crush Derringforth. And after all, what is the odds? He is nothing to me, the poor beggar."

Van Stump's animus was aimed at Marion, but when he learned that Derringforth had taken it upon himself to thwart his purpose by unceremoniously dumping Strum in a heap outside the office door, then it was that his hatred for Derringforth blazed out.

"I will crush him into a shapeless mass," he hissed, and the clinching of his fists added realism to his words.

His usual discretion deserted him. He came out from his hiding place and took a hand personally in the investigation, in a round about way, of the affairs of the Derringforths. He was too much in earnest to sit at home and idly await the result of Strum's further efforts. It would have been well for him had he done so, but of this not now.

With the twenty thousand dollar note due to Strum, as agent for Van Stump, paid and out of the way, the Derringforths saw a glimmer of sunlight streaming in through a rift in the clouds. It lighted up Mr. Derringforth's face and would have had a similar effect upon Phil but for other complications, an account of which has already been given.

"There are three weeks of smooth sailing before us, Phil," said Mr. Derringforth, settling himself back in his big office chair with an air of relief. "Three weeks—it's a good while, but there is nothing that will trouble us. If we were only free from that Shylock, but—well, he can't bother us until the next note falls due."

"And that is three weeks from now?" queried Phil.

"Yes, and in the mean time I hope to make a turn that will give us the money to take it up in full."

It was Tuesday that this conversation occurred, the day after Phil had pitched Strum out of the office. On Friday, just three days later, the firm was paralyzed by a blow from a friendly quarter. It came in the shape of a peremptory demand for the immediate payment of a large sum of money. Mr. Derringforth was stunned at what seemed to him a cold blooded, high handed procedure. Phil had never seen his father so visibly affected before. He looked as if the last friend had deserted him—as if his confidence in humanity was gone.

"I have paid this house hundreds of thousands of dollars, as you know, Phil," he said, speaking as one almost doubting his own senses, "and I should as soon expect you or your mother to turn upon me in this way. I can't understand it, I can't realize it—the Hayden National Iron Company—a house that I would have trusted with my very life."

"There is something at the bottom of this," said Phil, scarcely less shocked than his father.

"There must be—these people have been my friends. They would not treat us in this way. They knew exactly how we were pressed for money and told me to take our own time for paying them. 'Your

credit is good for any amount with us,' said Mr. Baldwin to me only last week.''

"And he is the treasurer?" said Phil.

"Yes, the treasurer. There is something wrong somewhere, as you say," replied the father. "Something wrong," he repeated to himself, looking as one trying to peer into an impenetrable mystery.

XXIX.

THERE seems to be an irony of fate that delights in making things turn out strangely different from our fancies. Marion went to the Harburys', feeling blue and depressed. She expected a miserably stupid time, and but for the prospect of a yet more dismal evening at home alone, would have remained there. The party was one of the events of the season ; it was *the* event with Marion.

She had scarcely entered the room when a tall, finely proportioned man was presented to her. He was an Englishman, a cousin to Mrs. Harbury. Devonshire—Richard Devonshire was his name. He had been in America only three days, but was not slow to discover the girl that appealed most strongly to his fancy, and to her he devoted himself almost exclusively throughout the evening.

That girl was Marion. She had never met just such a man before. He was a fascinating talker, a gratifying listener, and a gentleman of fine instincts. Marion was charmed with him, and was conscious of a buoyancy of spirit that was an extreme rebound from the

gloom of the early evening. She had never in all her life appeared to better advantage. Her conversation was bright and sparkling, her manner imbued with captivating enthusiasm, her beauty intoxicating. Devonshire hung upon her words with an expression in his eyes that was an electric stimulus to her.

They walked and talked and danced together, to the envy of some, but to the delight of each other. The conversation finally turned on England. Marion said that she had been considering the matter of going abroad with the beginning of Lent. "It all depends upon me," she added, "as papa and mama are anxious to take the trip."

"I wish I could say something that would persuade you to go," replied Devonshire. "I shall return myself at about that time."

"Shall you?" exclaimed Marion, her eyes dancing.

"Yes, and if you will go, and it would be agreeable to you and your father and mother, I will arrange to sail on the same steamer with you."

"Nothing would give us more pleasure, I am sure," answered Marion. "The thought of having so agreeable a fellow passenger almost persuades me," she added, with a look that made the heart of the Englishman beat faster.

"I think I could give you some pleasure in England. At all events I should esteem it a favor to be

allowed to do anything in my power for your enjoyment."

"You are very, very kind. I wish I could say now that I shall go, but I will let you know definitely within a day or two. I really cannot decide tonight."

XXX.

It was with an aching heart that Derringforth ascended the brown stone steps of the Kingsleys'. His venture into Wall Street, instead of helping him, had only added to his anxiety. It had already resulted in a small loss and the end was not yet. But worse than this—a thousand times worse, was the crisis in the firm's affairs.

He would gladly give ten years of his life, it seemed to him, for a little more time, but he had told Marion that he was free for that evening and knew that she would expect him. There was no reasonable and satisfactory excuse to offer her for further delay. No, there was no hope, he must go to her and ask that the engagement be postponed or the idea abandoned forever. The thought was torture to him, but there was no other way.

He entered the drawing room, feeling like one about to pass sentence upon himself. Marion came down a minute later and greeted him in the old time, cordial way.

"I am so glad to see you, Phil," she said.

"And I am glad to see you," replied Derringforth, taking both her hands in his. "I am always glad to see you, little girl." There was feeling in the words as he spoke them, though he tried to hide the gloom of his soul, and be the light hearted boy of a year before.

Marion led the way to the sofa. "I was afraid you no longer cared to see me since you couldn't come last evening," she answered.

"But it was impossible for me to come," he replied. The words were out before he realized that he was uttering a falsehood. The sound of the last syllable had not died away when his conscience thrust a picture before his eyes. It was a distorted likeness of himself with the word "liar" written obliquely across it. He winced and shifted his position, moving cautiously a few inches further away from Marion. She made no reply for an instant. The silence gave Derringforth time to feel a tremor of contempt for himself.

Meantime Marion was doing a little thinking on her own account. The thought flashed through her mind that it was only the night before last when she occupied precisely the same position on that same sofa, and that Burton Edwards then sat where Phil now sat.

Derringforth was wrought up to a highly sensitive state. Nothing escaped him. The flush of her face and the sudden confusion of her manner impressed

themselves upon him with photographic accuracy. He interpreted these outward signs as evidence of contempt for him, fancying that she knew he had said what was not true. The thought of deliberately lying to Marion was revolting to his sense of manliness.

"It is the devil that is in me that spoke those false words," he said to himself. "I never intended to say anything of the sort. It was *not* impossible for me to call." He was upon the point of confessing when Marion said:

"I was bitterly disappointed." She raised her eyes. They met his, and a blush of self condemnation leaped to his face.

"I was right," cried Marion to herself, stung by the pang of jealousy. "I was right," she repeated; "there is something he is keeping from me."

"I am very sorry," answered Derringforth, struggling to appear natural. "I wanted to come more than you can realize, but you know you asked for a few days' delay, and so I went into a little business venture with a friend."

Derringforth paused for an instant, and Marion, supposing he had finished, said:

"I didn't think you would let business keep you from coming to see me. Would it have kept you a year ago, I wonder?"

There was something in the way this was said that

sent a chill through Derringforth. Marion had tried to speak kindly. It was that pang of jealousy that keyed her vocal cords to harsher tones. He had intended to explain further about the business venture, and also confess the falsehood that was rankling in his soul. But he couldn't quite bring himself to do this now. There was an involuntary tightening about the cords of his heart. He answered guardedly, saying:

"I cannot always shape things quite to my liking. I have already said that I wanted to spend the evening with you, and I waited till towards night to see if I could not do so. In asking if I should have let business keep me from you a year ago you imply a doubt of my loyalty."

The word "loyalty" made Marion wince. Her own heart was her accuser—not Derringforth. "I did not really mean that," she said nervously. "I felt hurt and disappointed, and you gave no reason for not coming—you give none now—not quite enough, Phil, to satisfy a girl's heart. I didn't feel a bit like going out, and fancied that we could have such a quiet, good time at home."

"I am very sorry," answered Derringforth, melting again into sunnier mood. "I am very sorry, but hope my not coming did not spoil your evening."

"Oh, no, I went to the Harbury reception and had a most delightful time."

"I am glad," returned Derringforth. "As it turned out, then," he went on a trifle stiffly, "I hope

you are not sorry I couldn't come—you would have missed a good time, and now you have me with you tonight."

Derringforth paused for an answer. Marion hesitated. She would not utter a falsehood, and she could not well say how glad she was that she went to the party—could not bring herself to tell Phil of Devonshire and the delightful hours she had spent with him.

It was a trying moment for Marion. Her eyes were fixed upon the carpet. Derringforth's eyes were fixed upon her. He was waiting. The flush on her cheek and the nervous fumbling with her fan answered his question. It could have been no plainer if put into words.

The answer stung his pride and wounded him almost to the death.

The blaze of the big lamp in the corner had crawled up to a point that terminated in a shaft of smoke. Derringforth saw it streaming high towards the ceiling as he raised his head with a stifled groan, searching for something to break the painful silence.

"Excuse me," he said, rising suddenly and starting to cross the room.

Marion looked up and saw the smoke streaming from the chimney.

"Oh," she exclaimed, and in an instant was by Derringforth's side.

"It's all right now," he said, as he reduced the blaze beyond the possibility of further trouble.

"I wonder I didn't see it," remarked Marion, at the same time thanking heaven secretly for the relief this trifling incident brought her.

"You were not looking in the right direction," replied Derringforth. "I am the one that should have seen it before."

He turned towards her and looked down into her eyes. His expression startled her, it was so unlike the Phil of the old days. He took a piece of bric-à-brac from the mantel with the remark, "This is something new, is it not?"

"Yes," answered Marion, "and it is a very rare specimen."

She eagerly seized the opportunity to turn the conversation from the theme that had so embarrassed her.

"Very antique, strikes me," rejoined Derringforth, apparently studying it with much interest.

"Yes, very antique. A friend of papa's brought it from Europe only last week."

"Europe is full of interesting things," returned Derringforth. "I feel that I should like to go abroad and remain for an entire year, well away from business and business annoyances."

This remark was made with the view of leading up to his financial troubles.

"Oh, I wish you would go with us," said Marion, with a sudden burst of enthusiasm and, it may be said truthfully, with a thrill of delight even at the thought.

"Are *you* going?" asked Derringforth, looking up quickly.

"Mama has been urging the matter."

The look that flashed into his eyes made her wish that she had been more cautious.

"When shall you sail?" he asked, trying to appear indifferent.

"We may not sail at all. It is not settled yet," answered Marion, more diplomatically. His expression became grave and, Marion thought, a trifle stern. He stood erect, tall, and dignified. All the boyish lines of his face, it seemed to her, had yielded to the strength of mature manhood.

"But when your mother urges anything isn't it as good as settled?" he said.

He had tried to disguise his feelings, but there was a touch of sarcasm in his words that cut.

"Mama doesn't do all the thinking for the family. Your remark is hardly complimentary," returned Marion with considerable spirit.

"Pardon me, I didn't mean to be uncomplimentary," he said, returning with her to the sofa. "But I have had good reason, as you know—we have had good reason to recognize the force of your mother's will."

