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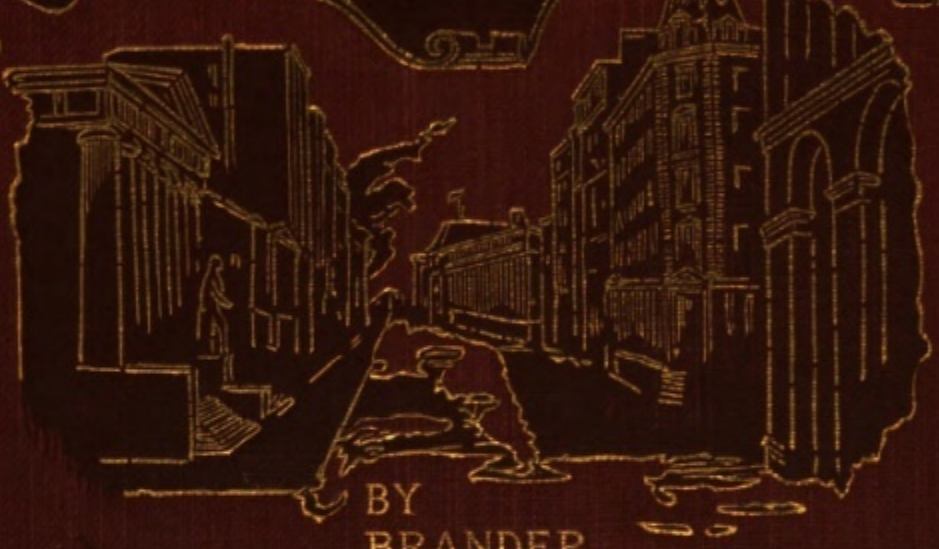
His Father's Son



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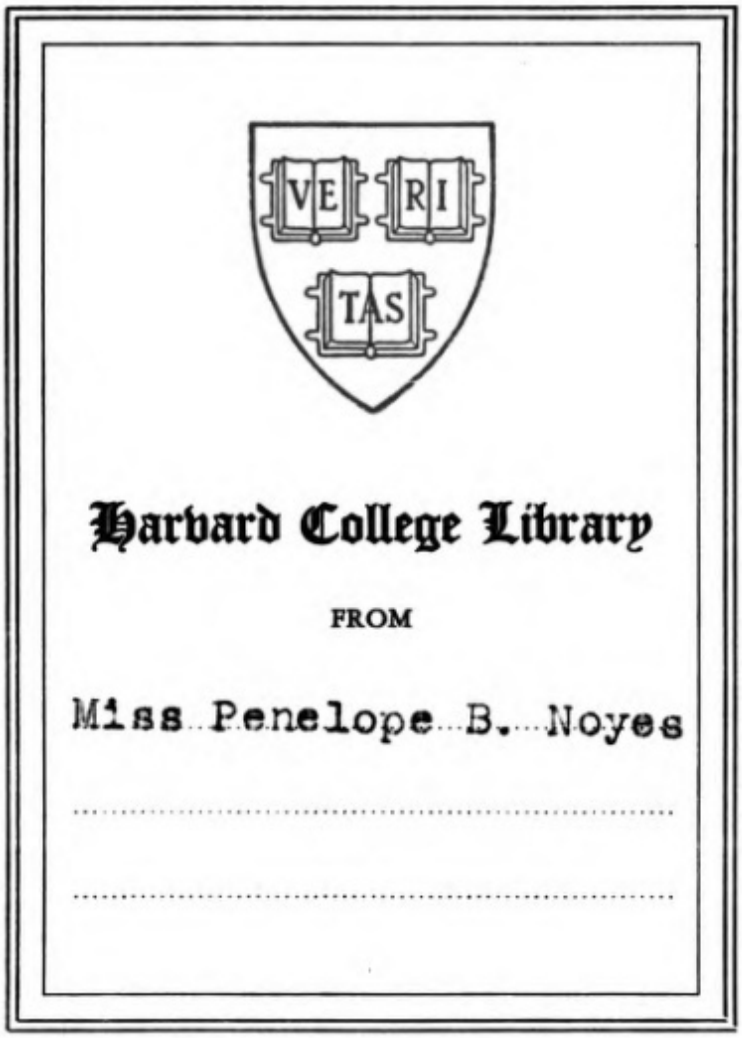