An expression of pain came into Marion's face. "I am sure mama has never urged anything with me that she did not believe best for me. No one knows this better than you, Phil."

"Yes, that is true, but one sometimes errs in judgment. It was just a year ago, little girl, that you and I yielded to your mother's will. You can tell better than I whether she or we were right."

Marion hesitated, thinking what answer to make. She tapped her folded fan lightly against her forehead as if to quicken thought. "Why do you think I can tell better than you?" she asked, raising her eyes to his in ingenuous query.

It was his turn to hesitate now, but at the end of an instant he answered: "Because I have never had but one opinion—yours may have changed."

"In all the years you have known me, Phil, you have never found me so very changeable, have you?"

The expression of her eyes and the appealing tones of her voice made it plain to Derringforth that his words had hurt, and they had. It was no easy matter for her to keep back the tears. He felt that he would like to take her in his arms and like a child cry with her and for a time forget the past—forget everything but her.

"No, I have not," he said softly—almost tenderly. "Forgive me for the suggestion," and then he killed the effect by an ill timed effort to justify himself, adding, "but you know you have seen so much of life during the year—have had so many good times—have met so many men."

Marion looked up quickly with flushed face. The

reference to the good times she had had and the men she had met startled her. Derringforth saw the color in her cheeks and misinterpreted its meaning, fancying that he had again offended her. But not knowing just how to help matters he said nothing, trusting to luck for an improvement in the situation.

A little silence and a good deal of thought followed. Marion was the first to speak. She had regained her composure, but the sting of her conscience was still felt, and the fear that perhaps he knew more of her flirtations than he had admitted prompted caution.

"You have been quite as free to meet girls as I have men," she said, bringing him forward as the subject of discussion, "and since they have not influenced your opinion, why should the acquaintances I have made influence mine?"

"But I have met scarcely any one," replied Derringforth, not altogether sure that luck had served him especially well. At all events this was a turn to the conversation that he had not expected.

"You have never told me anything about the girls you have met," pursued Marion, in justification of her own omission to inform Derringforth of the delicious little flirtations she had had.

"There has been nothing worth the telling."

"Oh, Phil," she said, with a captivating little gesture that should have made him own up to anything, true or false.

"There has not," he repeated, unmoved.

"Don't blush so about it or I shall really believe there is something that you don't want me to know." She was far more serious than her manner indicated. Derringforth was angry at himself, but the color grew deeper.

Marion smiled. It was that sort of smile that irritated him. Derringforth shifted his position and appeared ill at ease, all of which had a tendency to confirm Marion's suspicions. It fed the slight feeling of jealousy already awakened.

"It seems to me we are drifting away from the subject," remarked Derringforth, in the effort to free himself.

"Yes, drifting to a rather more interesting subject," answered Marion.

"Not to me."

"But to me."

"Suppose we take them up in order, then, and return to the one with which we began? I believe we were trying to determine whether the year that has just closed has proved your mother's judgment to be right or wrong."

"Yes, but can we be sure either the one way or the other?"

"I don't understand you."

"I mean to say that without further knowledge of the future I can't see that we can say positively that mama was wrong or that we were right. I am sure you will admit this."

"I don't know that I shall," answered Derringforth, with the growing suspicion that Marion was parrying with him and that her views had changed a good deal more than she was willing to admit. The thought increased his reserve.

"Then if we can't agree, what is the object of discussing the question, and what good can come of it, since we can't recall the past?"

"The errors of the past are guides to the future," returned Derringforth sententiously.

"Very true."

"Then why is there nothing to be gained by the discussion?"

"Because we cannot, it seems to me, settle the question as to who was in the wrong."

"Perhaps you don't want to settle it," said Derringforth coldly.

The words left a bitter sting. They were nearer the truth than she was willing to acknowledge to herself, even. But it was the way they were spoken that hurt most. Her face flushed. Derringforth watched her expression with keen eyes. The heightened color, the hesitation, the evident disquietude, all tended to confirm him in his suspicion that Marion had wavered in her steadfastness.

He had come to her with the intention of telling her everything about his troubles—of telling her of his struggles to free himself from the grasp of a Shylock—of telling her of the torture he had suffered in

the thought that perhaps Burton Edwards was winning her love, and of finally saying to her that it was he who must now ask that the engagement be postponed, or perhaps abandoned forever. He had come with the belief that she would be true to her purpose of a year before, but the conversation thus far had led him to suspect that he was mistaken. He turned so that he could place his arm upon the back of the sofa. He put his hand to his throbbing temples. The position brought his face directly towards Marion's. Neither spoke for a time. In the soft light, and in a becoming evening gown, so fashioned that it revealed a glimpse of a white, round neck, she was very pretty. Derringforth thought of the past and of the happiness they had had together ; of the happy life they had planned to live together. She was handsomer now, as he saw her, than ever before. He had never craved her love so much as at this instant. To give her up—to think of her as the wife of another—no, no, he could not do this ; the thought was maddening. He was miserably unhappy.

Marion was equally unhappy. The conversation had drifted in a way that neither expected—that neither desired. The love of their hearts had been forced back into deep recesses where its light could not be reflected in the eye ; where its sweetness could not add music to the voice.

Marion, too, thought of the past—of the simple days of childhood—of Phil as he was then—as he had

been all their lives. Her breast heaved with a suppressed sigh and she raised her face to his. The soft, appealing look in her eyes penetrated almost beyond the reserve that incased his true nature. Oh, that he had had the breadth and sweetness of soul to lift himself above himself, and, forgetting miserable pride, had reached out his hands to her. She would have taken them eagerly in the spirit in which they were given, responding with all the wealth of her heart—with all the depth of her love. One word from him would have been enough, and all the world in her eyes would have been as nothing compared with him. One word from her would have caused him to forget everything in life but her—would have filled his soul with happiness sweeter and purer and deeper than all else of the treasures of earth. God must have turned away sorrowing that that word was not spoken.

Once or twice it hovered on Derringforth's lips; once or twice it hovered on Marion's lips. If each could have seen deep into the heart of the other their two lives would have blended into one. There would have been mutual confidence—mutual confidings, and love would have softened and sweetened and made radiant the soul of each.

But their better impulses were forced back, and two hearts moaned piteously.

"If your mother was right a year ago," said Derringforth, finally breaking the silence, "why shouldn't she wish the same policy to prevail for

another year and perhaps yet another, and maybe still another?"

"Mama thinks she was right," answered Marion softly.

"That makes the matter clearer," replied Derringforth. His voice was not quite steady, though he was steeling himself against all emotion.

The situation for both Derringforth and Marion was a complicated one. Had he been in a position to become engaged he would have reached the subject in a direct way. He had come with the intention of telling in a straightforward manner of his almost hopeless financial condition, but the unfortunate opening of the conversation chilled him. He was in a highly sensitive state, due to the strain and anxiety that had reduced him almost to the verge of nervous prostration, and readily became secretive, thinking it better to draw Marion out before opening his heart to her.

Marion, on the other hand, was at a disadvantage from the start. She knew nothing of his misfortunes, and felt hurt, as a proud spirited girl should, at his seeming indifference. He had not been himself for months. She had seen very little of him, and they had drifted further and further apart as the weeks went by. She blamed him, and had a right to blame him, not knowing the struggle he was undergoing. Had he confided in her he would have drawn her towards him and she would have drawn him towards

her. There would have been mutual confidence, and the love that began away back in childhood would have continued to grow deeper and fuller and riper. The passion of the human heart cannot live on air; will not thrive on memory.

Marion was scarcely less sensitive than Derringforth, and detecting his diplomatic tactics, felt that his treatment was cold and cruel. But she had too much pride to let him know her thoughts, and following his example became equally diplomatic—equally cold and indifferent. They were at cross purposes. Neither understood the other; each blamed the other.

One thing was plain to Marion, and that was Derringforth's desire to find out, without committing himself, her feeling regarding the engagement. This was not manly, not generous, not right. It annoyed her, and she determined that he should never know without asking her.

He, on the other hand, could not ask her to engage herself to him, situated as he was; and if he were to confess his inability to assume such responsibilities he fancied he would never know her mind regarding the matter. With the almost positive knowledge that her mother would wish her to continue free, and with the belief, resting largely, to be sure, on an interpretation of misleading acts and utterances, that she herself was anxious to avoid the engagement, he vowed that he would say nothing of his own affairs.

"I have kept faith," he reflected, "and with no prospect of an engagement why should I humiliate myself before her? It was my place to tell her everything, as I intended to, had she proved herself worthy of my confidence."

A half hour later Derringforth went out into the night. The parting was formal—not warm, not frigid, but excessively polite.

XXXI.

The click of the door closing behind Derringforth brought him to a realizing sense of his position. He was not only shut out from Marion's presence, but with equal truth, it seemed to him, shut out from her heart. He had no sooner reached the street than he stopped and looked back, in the vain hope that he might yet see her face. He was upon the point of turning back with the impulse to implore her forgiveness—to beg for the assurance of her love—when the door was thrown open. It was not Marion, come to recall him, but a servant, who an instant later closed the heavy outer doors. Derringforth gazed longingly at the house. His head drooped; his shoulders sagged.

Marion hurried to her own room, and in the darkness went quickly to the window and looked out, with the hope that she might yet see Derringforth. She looked down the street to a point where she imagined he would be, but saw no one. She turned to the other side of the bay window and looked in the opposite direction, but was not rewarded with the sight

of him she sought. She returned to her original position and again peered into the gray, misty darkness. Her heart cried out with disappointment and bitter anguish. She threw herself upon a hassock at the base of the window, and with her head resting upon her hand still looked far down the street.

A heavy mist, that was almost rain, made the atmosphere wet and cold. Marion shuddered, chilled by the sight and by a sense of loneliness so keen that the tears stole down her white cheeks. She wiped them away with her handkerchief, and in doing this cast her eyes downward.

At that instant Derringforth threw up his hands in a pathetic gesture that seemed to say, "It is all over—there is no longer any hope;" and he turned away, bent forward with a burden of sorrow that was crushing out all the spirit of his young life.

Marion was stunned—dumb, helpless for an instant, and then she raised the window and called to the man she loved to come back to her. But he heard her not.

Marion sank again upon the hassock and gave way to deep, bitter, cruel sobbing.

The angel of love had again taken the hands of these two and stretched them forth till they almost touched. But the chasm was not quite spanned—the currents of love not reunited, and each turned away, hopeless.

XXXII.

EARLY the following morning Marion received a note from Richard Devonshire, asking if he might not call upon her during the forenoon. It was a straightforward request, written in a manly, clear cut hand.

"I can't see him," she exclaimed, thrusting the note away from her. "I must not see him again, I must not."

She leaned languidly upon the arm of her chair and pondered. Her eyes were fixed upon the carpet in a vacant stare. The maid's presence was forgotten. But the latter very soon recalled her from her reverie, saying, "The boy is waiting for an answer, Miss Marion."

"Tell him there is no answer," said Marion, almost peevishly.

The maid closed the door and started to do her bidding.

Marion hurried to the stairs and called her back with the remark that she must say something. She went to her desk and wrote:

My dear Mr. Devonshire:—I am very sorry, but it will be impossible for me to see you this forenoon, and unfortunately every hour of the day and evening is engaged. You are very kind to suggest calling. I wish it were so that I could receive you, but——

Here Marion paused. Her penholder found its way to her mouth, and she bit it very hard with her pretty white teeth in the effort to solve the problem. She got up, went to the table, picked up Devonshire's letter and returned with it to her writing desk. She read it again.

"It's really very nice of him to want to see me," she reflected. "He is such a charming man, and so handsome. I should be so sorry to offend him, and I am afraid he would be offended if I should refuse to see him. But I don't want to see him—I can't see him, and yet—really I ought to, I suppose. Mama would wish me to, I am sure."

She turned her head and saw the maid staring at her in dumb surprise. She felt a tremor of nervousness, and wished the girl would leave her. She took up the unfinished note and tore it into a thousand pieces, a rosy tint spreading over her face. Then she began a second letter.

My dear Mr. Devonshire:—I am very glad that you have not forgotten me.

She held up the paper and read thus much, and then did some more thinking. "I am glad," she

said to herself, "I am glad that he hasn't forgotten me. No girl likes to be forgotten by a nice man the minute she is out of his sight. I wonder what he wants. I wonder—but I shall never know if I refuse to see him, and would it be treating him right to do so? It can do no harm to see him. I don't want him to call. I wished he had not asked me to let him call; but now that he has done so, I don't like to offend him, and Mrs. Harbury—she too might be offended."

The note was finally finished, and an hour later Mr. Richard Devonshire was in Marion's presence.

XXXIII.

DERRINGFORTH turned away from before Marion's home in despair. He had stood there for hours, it seemed to him, but minutes were hours at that bitter moment. The unseemly haste in closing the outer doors and turning off the lights as soon as he was out of the house, sent a cold shudder through him. It was not late. The neighboring residences were still cheerful and bright with illumination. Between them stood the Kingsley home, somber and gloomy.

Derringforth turned his eyes towards Marion's room, hoping, even yet, that a light would appear in her window for him—that he might see her face, or in some way be assured that she still thought of him —still loved him. But the longing of his heart was not satisfied. All was darkness.

Life had never been so black and bleak and dreary as at this instant. The foundations that he had built upon had crumbled and tottered before his eyes. That hope which had been his life—which had given to it sweetness and inspiration and enthusiasm—was dead.

He walked on and on in the cold, wet night, suffering as only a sensitive, sincere nature can suffer. The pain was so keen that he could scarcely bear it; death would be a welcome relief.

"What is there left to me?" he cried. "With Marion there was everything; without her there is nothing."

He had wandered far over towards the East River, and was walking through a gruesome part of the town. He had turned up one street and down another with no definite purpose, with no care for his whereabouts, when suddenly he was awakened from his reverie by the discovery that he was being followed. His pursuer was almost upon him when Derringforth came to a realizing sense of his danger, and in a flash all the unhealthy desire for death vanished from his mind. The instinct of self preservation sprang to the front with as keen a desire for life as Derringforth had ever known. Marion and all his troubles were instantly forgotten, and his whole mind was alert for some way to escape the peril which threatened him.

He quickened his pace gradually. By this means he widened the gap between himself and his pursuer. But within another minute he was made aware of greater danger. A low whistle sounded from the opposite side of the way and a little in advance of him. Instantly the man behind made a dash forward, while another ran across the street to cut off escape. The two were closing in upon Derringforth.

It was a critical moment. To turn back would land him in the hands of the enemy. To go forward would bring about a similar result. Derringforth thought quickly. The man in front, club in hand, was almost upon him. Derringforth sprang for him and forced the fight. In a flash the club had been struck from his hand by Derringforth's heavy cane, and a quick blow across the head sent him reeling to the ground with a cry that pierced the darkness and awakened a slumbering policeman on the corner below. The shriek from his confederate terrified the other assailant, and instead of bringing his sandbag down upon Derringforth he turned and ran for his life.

Derringforth pursued him with the speed of a sprinter, and had almost run him to earth, when the awakened policeman joined in the chase and captured him. Derringforth explained the situation, and with the officer hurried back to where the other man had fallen. He lay there still, half stunned by the heavy blow he had received. The policeman lifted him to his feet, and in a few minutes Derringforth's assailants were on the way to the station house.

It was past midnight. The heavy mist had developed into rain. The air was chilly and penetrating, but Derringforth did not feel it. The incident with the footpads had sent the warm, young blood bounding through his veins. A healthy glow was upon his face. His shoulders had regained their

usual position. He walked erect as he made his way homeward. There was a decision and swing in his movement that suggested strength and power—suggested the man in his own consciousness and in fact.

The contrast with the Derringforth of half an hour before was marvelous. Then he was wandering aimlessly, he knew not and cared not whither. His shoulders were bent forward, his head drooped, his step was slow and uncertain. He had reached that degree of despair when death began to appeal to him as the only source of deliverance from a misery that it seemed to him he could never endure. The thought once gaining access to his mind, it began to possess him, and in a cold, unnatural, unhealthy sense comfort him.

There is a strange inclination in human nature to make a luxury of misery—to dwell upon it and paint it, in morbid fancy, in its most harrowing, most direful, most dreadful colors—in its most dramatic and disheartening and gruesome aspects. This is especially true of women, but men are not free from it; Derringforth was not free from it.

It is a novel experience to be suddenly confronted with death just when one is yearning for it. It rarely makes its appearance at such a time. The difference between the real thing and the mawkish fancy of a disordered mind is so great that one should be excused if, in unseemly haste, he abandons his desire to pass beyond into the unknown.

We excuse Derringforth and rejoice that his life was threatened by these two murderous scoundrels. Nothing could have brought him to his senses more effectually—nothing could have given him a fuller realization of his folly.

He shuddered at the possibility of what might have happened but for this incident. The thought of his father, struggling along alone under a crushing load, and the picture of his mother, pale and broken hearted, racked his soul with deepest emotion. It gave him a conception of his own selfishness that frightened him.

The encounter with the footpads was so heroic a treatment that it did more for Derringforth than six months would ordinarily have done for him. It was a tremendous shock, a tremendous struggle, a tremendous awakening. He was stronger and braver and better able to bear the sorrow of his life because of it.

XXXIV.

A YEAR of struggle had wrought a change in Derringforth, but he was still the boy when he called on Marion to tell her that the engagement must be postponed, and, like a boy, sensitive, petulant, almost childish, he was swayed by foolish pride.

When he entered his office the following morning there was a quiet determination in his face that suggested the man. The turbulent spirit of the boy had vanished, and in its place had come a certain firmness —a grim stoicism.

A close observer might have detected a trace of recklessness in his manner—might have fancied, too, from the somewhat dogged way in which he went about his work, that the sweeter elements of his nature had petrified into unyielding rigidness. There was a slight suggestion of cynicism about the mouth, and an expression in the eyes that was almost stern—perhaps more cold than stern—perhaps more pathetic than cold.

A crisis stared the Derringforths in the face this morning. The heavy hand of the Hayden National

Iron Company was raised to strike them down. Behind that hand was Van Stump. In his search for some means to crush the Derringforths, he discovered that they were large debtors of the Hayden Company. The latter was a corporation whose stock was listed on the New York exchange. It was, therefore, an easy matter for him to buy a controlling interest. The business was prosperous, and the purchase would not only prove a paying investment, but would serve his purpose regarding the Derringforths.

At the end of a couple of days he was in a position to dictate to the management of the Hayden Company, and the very first stroke of his hand was leveled at the Derringforths. The amount of the claim was sixty seven thousand, four hundred dollars.

The Derringforths had not expected to be called upon for this money. They had in fact been told to take their own time for paying it, and had accordingly felt easy in this quarter. All their energies had been bent towards freeing themselves from the Shylock who had brought them to the very verge of bankruptcy. But the demand from the Hayden people was couched in language that left no doubt of its meaning. Van Stump not only wanted to humiliate young Derringforth, but was anxious to crush the firm. The collaterals he held, for money advanced, were improving steadily. With a better feeling in financial circles, the Derringforths would soon be

able to raise money on them through legitimate channels, and then he would lose the securities that he greedily coveted. It was, therefore, important to him that the blow be struck without delay.

"Sixty seven thousand dollars will smash them," he muttered, gloating over the fancied downfall. "A clever move, getting hold of this Hayden business," he went on, smiling at his own cunning, "a very clever move. It will crush them so flat that they will never rise again."

From the Derringforths his mind drifted to Marion, and a look of cruel triumph came into his hard, cold face. "You shall rue the day, young woman, that you ever snubbed me," he hissed.

Van Stump had presumed too much on the meekness and weakness of the Derringforths. A new spirit had entered the firm. Mr. Derringforth had magnified the importance of protecting his name. His sensitiveness and pride on this point amounted to little short of weakness. Phil had, from the first, questioned the advisability of bolstering up a name by such ruinous expedients as his father had resorted to. He had protested mildly from time to time, but his protestations had been those of a boy; now they were those of a man. He was in no mood for conciliating ugly creditors.

"I think we have had quite enough of this defensive policy," he said to his father. He spoke in a quiet, decisive way that lent force to his words.

"In the effort to save our name we have ruined it. From the minute we placed ourselves at the mercy of that miserable Shylock—from that minute we were doomed. It was a mistake. I thought so at the time; I know it now."

"It was a mistake, Phil, you are right," responded Mr. Derringforth. "But we can't retrace our steps," he continued. "We can't undo the mistakes of the past. We must meet the situation as it is today, and it is very grave."

"The past is dead," said Phil. "Let us forget it."

There was indescribable gloom, indescribable resolution in these words, as he spoke them. They told a story that pierced the father's heart. Neither spoke for an instant. Phil was the first to break the silence.

"Let us face the future without sentiment," he said, "and meet the situation boldly. If we had only done this a year ago we should not be where we are today. There wasn't a creditor then who would not have cheerfully given us time to turn around in. We could have made a showing that would have satisfied every one of our ability to pay, and of the profitable business we were doing. But what might have been is neither here nor there. It is no longer a question of pride, but one of expediency. This ugly demand from the Hayden Company has worried you until you are sick; it has made me mad. We have done the walking long enough; now let somebody else do it."

Mr. Derringforth was astounded at the change in Phil. His manner, and the aggressive spirit he manifested, were a revelation to the father.

It was only after a prolonged protest that the management of the Hayden Company yielded to Van Stump's dictation for forcing a settlement from the Derringforths. On receipt of a reply from the latter the Hayden management felt as if it had run up against a stone wall. The letter, which was inspired by young Derringforth, ran as follows:

HAYDEN NATIONAL IRON COMPANY:

DEAR SIRS—Comment on your action of yesterday is hardly necessary. You can perhaps imagine our opinion of a house that would take the position you have taken, considering the years we have dealt together, and the assurances we have had from you —upon which assurances much of the business between us was done. Whether you can imagine it or not, it matters little. But what we wish to say is—and this we desire to emphasize—that there is some doubt, in our minds, about your ability to make an immediate collection of sixty seven thousand, four hundred dollars from this house. You may understand the situation better than we do, but, as we see it, we are persuaded that, if you attempt the measures you foreshadow, you will begin a walk that will prove a long and wearisome one to you.

Very truly yours,
DERRINGFORTH & DERRINGFORTH.