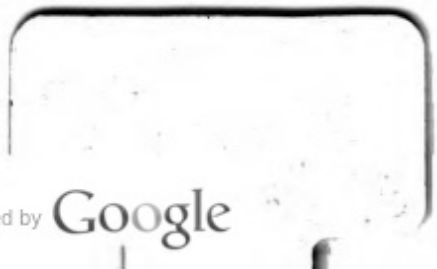

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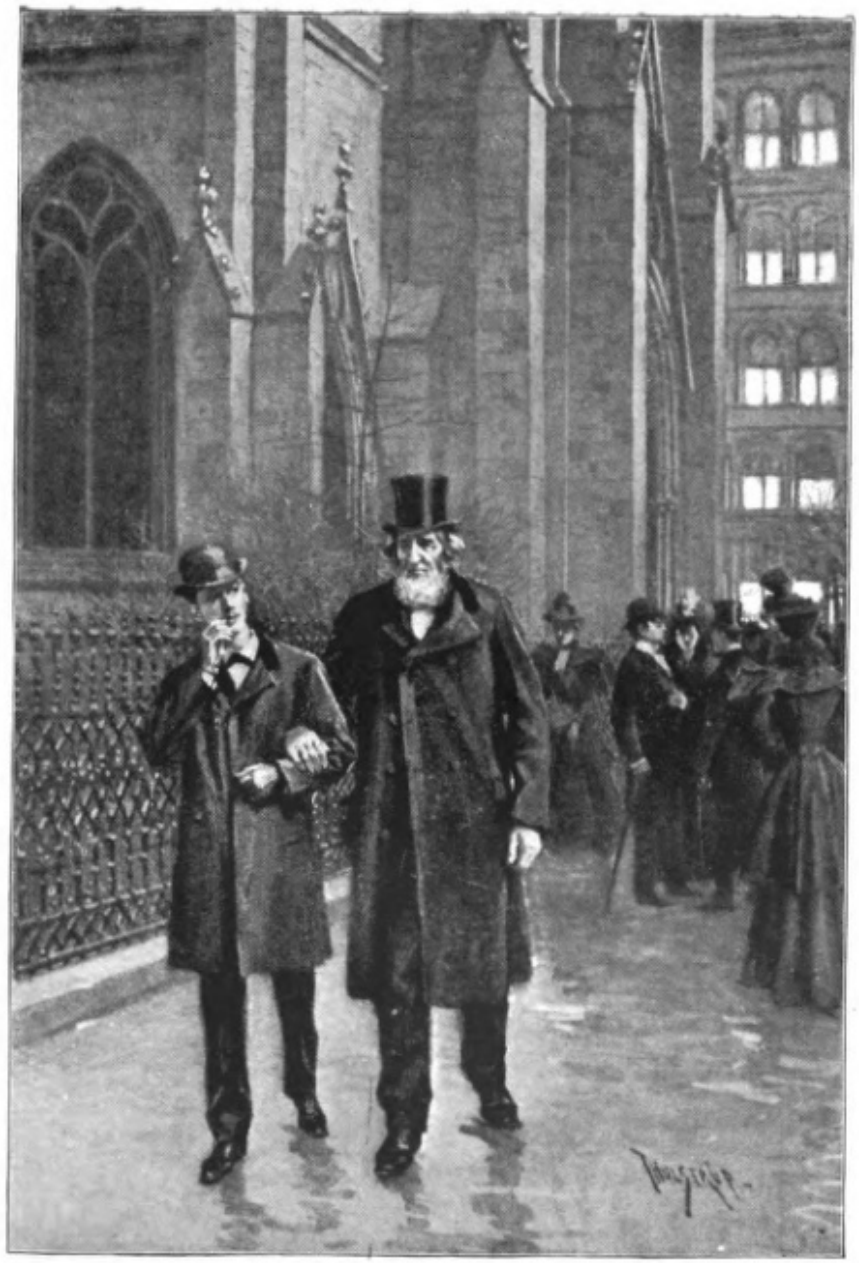

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"THEY SPED ALONG, SIDE BY SIDE"

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HIS FATHER'S SON

A NOVEL OF NEW YORK

BY

BRANDER MATTHEWS

ILLUSTRATED BY T. DE THULSTRUP

NEW YORK
HARPER & BROTHERS PUBLISHERS
1896

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HIS FATHER'S SON

I

THERE was a double stroke on one of the bells in the lofty steeple of Trinity Church, and the hands on the dial of the clock showed that this ambiguous signal was intended to declare the hour as half-past one. Down below on the plain of Broadway, and in the narrow canyon of Wall Street hollowed out straight away from the church-door, men and boys were darting hither and thither; and an observer used to the ways of the Street would have remarked an unusual haste in their movements, and would have known that a pitched battle of some sort was then raging in the Stock Exchange on Broad Street, just around the corner.