The letter was at once forwarded to Van Stump for

his edification and advice. There was a mingling of contempt and sarcasm and defiance in it that he little expected from the Derringforths. He was livid with rage, and stormed about his library in a way that terrified Strum.

XXXV.

It was no easy matter for Derringforth to bring his father around to a fighting standpoint. But the young man had developed a strength of will that prevailed in the end, and the letter to the Hayden Company represented the now dominating spirit of the Derringforths.

The condition of their affairs called for vigorous and extraordinary measures. A survey of the situation made it clear that some one should go West, to put certain property in such shape that it would be safe from attack. Mr. Derringforth was too nearly worn out to attempt the journey. He was actually ill, and ought not to have been at business. The only alternative was that Phil should go, and at six o'clock that night he stepped aboard the train at the Grand Central Station, bound for Nebraska.

Before going, he called on Burrock to talk over the situation in Wall Street.

"The market has rallied a good deal today," said Burrock. "It has developed a strength that few men looked for. My advice is that you hang on to West-

ern Union. While you are away I will look after your interests for you."

"All right," replied Derringforth. "You know I always act on your advice. But be sure not to let me lose very much on the deal. I'm the next thing to a bankrupt."

It was a relief to Derringforth to get away from New York, and to feel that three full days stretched out before him, without a hand's turn to be done—no notes to pay, no mail to answer, no accounts to audit — nothing but nothingness. The last twenty four hours had been so long and so full that he felt older by a score of years. Until now he had not had a minute to reflect calmly upon all that had occurred. His suffering had been so keen, so deep, and so cruel that, it seemed to him, it never could have been compressed into a single day.

In memory he went back to the previous night, and saw Marion enter the room to greet him. He could feel her hands in his—could see himself beside her on the sofa. But how far back it all seemed, and yet the pain of his heart was that of a fresh wound. He thought of every word she had spoken and of every look she had given him. The scene stood out vividly before him. Once he suddenly reached forth his hands as if stretching them out to her. It was at that point where he had almost asked her forgiveness, almost begged for her love. A look of tenderness came into his eyes, and the rigid lines of resolution

about his mouth began to relax. For a little time the old hopeful, pleasant smile was on his lips. The stern determination vanished, and he was a boy again.

But as his mind wandered on, and the breach between Marion and himself widened—as he saw himself leaving her with a formal good night—saw himself stopping, after reaching the street, and turning back, swayed by love too powerful to yield longer to his pride—as these thoughts surged through his mind, and he saw the house suddenly darkened, his expression changed. A stony resolution came into his eyes, and the light of love and hope and sweetness faded from his face.

The devil—if there be such a creation—has a very bad habit of doing things, at times, that he ought not to. He is popularly supposed to inspire all evil acts and to perform, personally, an overwhelming proportion of them. If it be so that he does all this, the activity of his majesty commands our admiration, and paralyzes our comprehension. He is certainly very great in his line.

But there is a suspicion, in the minds of some people, who think a little now and again, that it would be a trifle more just if humanity, as a whole, would to some extent divide with this satanic genius the responsibility for some of the thoughts that go astray from the canons of morality and purity—divide with him the responsibility for an occasional censurable act.

There are some things credited to him, however, that look very suspicious—assuming, of course, that he is what he is supposed to be. One of these is his trick of stepping in at a critical moment, and turning the current of one's thoughts in a way that perhaps changes the whole life.

For example, Marion was reassured of Derringforth's love by the discovery that he had waited so long outside the house, after she had said good night to him. She interpreted his motives perfectly, and her own love went out to him. In the morning she started to write and tell him all. She had written but a few sentences, when the note from Devonshire was handed to her.

This was a crisis in her life. She had turned towards Derringforth, and, left to herself, the impulses of her heart, and the true, womanly instincts of her nature, would have led her to him. But she was not left to work out her destiny in her own way, guided by love.

It was at this critical point that the devil began to get in his work. Richard Devonshire became the instrumentality through which his satanic majesty gained touch with Marion. The result may be inferred from the following letter, which was written several days after Derringforth had started for the West.

DEAR PHIL:—I can't go away without telling you that I am going. I hope I shall not have to go without seeing you. I said something, you know,

the last time you were here about the possibility of our going to Europe. We have decided to go, and shall sail Thursday, one week from today. We may be away a long time—perhaps more than a year, as papa wishes to spend next winter in Egypt. I hope you will come to see me. I cannot go away happy, without seeing you. There is so much I want to say to you—there was so much I wanted to say to you, the last time you called, but, as you know, there was an atmosphere of constraint that made us both untrue to ourselves. I hope you will forgive me, and come to see me.

As ever,
MARION.

If our tickets were not already bought, I should rebel, even now, against going.

This letter was sent to Derringforth's office, and from there it was forwarded to Nebraska. Before it reached him, Derringforth had left for Dakota. The letter was again sent after him, but before it had overtaken him, he started East, having been summoned home by a telegram, informing him of the serious illness of his father.

Mr. Derringforth had dragged himself down to the office for several days after Phil went away, but finally he gave up and took to his bed. His illness speedily developed into pneumonia, and he had no reserve force with which to combat the disease. He was worn out in body and mind from worry, and the struggle he had undergone. The blow from the Hayden Company was the final stroke that crushed him.

He was barely alive when Phil reached home. He had fixed his mind, it seemed, on holding on to life long enough to see his boy once more. He had prayed that this wish might be granted, and had asked often for the time, as if calculating the number of minutes before Phil would come.

Mrs. Derringforth met her son at the door. One hurried glance of inquiry at her eyes, and his heart sank within him. She led him softly to his father's side. A smile lighted up the dying man's face when he felt the pressure of Phil's hand. He opened his eyes and looked into Phil's. The son pressed his lips to his father's forehead. The father tried to speak. "My boy," flickered on his lips, and he was gone.

XXXVI.

MARION sailed without receiving any response to the letter she had sent Derringforth. A week of waiting and hoping ended in disappointment, and she went on board the steamer with listless tread. She had never known deeper depression—had never faced gloom so dense.

The fancies of pleasures abroad, that had won her consent to go, had lost all their charm. They were as dull and cheerless as the morning. A nasty east wind was blowing, and a great gray mass of fog hung over the city and shut in the ship. Marion could scarcely have felt more oppressed if she were going to her doom. When she had passed up the gang plank she stopped and looked back with the hope, even yet, that she might see Derringforth. She could not believe that he would allow her to go away without taking her by the hand and wishing her God speed. It was not like him to be unforgiving—not like him to be rude; and the failure to answer her note was rudeness.

At this instant a cab dashed down the pier. She

saw it, and her heart gave a sudden bound. The door was quickly thrown open, and Richard Devonshire stepped out. Marion turned away and hurriedly sought her stateroom. A look of unutterable disappointment was on her face. Her last hope was shattered. The gang plank was run ashore, and the great steamer moved out into the dense fog.

"Oh, Mrs. Kingsley!" exclaimed Devonshire, some little time later, rushing up to her and seizing her hand with undisguised pleasure; "I have been looking everywhere for you for the last half hour."

"I am so sorry," answered Mrs. Kingsley, with a smile that made Devonshire feel very much at home with her.

"I had almost concluded that some dreadful thing had happened at the last minute to prevent you from sailing, and I was upon the point of going back on the tug."

"Oh, Mr. Devonshire!" protested Mrs. Kingsley.

"Upon my soul, I was. You can't imagine my disappointment; but where is Miss Kingsley? I hope she did not fail to come."

"Oh! no; she is in her stateroom. The excitement of getting away and the early hour of sailing have given her a slight headache, and she thinks it best to be quiet for a little time."

If Mrs. Kingsley had said heartache she would have been more accurate in her statement. Possibly, though, she thought it was headache; possibly she

thought that the early hour and the excitement of getting away were alone responsible for Marion's utter wretchedness. To give one the benefit of a doubt is charitable—even commendable.

"I am so sorry," answered Devonshire, with a good deal of feeling.

"You are very kind," returned Mrs. Kingsley. "A few hours will quiet her head, I am sure."

"A few hours!" repeated Devonshire, an expression of disappointment coming into his face.

"That is not so very long," rejoined Mrs. Kingsley, understanding him, and secretly elated.

"Time is comparative, you know. A day is a year, or a year is a day, as the case may be."

"And how is it in this case?"

"I am sure you cannot go astray in judgment," said Devonshire earnestly, convincingly.

"Marion will be very much flattered. I shall tell her how time drags with you during her absence."

"Do, please. It is very good of you. I wish you would."

Compliments, sincere or otherwise, never fell flatter than these from Devonshire, when they were repeated to Marion. She was in no mood to be flattered by words from his lips. She had fled to her stateroom to escape him—had fled there to be alone. His compliments only served to irritate her, and the presence of her mother, bearing such a message, was scarcely less annoying.

A combination of influences had brought her to the point of yielding to her mother's will, and now she was bound for Europe. Her heart had fought against going, but the peculiar circumstances surrounding her, the strained relations with Derringforth, and finally the persuasion of Devonshire—an influence almost hypnotic in character—had overcome her resistance, and in a weak moment she consented to go. The promise was no sooner given than she began to wish she could recall it, but her pride stood in the way.

She wrote to Derringforth, hoping he would come to her—hoping that he would rescue her from the influences that had persuaded her to do the thing she had fought against doing. One word of encouragement from him—one word of frank, sustaining love—and she would have fled to him even now and given him all the sweetness of her youth—all the love and confidence of her heart.

But he did not come to her—did not answer her letter—did not give any evidence that he had one thought for her, and the ship put out upon the ocean and she had not seen him. She was unspeakably wretched and wanted to be alone. It was while in this mood that her mother came to her with Devonshire's compliments. They were nauseating at this time, almost maddening.

"I wish you would be good enough not to annoy me with his flattery," she said, speaking as she had never spoken to her mother before.

"Why, Marion!" exclaimed Mrs. Kingsley, astounded.

"I can't help it. I wish I had never seen him. If it hadn't been for him I should not be here now."

"You should not be unjust, my dear."

"I don't believe I am. I have been persuaded to make myself wretched. I have yielded to please others—yielded to please him, in part."

"It breaks my heart to hear you talk this way, my child. God forgive me if I have had a selfish motive in urging you to take this trip."

"Forgive me, mama," said Marion, drawing her mother to her and kissing her. "But I can't help thinking it is all a mistake. I know you have done everything for my happiness—have done everything that seemed to you best for me, but, my dear mama, is the result all that you could wish? I was very happy a year ago—Phil was very happy; now we are both wretched. He has lost faith in me—hates me, perhaps. He did not come to see me off—did not answer my letter. I am sure I have treated him very badly, or he would never have allowed me to come away without seeing me."

"Do you think you have treated him so very much worse than he has treated you?" asked Mrs. Kingsley, after a few moments' thought.

"I am sure I must have," answered Marion, bitterly condemning herself.

"I can't think your conclusion is right, Marion,

but I would suggest that you go over the events of the year carefully and with a view to dealing justly with yourself as well as with Phil."

Mrs. Kingsley paused, and the conversation ceased for a few minutes, during which time Marion's mind reverted to Derringforth, and for the thousandth time she asked herself why he had not answered her letter —why he had not come to see her? She knew nothing of his trip West—knew nothing of his father's sickness and death.

"You spoke of being very happy a year ago, Marion," said Mrs. Kingsley, breaking the silence, and speaking more seriously than usual. "Has the social life of the last year given you no happiness?"

"It has given me a great deal of pleasure," answered Marion.

"But not happiness?"

"A different kind of happiness."

"Would you not expect a different kind of happiness now that your school days are over? Life is ever changing. One cannot go back from one period to another and take up the old pleasures and find them the same. This is one reason why I have aimed to lead you into broader fields. Your happiness has been my study. I have lived for you, not for myself, and it hurts me, my child—it hurts me more than you can realize, to hear you say that you are miserable, knowing as I do that the blame for your unhappiness rests on me."

"I am very sorry, mama. I wish I had not spoken the way I did. I am not myself this morning. You cannot understand how cruelly hurt I am at not seeing or hearing from Phil. I blame myself, not you. Forgive me, dear mama. I am selfish—I am horribly selfish. If I had not been, I should not have treated Phil in a way to offend him, and I should not have spoken those mean words that hurt you so much. I was annoyed by Mr. Devonshire's silly flattery. I suppose I ought not to feel unkindly towards him, but I do. You will forgive me for what I said, won't you? I am so sorry."

"I am only too glad to forgive anything in you, my dear child," said Mrs. Kingsley, taking Marion in her arms with a mother's love. "I do not expect you, at your age, to understand life as I do," she went on. "But when you have grown older, I think you will see it from a broader point of view. This trip will be an education to you. You will be very glad, in a few years, that you had the opportunity to see so much of the Old World, and under such favorable circumstances. But what shall I say to Mr. Devonshire? He will naturally wish to know what you said when I gave you his message."

"There is only one thing you could say if you were to tell the truth."

"Imagine my saying to him that you requested me to be good enough not to annoy you with his flattery. That would be a rudeness of which I could never be

guilty. Isn't it just as well, Marion, to be a little bit reasonable? Mr. Devonshire is a gentleman. He has been especially nice to you, and has done nothing for which you should blame him. He is ignorant of any motive you may have for wishing not to go abroad, and his desire that you should go is complimentary to you. He will be on this ship with us for a week. I hope you will treat him with the courtesy that he deserves."

"I do not like to be rude to any one," answered Marion, "but it was his persuasion that finally made me commit myself, and I have been sorry ever since, wishing I had never seen him. The feeling is unreasonable, I know."

"Then if you realize that it is unreasonable, as it undoubtedly is, I shall have no further fears of your treating him rudely."

"What shall you tell him I said?" asked Marion, as her mother was leaving her.

"I have not decided yet what you *did say*," answered diplomatic Mrs. Kingsley, with a triumphant smile.

XXXVII.

THE load that had crushed Mr. Derringforth was one that few young men of Phil's age would have attempted to shoulder. A few weeks before, Phil himself would have hesitated and turned away. The situation was aggravated by the death of his father. Creditors whose faith in Mr. Derringforth, personally, had made them lenient in the matter of collections, now pressed hard for their claims.

The Hayden Company, obedient to Van Stump's command, sued for something over sixty seven thousand dollars. Derringforth fought the suit, feeling that he could well afford to pay lawyers' fees and court expenses in order that he might gain time ; for time to him then meant everything. The conditions under which the transactions were had with the Hayden Company enabled him to make a technical defense. Their procedure had been nasty in the extreme. Derringforth believed that this blow from them was the final stroke that sent his father to the grave. He felt very bitter. The spirit of charity was not dominating his thoughts and acts just now.

Pride did not stand in his way, as it had in his father's. He was ready to take any legitimate action that would tend to improve the situation. His first aim was to get out of the clutches of the money sharks. He discussed the situation with his mother, and they agreed in the opinion that the wise thing would be to turn their house into money at once. This was speedily done, and a sum was realized from the sale that enabled him to pay back several of the loans that had been secured from Strum.

This released a lot of valuable securities which the latter had held as collateral. On these Derringforth was able to raise, through legitimate channels, enough money to take up the remainder of the firm's notes held by Van Stump.

A few weeks of his management, and Derringforth & Derringforth were free from the grasp that had dragged them to the verge of bankruptcy. But they were far from being out of debt. Their obligations had been lessened slightly—merely to the extent of the proceeds from the sale of the house—but, for the most part, they had only been shifted.

This change was not brought about without friction—not without an injury to the name that would have cut deep into the pride of Mr. Derringforth. Several suits had been begun against the firm, and the atmosphere was squally indeed. The standing of the house in financial circles had been very nearly destroyed. But this was inevitable. Derringforth's

boldness bordered on recklessness. Conservative creditors shook their heads ominously as they watched his methods, and pressed with redoubled vigor for the collection of their claims. There were others, of less timid nature, who saw something in the young man that commanded their admiration. They liked the fighting qualities he displayed. But had they known that he was plunging deeper and deeper into Wall Street every day, they, too, would have wagged their heads ominously.

When his father died, Derringforth held two hundred shares of Western Union. Had he closed out then, his experience in the Street would have cost him a trifle less than six hundred dollars. He went to his office the morning after the funeral with the intention of selling his stock—with the conviction that he would have nothing more to do with speculation.

A large accumulation of mail was awaiting him. The demands on his time were so numerous and so imperative that the thought of Wall Street did not come into his head until towards night.

"Another hundred—perhaps three or four hundred gone," he reflected. There was a look of inevitable resignation in his face. He evidently had no hope that the market had turned in his favor. His manner was grave, almost gloomy. Dense clouds had set in about him, and they were so dark that his eye could not penetrate to the silver lining. An hour later a darker tinge spread over them.

He had finished his dinner, and was sitting by the library table. His mother sat opposite. She was prostrated by the death of her husband. The atmosphere of the house was gloomy and sad. Derringforth had been trying to comfort her—had been trying to say something that would lighten the sorrow of her heart. He picked up a paper that had not yet been removed from its wrapper. He opened it and glanced over its contents. He was not reading. His mind was not with his eyes. He could not have recalled a word—not until the name Kingsley riveted his attention. He read eagerly. A sickening sensation made him grasp the arm of his chair. The item stated that the Kingsleys had gone abroad for a protracted stay—perhaps two years. It went on to tell something of their plans, and ended with a highly flattering reference to Miss Kingsley. It spoke of her as one of the most popular girls in society, adding that she had both beauty and cleverness to aid her in her social aspirations.

Derringforth turned pale. His hands shook as he laid the paper down. A steely coldness came into his face. He was trying to master himself.

The gloom of the night did not disappear with the coming up of the sun. It was denser and blacker than on the previous day. Derringforth faced it with grim resolve. It had been a night of bitterness, of sorrow, of regret, of indignation. He could see no light anywhere. But the sadness of his mother's

face called up all his pity. He tried to speak a few words of cheer to her before going down town to business, but his words were without life; there was no cheer within his own heart. He could not give forth that which he did not have.

The day was on, and the work of the day must be done. The first thing was to close out his stock. He turned to the market report and ran his eye over the list. It rested on Western Union. He started, and then held the paper up closer, to make sure.

"An advance of five points and a quarter!" he exclaimed. "Impossible, impossible!" Then he read the financial editorial, and found that the quotation was correct—that the stock had actually made this sudden leap.

"This is marvelous," he meditated. "It makes me richer by over a thousand dollars than I was yesterday—richer by twelve or thirteen hundred than I expected."

He had been so sure that the stock had made a further decline that he had not looked at the quotations in the evening paper, fearing that the loss would be greater than he even dared to fancy.

Gloom always breeds gloom. A shaft of sunshine penetrating the clouds spreads a flood of light over all. The atmosphere is warmed and sweetened and made buoyant. This sudden bit of good luck reawakened an almost forgotten sensation in Derringforth. He had pulled against a stubborn, adverse

tide until his stroke had become fixed. He plied the oars with a dogged persistency. Hope had played him false so many times that he no longer looked toward it. He had turned his back upon it with a frown. It was at this time, when everything was blackest, that this shaft of sunshine penetrated the gloom. He faced towards it with a glad heart. A new light was in his face as he looked forward to a career which, but a day before, he had resolved to abandon forever. Verily it is the little things of life that shape our ends.

XXXVIII.

The scope of Derringforth's transactions in the Street constantly broadened. The tide was with him —luck was with him. His profits grew amazingly. It mattered little what he touched, he seldom sustained a loss. The excitement was exhilarating. It largely absorbed his thoughts, leaving him little opportunity for unhappy reflections, and yet he could not get entirely away from these.

A good share of his time was still devoted to the old business of Derringforth & Derringforth. Everything connected with it reminded him of his father. The wound healed slowly. That other sorrow—that living sorrow, still cast its shadow over him.

Marion had been abroad six months now, and he had not heard a word from her. The letter she sent him a week before sailing was still in Dakota, tucked away in a dusty pigeonhole in the little country hotel, where Derringforth had stopped in the winter. He did not leave his address, and the proprietor of that inconsequential hostelry, thinking that without a street number in New York the letter would never

reach its owner, decided to hold it for him. It was accordingly put aside and forgotten.

Derringforth had been astounded, on reading of Marion's departure for Europe, to think that she would go away without giving him a chance to say good by. He needed no further proof of her faithlessness. Embittered, he tried to force himself to forget her.

But it is not an easy matter to forget one who has entered so largely into a life as Marion had into Derringforth's.

Down deep in his heart—far down beneath the bitterness and cynicism that tinged his thoughts, lurked the hope that some day he might receive a letter from her. A strange eagerness possessed him to get his mail on the days of incoming steamers from Europe. This feeling was incompatible with his efforts to forget Marion. He knew it, and despised himself for the longing that he had not yet been able to force from him. But each time the will pressure was increased, and the sweetness of his heart yielded to deeper cynicism.

Sometimes the thought had occurred to him that he was at fault—that Marion could not have written to him after his coldness the last time he saw her.

"I wonder if this is the real cause?" he reflected. "If I thought it were—but no, it can't be. There is no shadow of reason for such a belief."

Nevertheless the impulse to write to her almost mas-

tered him at times, but with a grim resolve he choked back these better feelings.

One day in searching through his pocketbook he came across a clipping from a newspaper. The color suddenly left his face, and a dark frown gathered on his brow as he read. A strange, fierce light came into his eyes. Presently he took up the item and read again :

"She has both beauty and cleverness to aid her in her social aspirations." Then with a flash of scorn he crushed the scrap of paper and hurled it from him, repeating contemptuously the words, "social aspirations."

"Nothing is too sacred to be sacrificed to this god of pleasure," he muttered, with a curl of the lip. "Little she cares for a man's heartache; little she cares for anything except the flattery and dazzle of society. My father's death, even, has not moved her, and it was she—this girl, whose heart hasn't a single throb of loyalty, whom I wanted to make my wife.

"Poverty was indeed kinder to me than I thought," he went on, swayed by the bitterness of his heart. "The grasp of that miserable, cringing Shylock was soft and tender compared with the fate I sought. God be praised that I escaped. I was blind, but now I see. Men are fools in their eagerness to enslave themselves. I was one of them—was ready to give up my freedom, my life even, and for what?

Love—love, did I say? No, no, there is no longer any such thing as love."