It was a clear bright day in the first week of December, and the westering sun warmed the three windows of an office on the second floor of a building almost in front of the Stock Exchange. Two of these windows belonged to the larger room, where the clerks sat, and where the furniture was plain and dingy; here a hard-coal fire glowed in

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the grate, and the door opening into the hall had painted on it, in full black letters, the name of Ezra Pierce. The third window was that of a smaller room opening from the first, and used by Ezra Pierce as his own private office.

When the single stroke of the bell dropped from Trinity steeple that limpid afternoon in December the door between the two rooms was closed, for Ezra Pierce was closeted with a visitor in the smaller of the two. In the outer office the old book-keeper, Mr. Arrowsmith, was making out an account; and the other clerk, a younger man and better dressed, Farebrother by name, was standing between the windows watching the tape as it was spasmodically reeled off by the ticker.

"I guess the old man's pretty happy to-day—he's got Sam Sargent in a hole this time, sure," he said. "Transcontinental has gone off two points since I came in from lunch. I'm glad I backed the old man's luck. I've made enough already to pay for my Christmas presents." Then he released the long ribbon of paper and crossed to the fire. "I say, Arrowsmith," he continued, "why don't you ever take a flier?"

The old book-keeper finished adding a column of figures and then answered, gravely, "I have taken too many fliers, as you call them, in other days — and that is why I am now keeping Mr. Pierce's books instead of employing you to keep mine."

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Before Farebrother had time to find an appropriate retort the door into the hall opened, and a young man entered hastily.

"Has father asked for me?" he cried, as he came towards the fireplace.

"No," answered Farebrother, briefly.

"I'm glad of that," said the young fellow, "but I really had a good excuse this time. You see, I met two classmates at lunch, and we got to talking, and I didn't really know how late it was till I heard the clock strike."

He took his place before the fire by the side of Farebrother. His name was Winslow Pierce, and he was the only child of the owner of the office. He was scant twenty-two years old, slight and pale, with full lips, a small nose, and a small chin. There were no lines on his unworn face. A struggling, reddish-brown mustache gave him something to pull at when he was not biting his nails. He was simply dressed, with even a suggestion of rusticity in his attire; his trousers were not well cut, and although nearly new, they were already bagged at the knees.

"I don't go to Delmonico's for my lunch every day," said Farebrother; "the food there is too rich for my blood. But I wish I'd gone to-day, just to see how excited the crowd is."

"I suppose they were a little more noisy than usual to-day," Winslow Pierce answered; "but they're always noisy enough, seems to me. Has father been out to lunch yet?"

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"Not to-day. And he didn't go out yesterday, either," the clerk responded. "Fact is, half the time he doesn't eat any luncheon, not even a roll; you'll find that out for yourself when you've been here long enough."

"And mother told me to see that father had some soup, or something regularly at half-past twelve," said the son. "I don't see how I ever forgot it."

"Your father doesn't need any lunch to-day," Farebrother declared, laughing. "Sam Sargent is his pudding to-day."

"But I thought that father didn't approve of Mr. Sargent?" began Winslow.

"He doesn't," the clerk interrupted, crossing over to the ticker once more; "and that's why he's knocking the stuffing out of Transcontinental." Farebrother glanced at the tape again. "He's hammered it down another point already! And he takes it as easy as if Sam Sargent wasn't one of the hardest fighters in the Street. What do you suppose your father is doing now?"

"I'm sure I don't know," the son answered.

"He's in that office talking with Doctor Thurston," said Farebrother, "and I guess the dominie is striking him for a donation."

"Doctor Thurston says that father gives more liberally than any other man in the church," the son returned, not without a touch of pride.

"It isn't his giving the money that's so wonderful," Farebrother declared. "It's his finding

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time to talk to a minister on one of the liveliest days the Street has seen for a long while."