The growth of Derringforth's cynicism had been stimulated by close association with Burrock. The latter had had an "affair," and his regard for woman was tinged with contempt. He had not sought to make Derringforth think as he thought—feel as he felt. Had he attempted this, the effect would have been healthful on Derringforth, as it would have aroused his resistance. As it was, there was no guard against the insidious influence of Burrock's unhealthy views.

Burrock was not a man of fine fiber. There was a world of difference between him and Derringforth. Their association was a matter of accident. Wall Street had brought them together at a time when Derringforth was ready to grasp at any straw that promised the aid he sought. But beyond Wall Street there was little in common between them at first. As time went on, however, they grew toward each other. The growth was to the advantage of Burrock—to the disadvantage of Derringforth.

Burrock knew that Marion had gone abroad, although Derringforth had not mentioned her name since her departure—in fact, not since the night on which he had last seen her. It was evident to Burrock that a rupture of some kind had taken place. Derringforth's silence increased his curiosity. Delicacy of feeling was not a conspicuous trait in his character,

but it had been sufficient to prevent him from mentioning Marion's name to Derringforth. There never happened to be a reasonable excuse for doing so. But one day his chance came. It was Sunday. He was lounging back in an easy chair at his rooms, reading the foreign gossip. Presently he came across an account of a coaching trip. The mention of a Miss Kingsley of New York as one of the party fastened his attention. The item went on to say that she was one of the most attractive American girls in Europe. "It is rumored," continued the writer, "that Richard Devonshire, a young Englishman of excellent social position, who is also of the party, is paying devoted attention to Miss Kingsley. But his is not the only British heart that this American girl has set to quicker action. Lord Hethersford and the Duke of Huntingdon are among her most ardent admirers."

There was a gleam of satisfaction in Burrock's eyes when he had finished reading this bit of gossip.

"Confirms my theory—just what I expected—wouldn't trust a woman far as I could throw an elephant—all alike—sorry for Derringforth—explains why he has kept so glum—something he had to learn, though—every man learns it sooner or later."

Burrock's concern for Derringforth was far less than his delight at what he regarded as the discovery of Marion's disloyalty. He had no object in wishing her to be disloyal beyond the desire to see his insane the-

ory regarding woman verified. He was fond of Derringforth, in so far as his selfish nature was capable of fondness.

Armed with this cutting he started out to find Derringforth. It was the opportunity he had been longing for. It would open a subject that he had not hitherto dared approach.

Derringforth was at home. Burrock shot a quick glance at him. "No," he said to himself, "he can't have seen it. He is as cool and undisturbed as usual."

"I'm glad you called," said Derringforth. "I have just read a capital financial article. I want you to read it. We are going to have a strong market, mark my words."

Burrock took the paper and glanced over the article in a half hearted fashion. "Yes, looks well," he said. "I think you are right—market should boom."

Derringforth began telling why he looked for an advance in prices when Burrock interrupted him.

"By the way, old man," he said, plunging his fingers into his vest pocket and bringing out a scrap of paper, "here is something I clipped from today's *Herald*—may interest you."

Derringforth took the cutting and quickly ran his eye over it. A pallor like that of death came into his face. But beyond this and a slight trembling of his hand as he passed the clipping to Burrock, there was no indication of the tumult within.

"You may keep it," said Burrock. "Doubtless interests you more than me."

"You are very kind, but it does not interest me sufficiently to stimulate a desire to retain it," answered Derringforth with steely indifference. There was something in the way he spoke that warned Burrock of the danger of proceeding further with the subject. Nevertheless he was not going to be put off in this way. He wished to say his say about women—about this woman in particular. He was sure that she had misused Derringforth, and he wished to "sympathize" with him.

"I am glad, old man, you have so little interest in her—thought you were still in love with her—wanted for months to talk it over with you—glad I was mistaken—fortunate you've got over it so easily—she isn't worthy of——"

"Stop!" said Derringforth, raising his hand in a warning gesture. "Not a word that reflects on Miss Kingsley." The fire flashed in his eyes as he spoke, but his control over himself was perfect.

Burrock was chagrined. The hot blood burned in his cheeks, but he bridled his tongue with caution.

"I did not intend to reflect on her individually," he said in an attempt at apology. "I know nothing against her personally—simply know that she is a woman, and that is enough."

"No, not enough to warrant you in even breathing aught against her, individually or collectively," an-

swered Derringforth. His manner left no room to doubt his earnestness. "This is the first jar we have had, Burrock," he went on. "*It must be the last.* You will apologize for the reference you made to Miss Kingsley, or I shall forget that I ever knew you."

Burrock hesitated for an instant and then held out his hand. "I am sorry, Derringforth; I certainly did not intend to say anything offensive to you. I hope you will overlook what I said. I know nothing against Miss Kingsley, and will take good care not to speak of her again."

Derringforth took the proffered hand, believing it was extended in good faith. "I am sure you did not intend to offend me," he replied, "and I am glad you have made it possible for me to forget the occurrence of this unpleasant incident."

XXXIX.

A LARGE English steamer was plowing through the waves toward Sandy Hook. A pilot boat had just been sighted. The passengers crowded eagerly to the rail and watched its approach. It was to be the first coming in touch with things of "home." A little boat put out from the vessel with the huge number on her sail, and a pilot was rowed to the side of the big steamer. A bundle of newspapers was sticking out from his pocket. These were quickly bought up by the ocean travelers, thirsting for "news."

On the forward deck was a tall, graceful young woman, with a bright, cheerful face that had won much admiration abroad. She leaned over her father's chair and ran her eye over the paper he was reading. Presently Mr. Kingsley turned the page. Marion gave a sudden start and grasped her father's arm. A big display heading had attracted her attention. This is what she read beneath it:

Phil Derringforth, the young man who has made things lively in the Street for the last few months, has

gone to the wall with a crash. His losses, as near as can be learned, amount to something over two million dollars. He was believed to be worth a clean million twenty four hours ago ; now he is this much worse off than nothing. The dramatic side of Wall Street is seen to perfection in his case.

Derringforth began speculating at about the time of his father's death, which occurred nearly two years ago. The firm of Derringforth & Derringforth, which consisted of father and son, was heavily involved at the time of the senior partner's death. It had been in a bad way for a year and a half. Young Derringforth showed great ability in managing the firm's affairs, after the business came into his hands—so great, in fact, that he was able to pay up all indebtedness, and come out with a profit. But he had become interested in Wall Street, and finally closed out the old business and gave all his time to speculation. His boldness brought him quickly into prominence. He was beginning to be a power in the Street when his mother died suddenly. The shock was very severe on him. He kept away from the Street for a few weeks, but on returning began speculation with a recklessness that seemed born of desperation. Luck was with him until he was stabbed in the back by a friend—one Burrock, a miserable fellow who would sell out his own father if it were to his interest to do so.

It came about in this way. It seems that about a year before the death of the senior Derringforth the firm fell into the hands of J. Harrington Van Stump, a rich Shylock who squeezed the life blood out of the house. Van Stump is well known in social circles, is very rich, and poses as a man of exemplary character. The Derringforths, up to the time of the senior partner's death, did not know the hand that had dragged them

to the verge of bankruptcy. Their transactions were had through an attorney—one Martin Strum, a tool of Van Stump's. But after the father died the son in some way found out the name of the real Shylock, and with the daring of a young man he entered into a fight that caused Van Stump a great deal of annoyance and eventually a heavy loss. There was mutual hatred between the two men. Van Stump, as the story goes, bought a controlling interest in the Hayden National Iron Company with the evident purpose of crushing the Derringforths. He succeeded to the extent of driving the senior Derringforth to his grave. Young Derringforth finally came into possession of certain information that enabled him, in company with others, to make a powerful attack on the Hayden Company. The stock went down with a rush. Van Stump bought liberally, with the purpose of stemming the tide, but the *coup* was so well planned that the bottom seemed to drop completely from under the stock. Van Stump, always a coward, got frightened and sold his entire interest in the Hayden Company, netting a loss of nearly half a million dollars.

This was sweet revenge for Derringforth, but it was not all. The assault netted him a profit of nearly a hundred thousand dollars. This was the first big money he had made, and it gave him a sense of his own power.

Van Stump, it is said, was the most angry man New York has seen in a generation. He swore vengeance on Derringforth. War was declared. But the god of battle was with the young man until treachery in one he trusted landed him at the feet of his foe. It was a contemptible procedure on the part of Van Stump, and inconceivable on the part of Burrock. It seems that the latter and Derringforth had been old

school friends, and that it was through Burrock that Derringforth got into speculation. The two had worked together for a time, but eventually Derringforth branched out independently of Burrock. The latter was envious of Derringforth's rapid rise in the Street, but as a matter of policy kept on friendly terms with him. He retained Derringforth's confidence, and was familiar with his assault on the Hayden Company.

Finally, through some means, Burrock was brought in touch with Van Stump. From that hour Derringforth's fate was sealed. Van Stump was kept informed of his plans. Every move he made or contemplated making was laid before the old Shylock. Armed with this information it was not a difficult matter for him to lead Derringforth into a trap. Much sympathy is expressed for the young man in the Street.

It was a singular coincidence that the first thing that greeted Marion's eyes, as she approached home, should be this startling account of Derringforth's downfall, giving as it did a brief outline of his career during her absence of almost two years.

"Oh, poor Phil!" she exclaimed. "This is dreadful, dreadful! and we knew nothing about the death of your father and mother."

"It is shocking," said Mr. Kingsley. "I cannot realize it."

In all the time Marion had been away she had not heard from Phil. Her letter remained unanswered, and she was too proud to write him a second time.

There was but one conclusion to draw, and that was that he was angry and wished to break with her. The thought was a bitter one, but there was no other reasonable explanation. Why then should she humiliate herself by venturing to write again? The possibility that her letter did not reach him never entered her mind.

He had deliberately ignored her note; had deliberately refused to call on her before her departure. This was a cutting conclusion for a girl of Marion's pride. Indignation was the inevitable result. The love of her heart was embittered. She tried to forget Derringforth, even as he was trying at that very time to forget her.

There was nothing in her life abroad to remind her of him; there was everything in it to bury the past deep beneath a constantly changing panorama of pleasures. She had hitherto held herself in check, always with the thought of Derringforth. But she was free now to accept attention without restraint. Conscience had dropped its warning finger. She filled her lungs with deep, long draughts of pleasure. She lived in an atmosphere of delicious intoxication. She was courted, admired, flattered, fêted. The exhilaration was sweet to her. It became her life, her soul, her very self. Suitors for her hand failed to entice her from these effervescent delights.

"Mama was right," she told herself. "A girl ought not to marry before she is twenty five. I cer-

tainly shall not, and I shall keep myself free from all entanglements so that I can enjoy myself. One thing is sure, I will never become engaged until I am ready to marry. When I have grown tired of this sort of pleasure, then I suppose I shall marry, but I'm not going to tie myself down so long as I enjoy the life of a girl. There is plenty of time yet for me to think of marrying."

Richard Devonshire's fate was only that of many another man whose heart Marion had quickened to the tune of love. But she managed with a clever tact that enabled her to retain the friendship of all — the admiration of many. This was true of Devonshire; it was equally true of Burton Edwards, who still loved her deeply, though he had followed her to Europe and turned his face homeward without the promise he had sought. Sometimes Marion contrasted the ardor of Edwards with the indifference of Derringforth. But Edwards was not the only man she had contrasted with Phil. All alike had been compared with him, and though she had tried to forget him there was still, down deep in her heart, a feeling for him that she had never had for any other man.

Whenever her thoughts strayed to Derringforth she saw him as she had seen him in the past. There was no change in his appearance. He had grown no older. In fancy, she could see him at his office, pen in hand, busy with correspondence, or perhaps at

home reading in his favorite corner. She could see his father in his big easy chair, smoking an after dinner cigar, and Mrs. Derringforth, a little way from him, busy with some piece of fancy work. The thought had never occurred to her that anything out of the ordinary had taken place with the Derringforths during her absence.

This newspaper account, telling of Mr. and Mrs. Derringforth's death, and of Phil's failure, was therefore a rude awakening to a sad reality. She was inexpressibly shocked. Her heart was warm with sympathy for Phil, while she condemned herself for the bitter feelings she had had for him—condemned herself for the little thought she had given him.

XL.

Colonel Geoffrey Rayburn invited Derringforth to go down to his Southern home with him for a few days' rest. The invitation was little short of a command.

"Rest!" exclaimed Derringforth, when the colonel mentioned the matter the day after his failure.

"Certainly, and why not? You will never have a better opportunity. There is nothing you can do here during the next few days. Your affairs are in the hands of your lawyers."

"You are extremely kind," answered Derringforth. "I appreciate the invitation very much, but think how it would look for me to go off on a pleasure trip at this time."

"Hang the looks!" returned the colonel. "I am your largest creditor, and if I do not grumble no one else should."

"But every one has not your generous eyes."

"Nonsense, nonsense, young man. Make your plans to start with me tomorrow morning. I can't allow you to break down—you owe me too much

money. A few days' rest will give you a firmer stroke. You must put yourself in condition to jump in and hammer out another fortune."

It was ten o'clock on the morning after Marion had read of Derringforth's failure. She stood by the rail of the big Cunarder that had borne her safely across the Atlantic. The steamer was moving majestically up the Narrows. Marion's heart beat with joy as she saw the familiar sights dear to all American eyes.

The great ship steamed steadily on and presently ran into the busy waters of the Hudson. A ferry boat put out from the New York side and headed straight for the New Jersey shore.

The great ocean steamer loomed up as a monster beside the little side wheeler. A sea of faces peered over the rail and looked down upon the upturned faces on the little boat. Two men stood somewhat apart from the others on the river craft. One was a tall, athletically built young man, dressed in a traveling suit. His companion was his senior by perhaps a score or more of years—a man of military bearing and strikingly fine presence.

A cry escaped the lips of one of the steamer's passengers, followed by the frantic waving of a feminine handkerchief. Derringforth saw it, and saw, too, a very pretty face turned towards his with an eager smile. He looked for an instant and then turned his head away without a sign of recognition.

Marion's heart sank within her. The distance be-

tween the two boats widened; the distance between herself and Phil, it seemed to her, widened in geometrical progression.

It was a bright, crisp November morning when Derringforth and Colonel Rayburn reached their destination. The soft rays of the Virginia sun made it seem to Derringforth like October in the Berkshires. Colonel Rayburn held the lines. Derringforth sat beside him. The horses flew over the ground at a rattling pace. The air was exhilarating. Derringforth drew in long breaths and feasted his eyes on the scenery, made beautiful by the autumn foliage.

"This will do you a world of good, my boy," said the colonel.

"It has done me a world of good already, I fancy," answered Derringforth. "I believe my chest is larger by two inches," and he swelled it with another long breath of that life giving air.

The horses shot between two great stone piers and into the curving roadway of private grounds. Derringforth caught a glimpse, through the trees, of a typical Southern home. A flitting shadow attracted his eye and instantly vanished behind the foliage. The carriage swung to the left. The horses bounded forward. The trees thinned. A tennis costume, a racket, a graceful figure burst upon his vision. Ah, yes! another similar costume, flying after a ball, speeding from the racket of a young man on the other side of the net.

XLI.

DERRINGFORTH felt more at home with the Rayburns at the end of an hour than he would have felt with some New England family at the end of a week. He saw Southern hospitality in its perfection. It was a revelation to him—a delightful realization of a fancy founded on what he had read and heard. He was glad he had come, though but a little while before, when he first caught sight of the tennis players, he felt like leaping from the carriage and running 'cross lots to the railway station, to escape meeting these girls. He had not known that Colonel Rayburn had a daughter, and only expected to meet his wife.

But no young man in his right mind could regret making the acquaintance of Dorothy Rayburn. He felt like calling her Dorothy already, and fancied that she was likely to call him Phil at any moment. Her cousin, Nellie Bradwin, was also an attractive girl, and Mrs. Rayburn was a charming woman. Stanley Vedder was the young man playing tennis with the girls when Colonel Rayburn and Derringforth drove up from the station.

Vedder started to go after meeting Derringforth and talking for a few moments with him.

"You must not go, Stanley," said the colonel. "I want you to help entertain Mr. Derringforth."

Vedder's face lighted up. He did not want to go.

"I shall be very glad to do anything I can to add to Mr. Derringforth's pleasure," he replied.

The two young men were of about the same age. The one had made a reputation as an athlete in college; the other had made and lost a fortune. The training of these two had been widely different. Which was the better equipped to fight the battles of life—Derringforth with an indebtedness of a million dollars and not a cent with which to pay it, or Vedder with his enviable football record and a considerable knowledge of Latin and Greek? Possibly this thought came into Colonel Rayburn's mind as he saw these two young men side by side. It would not have been surprising if he had asked himself which would make the more desirable husband. The look in Vedder's eyes whenever they met Dorothy's would certainly have suggested the query.

In the afternoon the horses were saddled and the four young people mounted them and started off in gay spirits for an hour's royal sport. Vedder had cleverly managed to take a position that would naturally bring him beside Dorothy. Derringforth did not notice the maneuver. He found himself between the two girls, and as all rode abreast at first, he felt

that he was in luck, happening to be just where he was when the start was made.

But when the main road was reached they broke up into couples. Then it was that he realized he had not been quite so lucky as he thought, for instead of two girls he now had only one. He fancied that he saw a slight look of disappointment in Nellie's face, and he feared that he had inadvertently made a blunder in falling in where he did.

"If Vedder had wanted to ride with this one ever so much I suppose he would have made no move toward doing so," thought Derringforth, a trifle uncomfortable. "This Southern courtesy is so excessively fine that I dare say he wouldn't utter a word of protest if I were to tread on his toes."

But Nellie made herself so agreeable that it was not long before Derringforth's fears began to subside. They would have vanished altogether but for a move that transferred him to Dorothy's side. The summit of a high hill had been reached, from which a fine view could be obtained. All stopped to look at the surrounding country. When they began the descent, Derringforth found himself beside Dorothy. He didn't know just how the change came about, but he was conscious of a sense of delight that he was with her. He felt, too, that he had got out of Vedder's way, and that in itself was a satisfaction. Then the thought occurred to him that the stop might have been made on Vedder's suggestion, with a purpose of

bringing about the change, in so clever a way that he would not suspect the other's aim.

"This is indeed a courteous people," he reflected. "I like such delicacy."

He was partially right. The stop *was* a diplomatic one. But it was Dorothy's diplomacy that had brought it about—not Vedder's. If Derringforth had looked back he would have seen a very troubled expression on some one's face. But he was not looking back just now.

"Here is a good stretch of road ahead," said Dorothy. "Shall we not have a little dash?"

She turned her eyes toward Derringforth's. There was a something in them that awakened an almost forgotten thrill in his heart.

"Yes, indeed, I should like it immensely," he replied, with an eagerness that made Dorothy smile.

The horses were off on the instant and racing at full speed.

"This is glorious sport," said Derringforth, when they had reached the foot of a hill and slowed down.

"I am so glad you like it," rejoined Dorothy, with delight in her eyes. "I was afraid you would find our simple country life very stupid, but now I know how to entertain you."

"Your life here is charming," declared Derringforth, "and there is nothing I like so much as a dash on a spirited horse. These two are very evenly matched."

"They seem to be today, but Billy is a little the faster, I think. You are, aren't you, Billy?" she added, appealing to the horse himself for confirmation.

"I think I would be willing to back Jack against him," said Derringforth.

"All right," laughed Dorothy. "We would like nothing better, would we, Billy?"

Billy didn't make it quite clear whether he relished the idea of a race or not, but Dorothy cast the deciding vote, and it was settled that there should be a race between Billy and Jack, with the respective riders that were then up.

Derringforth forgot all his business troubles. His heart was as light as that of one who had never known a sorrow.

"She is very sweet," he said to himself, stealing an admiring glance much oftener than one of his cynical tendencies should. "I wonder why Vedder fancies the cousin? She isn't so pretty as Dorothy—hasn't the same charm of manner. But there is no accounting for tastes. He probably knows what suits him."

Derringforth was not quite sure on this point, however, when they reached the house. He and Dorothy had dismounted and were standing on the veranda, chatting, when Vedder and Nellie rode up. There was a considerable difference in the expression of their faces. Nellie's was more than passively

happy; Vedder's was more than passively unhappy. Derringforth was quick to note this, for he had expected to see each beaming with joy. He was puzzled by the contrast.

Vedder tried to appear light hearted, but his effort was a palpable failure. There was no spirit in his words; no buoyancy in his soul. He seized the first opportunity to get away without seeming abruptness, and went home in a very gloomy mood.

In the evening, Colonel Rayburn and his wife, the two girls, and Derringforth, sat down to a game of hearts. Dorothy was prettily gowned in a light, soft silk that was especially becoming. Derringforth found himself admiring her. She talked very well—played very well. Now that they were side by side the contrast between her and Nellie was certainly in her favor. He liked Dorothy's blue eyes better than the deep black ones of her cousin. Dorothy's features, too, were rather more delicate. She resembled her mother.

"Some people, though," he admitted to himself, "might fancy Nellie's looks more. I suppose Vedder does. But I can't understand him. He was certainly in the dumps when he came home from the ride."

It was a jolly game. Every one was in the best of spirits. Colonel Rayburn called Derringforth Phil, and this made him feel even more at home. The evening swept by and was gone. It had been a day

of life and happiness to Derringforth. He was sorry that it was over, never again to be relived. But the hope of another equally enjoyable on the morrow gave sweetness to his sleep.

The morning dawned as bright as the one that preceded it. Derringforth went out on the veranda before breakfast and filled his lungs with the invigorating air.

"This is life," he reflected, looking off over a wide expanse of beautiful country. "This is nature —not the cold, unyielding granite of the city. I like God's work."

The door opened, and he saw it in its perfection. Dorothy was beside him, as fresh and pretty as a wild flower.

"Isn't this a perfect morning for our race?" she said, adding with mischief in her eyes, "I hope you haven't weakened."

"No, indeed. I'm anxiously awaiting the start," he answered, delighted by her beauty.

"You are enjoying the anticipation of victory, I see."

"It's best to cling to a sure thing," he laughed. "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, you know."

"Yes, but faith often leads us such a merry chase only to disappoint us in the end."

"And that is the way I shall find it in this race, you think?"

"Well, I warn you I shall ride to win."

"That is another way of saying I shall be beaten. All right. I have great faith in Jack."