"Do you suppose they know that it's father who is selling Transcontinental?" Winslow Pierce asked, pulling at his mustache again and trying to curl it.

"They must know it, of course," Farebrother answered. "But the old man—I mean, your father—has kept so quiet about it that guessing is all they've got to go on."

Just then there came from the private office the sharp clang of a call-bell. Winslow went to the door, opened it, and disappeared in the other room.

"Say, Arrowsmith," remarked Farebrother, when the door had closed behind Ezra Pierce's son, "I wonder what they do teach 'em at those up-country colleges?"

In a minute Winslow came back, shutting the door again, and going straight to the book-keeper's desk. "Mr. Arrowsmith," he said, "father wants a check for a thousand dollars to the order of Doctor Thurston, and charge it to Foreign Missions."

"Certainly," answered the old book-keeper, opening the square check-book.

"I don't see how he can be so calm," commented Farebrother. "If it was me, I'd be hanging over the ticker instead of hobnobbing with dominies. I'll bet that Sam Sargent isn't wasting his breath on any minister just now."

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Mr. Arrowsmith had written the check, and, taking his brass-edged ruler, he tore it from the book. "Foreign Missions?" he queried, as he handed the slip of paper to his employer's son.

"Foreign Missions," the son repeated, walking over to the private office, into which he disappeared again.

"It's the old man's check, of course," said Farebrother, going back to the fireplace, "but it's Sam Sargent who's going to make the deposit to meet it. I guess it's the first time he ever chipped up for the heathen."

Suddenly his manner changed. The door into the hall had opened, and a tall full-bodied man had entered. He was rather handsome, with a florid complexion and a heavy blond mustache streaked with gray. He was perhaps fifty years old. His manner was easy and masterful. His step was quick and vigorous. He pushed open the gate in the low railing which partitioned off an outer space in the office. Farebrother stepped forward to meet him.

"Is Mr. Pierce in?" asked the new-comer.

"He is engaged just now," responded the clerk, respectfully, "but I've no doubt he will see you, Mr. Sargent."

"All right, then—tell him I'm here," Sargent answered, taking in every detail of the office in a single swift glance of his clear blue eyes.

Farebrother tapped at the door of the private

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office. A strong, hard voice called, "Come in!" The clerk obeyed.

Sargent walked forward to the window in front of him, and stood there silently, with his right hand in his trousers-pocket. He smiled as he looked down on the crowd of men and boys, now pressing up to the door of the Stock Exchange, and now scattering in all directions away from it. The old book-keeper came out of his cage, and pretended to poke the fire, so as to get a better view of the man against whom his employer had been waging so bitter a fight for the last year or two.

The door of the private office opened abruptly, and Winslow Pierce stepped aside to let the minister pass before him.

Doctor Thurston had his hat in one hand, the check in the other, and his overcoat on his arm.

As Winslow took the overcoat to assist the minister in putting it on, Sam Sargent faced round. "Ah, doctor," he cried, "is that you? I haven't seen you for a long while."

Doctor Thurston smiled a little bitterly. "You can always find me where you used to find me," he answered.

Before the speculator could reply, Farebrother came out of the private office and said to him, "Mr. Pierce will see you now, Mr. Sargent."

Sargent nodded to the minister, taking in Winslow with another of his swift glances, and stepped inside the private office.

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He was heard to say: "Mr. Pierce, you are probably surprised to see me here, but I've called to find out if we can't settle this thing between ourselves."

"There isn't anything to settle that I see," said the strong voice of Ezra Pierce.

"That's what I've come to talk over," returned Sargent. "Do you object to my smoking? I find now that I can always talk better when I've a cigar in my fingers."

"Certainly—smoke, if you wish;" and then the voice of Ezra Pierce was raised, and there was a hint of harshness in it as it said, "Mr. Farebrother, please close that door."

By this time Winslow had assisted Doctor Thurston into his overcoat. The minister folded the check carefully and put it in an inner pocket. Then he buttoned up his overcoat, and twisted a knitted comforter about his neck.

"I would not have obtruded myself upon your father if I had known that he was so busy to-day," the minister said. "Fortunately, I had concluded my little chat with him before we were interrupted."

"I was ever so surprised to see Mr. Sargent here," Winslow Pierce declared, "but I was almost as surprised to see that he knew you."