"You will persist, then, in spite of my warning, in enjoying the victory in fancy?"

"Yes."

"But the disappointment when you are beaten—just think of that."

"No, I won't think of that. I, too, shall ride to win."

"I should be annoyed if you did not. We must have a fair race."

At ten o'clock Jack and Billy were brought out, saddled for the contest. The riders mounted and jogged along slowly to the place selected for the race. Colonel and Mrs. Rayburn, and Vedder and Nellie, followed in a carriage. Pedro, the coachman, and several of the other servants were early on the scene. It was a great event with them and many were their wagers. But the betting was by no means confined to the servants. The colonel backed Jack, while Vedder placed his money on Dorothy's horse. He had recovered to some extent from his depression of the night before; still he was not in a happy frame of mind. The disturbance of his heart caused by Derringforth's sudden appearance at the Rayburns' was not so easily quieted.

Derringforth wagered a box at the theater with Dorothy, including a supper at Delmonico's. She

bet a silver cigar case. Nellie followed Vedder's judgment, while Mrs. Rayburn, as a matter of courtesy to Derringforth, bet on his horse.

"I tell you that Jack will win," said the colonel. "I have always said that he had speed, and today you will see it."

The bets were numerous and the interest at fever heat, when the flag dropped and the horses were off like a flash. Each seemed to know that something more than usual was expected of him—each imbibed the spirit of the occasion, and, responding to his rider's words, tried to vanquish the other.

The start was almost even, but at the end of a few rods Dorothy was in the lead. A great shout went up from the winning side, but the gap between the riders was not widened. Jack was beginning to attain a dangerous speed. Billy heard the clatter of his hoofs, and urged by Dorothy, almost flew over the ground. But the great stride of the bigger horse pushed him hard. The distance between them began to diminish, and a shout from the other side now rent the air.

A minute later, and Derringforth was beside Dorothy. The horses were going like arrows. It was neck and neck with them. Derringforth cast a quick glance at Dorothy. Her riding was perfection. Her face was bright with hope. He felt that the race was his, but he would a thousand times rather she should win it, and yet, remembering her words

of the morning, he could not give it away. He would not incur her displeasure even in the effort to give her a moment's happiness. The stake was but a little way ahead. Derringforth called to Jack for a final spurt. The response was instantaneous. Derringforth was half a length in the lead.

"I told you so," cried Colonel Rayburn, cheering wildly; but the great excitement was with the colored contingent. A mighty shout went up from those of them on the now winning side.

The stake was but a dozen rods away. Derringforth was increasing the gap between him and Dorothy. The road swerved sharply to the right. Derringforth was riding to a splendid finish, when a monster St. Bernard dog bounded over the fence on the left with a savage yelp. Jack plunged suddenly to the right. The girth parted. Derringforth kept straight on for an instant, and then fell heavily, the saddle beside him.

Dorothy was the first to reach him. She bent over him with frightened face. He tried to get upon his feet with her aid, but he could not stand. Colonel Rayburn was soon upon the scene. Derringforth was placed tenderly in the carriage and taken home.

XLII.

DERRINGFORTH opened his eyes and looked about with a dazed expression. The fumes of ether were still strong in the room. The surgeon had just finished his work. Colonel Rayburn stood beside him, wearing an anxious look.

"Jack was going straight for the stake," said Derringforth. "I didn't want to win, but she would have been offended if I had given her the race. Something happened. I never was thrown before. They will think I don't know how to ride. She will laugh at me. Well, she won the race any way, and I didn't pull Jack, either. But I can't see why I was thrown. It wasn't the dog—no, it wasn't the dog. Something did happen."

There was a touch of pathos in his struggle, half conscious as he was, to account for his fall.

"It was not your fault," said Colonel Rayburn.

Derringforth looked up quickly. Reason began to assert itself.

"Not my fault?" he repeated eagerly.

"No, not your fault, but the fault of the saddle."

"The saddle?"

"Yes, the girth broke."

An expression of contentment came into Derringforth's eyes.

"I knew something happened," he said. "I couldn't believe that I was thrown like a novice." Then, turning to the surgeon, he asked: "Is my leg really broken, doctor?"

"Yes, and it is a pretty good fracture; both bones broken just above the ankle."

That expression of contentment changed suddenly. Derringforth said nothing for a minute. He brought his hand up to his eyes. His brow was knit in thought.

"You will be as good as new again in a few weeks," continued the doctor in an encouraging tone.

"A few weeks?" repeated Derringforth.

"Yes, you could hardly expect the bones to heal in less time."

"Can I go back to New York with Colonel Rayburn?"

"Not for the world."

"But I must be there. It is imperative."

"Nothing is imperative with you now, young man, except to get back the use of your leg."

Derringforth raised his eyes to Colonel Rayburn in mute appeal.

"Don't worry about your affairs in New York,"

said the colonel. "I will look after your interests there for you, and the doctor and Mrs. Rayburn will look after your comfort here. Dorothy and Nellie will entertain you, and the time of your imprisonment will slip by before you know it."

Forced to face the inevitable, Derringforth did it graciously. It was useless for him to think of his business affairs, or to worry about anything. There was nothing for him to do but content himself and let nature do the rest. The tension of his nerves relaxed, and he found a sense of dreamy luxury in his enforced idleness. The days swept by. The past seemed a century away. He was in a new world, with new thoughts, new impulses, new realities.

But one day that past was brought vividly to his mind. The morning mail had just arrived. Dorothy ran quickly to Derringforth with the New York papers. She never tired of doing for his pleasure. Her coming always sent a smile of glad welcome to his face.

"You will make me wish these broken bones would never heal," he said, looking into her eyes as he reached his hand out for the papers.

"Oh, you wicked man!" replied Dorothy, with a gesture of protest. "Just think what you have said."

"I have been thinking, and that is why I spoke as I did."

"Dreaming, I fancy. I must have wakened you when I came in. I am so sorry."

"Your fancy is wrong this time, though I must admit it is usually right."

"I don't know about that. I'm afraid it is very erratic."

"No, I don't think so. I have reason to remember the accuracy with which it hit the mark once, any way. You recollect what you said the morning before our race, when we were standing on the veranda?"

"But I would have been wrong had there been no accident."

"'Buts' don't go. You were in at the finish, and I—well, you know where I was."

"That isn't fair to yourself; and besides, you wanted me to win the race."

"I wanted you to win it?" exclaimed Derringforth, with a quick look of surprise.

"Now be honest; didn't you?" said Dorothy.

"Why in the world do you ask such a question?" returned Derringforth, a slight flush tingeing his cheeks.

"Ah, you did, didn't you?" she laughed.

She said this in a way that made Derringforth feel like admitting almost anything, but he dodged the question nevertheless.

"I wonder if you will not charge me with being thrown purposely, so that you should win the race?" he returned.

"Oh, no, you certainly would have resorted to

some cleverer scheme than that, had you dared to let me win."

"Had I dared to let you win? Why shouldn't I have dared to?"

"Because you were afraid of offending me."

A deeper shade passed over Derringforth's face. Dorothy laughed at his perplexity.

"You didn't know I could read your thoughts so perfectly," she said.

"Upon my soul I must stop thinking."

"Oh, don't do that. It is such fun for me to read your thoughts."

"I don't believe you can read them all."

"Haven't I given you convincing evidence of my powers?"

"You simply chanced the statement. But I haven't admitted that I didn't dare let you win."

"You might as well, though—you know it is so."

"By what process of reasoning did you arrive at this conclusion?"

"Ah, don't you wish you knew?"

"Yes, won't you tell me?"

"Perhaps, if you will promise not to wish any more such wicked wishes as you did just now."

"I'll promise, but really I did not wish that. I simply felt that there was more happiness here with a broken leg than anywhere else in perfect condition."

Dorothy's cheeks flushed now. The slight embarrassment only added to her beauty. Derringforth

felt his heart beat faster. There was a minute's silence, broken by Nellie, who ran in to say that Mr. Vedder had just come, and that they were waiting for Dorothy to join them at tennis.

"Oh, has he come?" said Dorothy. "I will be right out."

Nellie had already gone. There was a look in Dorothy's eyes as they met Derringforth's that seemed to say: "I would a thousand times rather stay here with you."

"I wish I could go out with you and take a hand in the game," said Derringforth softly.

"Oh, I wish you could," returned Dorothy. There was infinite meaning in these words as she spoke them.

"I hope you will win," added Derringforth, after a moment's hesitation. His voice was hardly natural.

"Now you see the disadvantage of having a broken leg," said Dorothy, not heeding his last remark.

"Every phase and condition of life has its disadvantages as well as advantages."

"You are very patient."

"You credit me with a virtue that I fear I do not possess. It is my good fortune in being with such friends that contents me."

"I am sure you are not just to yourself."

"Oh, yes, I am. If I were in some places, now, flat on my back, as I am here, I should simply rave against heaven and earth."

"Oh, you must not say that. I don't like to think of your raving against heaven. It is dreadful."

"Pardon me, little girl," returned Derringforth. "I am sorry my thoughtless words pain you."

This was the first time he had addressed her in so familiar a manner. He did not do it intentionally. He was sorry the minute the words were uttered, but he had no need to be. The slip of the tongue, although it brought a flush to Dorothy's face, seemed to add sweetness to the tone in which she said: "I really must go—they will not forgive me if I keep them waiting so long."

"Their loss is my gain," said Derringforth. "You see I am selfish in keeping you from them."

"I am the selfish one in keeping you from your papers," answered Dorothy, and before Derringforth had time to protest she was gone.

But Derringforth was in no mood for reading just now. He pushed the papers away from him, and stretched his arms above his head and looked idly toward the ceiling.

"Is this all a dream?" he said to himself. "Is this home nothing but a shadowy vision? Is Dorothy merely a delightful creation of fancy?"

He lay there and reflected for a long time over the events of the last ten days. They were startlingly dramatic. He could hardly bring himself to believe they were real, and yet was there not the pain of knitting bones as evidence of his accident? The

scenes had changed swiftly. A single stroke, and he was hurled from the eminence of the millionaire to the jagged rocks of bankruptcy.

But for this crash he might never have visited the Rayburns—might never have known the charm of Dorothy's smile—might never again have seen that sweet side of life to which his cynicism had blinded him.

"Does everything come by chance in this world," he reflected, "or is there something just beyond the range of vision that shapes our lives?"

When he had wearied of thinking, he turned to his papers. He looked over the market reports and read the meager news. He ran his eyes over the dramatic notes and carelessly scanned the social happenings. Suddenly he came across a name that sent a thrill through him. It was Marion's. He read eagerly.

"Burton Edwards, a young Californian, and Miss Kingsley, led the german," continued the item. "They were a strikingly handsome couple. Miss Kingsley never looked prettier. Her gown was a fine specimen of Parisian art."

This was the first intimation Derringforth had had that Marion was in America.

"She may have been at home for months, for aught I know," he said to himself bitterly. "I should never have known of her return but for the newspapers. And Edwards! Edwards is with her."

A frown flashed to Derringforth's face.

"It is evident," he continued, with a curl of the lip, "that she keeps Edwards informed of her whereabouts."

This thought seemed to rankle within him. The past came surging back with startling vividness. He tried to shut his eyes to it, but this time his will failed him.

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