"He used to have a pew in my church," explained Doctor Thurston, a little stiffly; "but that was before his daughter married an Episcopalian; and I am bound to admit that he was never assid-

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uous in his attendance. By-the-way, Winslow, I hope to see you at the Friday evening meeting this week."

"I shall try to be there, sir," said the young man, as he followed the minister to the outer door.

"I do not think that you will need to exercise great resolution to accomplish so simple a duty," Doctor Thurston remarked.

When young Pierce had accompanied the minister out into the hall to escort him to the elevator, Farebrother took up his old position before the fire.

"I say, Arrowsmith," he asked, "what does this visit of Sam Sargent mean? Do you suppose he wants to beg off?"

The old book-keeper shrugged his shoulders doubtfully, but made no other response.

A minute later Winslow Pierce returned.

"I don't know when I've been so surprised," he said to Farebrother. "I didn't suppose that either father or Doctor Thurston knew Mr. Sargent —a man of that character."

"Why, what's the matter with Sam Sargent's character?" asked the clerk, in honest surprise.

"Father says that he is an evil-liver, a profligate, and not to be trusted," was the answer.

"Not to be trusted?" echoed Farebrother. "That's news to me. I never heard of his going back on his bank or doing anything crooked. Of course, the old man—I mean your father—doesn't

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like him, and he's squeezing him to-day ; and I suppose that's why Sam has just come here. I guess he's trying to coax your father to let up on him."

"How is father hurting him?" asked the son.

"He's driving down Transcontinental Telegraph point by point," the clerk declared—"that's what your father is doing ; and if he can keep it up long enough, he'll break Sam Sargent before he gets through."

Winslow Pierce was biting his nails as he hesitated, and then spoke again : "I do wish father would take me more into his confidence. I've been here two months and more now, and I don't seem to be any use yet. The work was all arranged long before I came ; and you and Mr. Arrowsmith do it all. I am only a fifth wheel—that's what I am."

"Don't you be in a hurry," returned Farebrother ; "the old man will make you useful yet. He'll put you into more than one board before the winter's over, and by this time next year you'll be a director in a dozen big things."

"Do you think so?" asked the young fellow—"really?"

"Sure," was Farebrother's answer.

"I hope you are right," said the son. "I'd like to be of some use in the world."

Then the door of the inner office opened, and Sam Sargent appeared again.

"That's your last word, is it?" he said, looking

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back, with his hand on the knob of the door. "You won't?"

"I can't," said Ezra Pierce, following his visitor into the larger room. "I shouldn't feel it right. There are others acting with me."

"Very well," returned Sam Sargent, taking the extinct cigar from his mouth and throwing it across the room into the fireplace. "If it is a matter of conscience with you, of course we can't hope to agree, and we needn't waste any more time over it. Good-afternoon."

"Good-afternoon," said Ezra Pierce, with his silhouette framed in the window as he stood and watched his opponent leave the office.

Ezra Pierce was tall and thin, and he stooped habitually; he had gray eyes, a large nose, and high cheek-bones. His grizzled hair was straight and ample; his beard was clipped, and his upper-lip was clean-shaven. His black frock-coat was unbuttoned, and his waistcoat, open half-way down, showed a simple white shirt. He wore a plain black silk neck-tie. He was nearly sixty years old; perhaps he looked a little older.

His son came up to him. "Father," he said, "I didn't know that you knew Mr. Sargent."

"He knows me better now than he did half an hour ago," declared Ezra Pierce, calmly, but not without a suggestion of triumph in his voice.

"You must have got him pretty badly scared," said Farebrother, admiringly, "or he'd never have come here."

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The owner of the office took up the tape of the ticker, which had begun again insistently to record the movements of the Stock Exchange across the street.

He smiled as he read the latest figures jerkily printed on the white ribbon. "Come here, Winslow," he said.

When his son stood beside him he read aloud, but in a rasping whisper, the telegraphic word of his attack: — "100, 15⅞—200, ¾—100, ⅞—500, ½, ¼—200, 15."

"You are hammering it down," the son declared, with admiration.

"Well," the father returned, "I don't know as it is a bad day's work, and we can do better tomorrow, I think."

"If you do that," his son commented, "Transcontinental won't be worth anything at all, hardly."

"I don't see why it isn't worthless now as long as that man Sargent has control," said Ezra Pierce.

The outer door opened, and a small boy with a face of precocious shrewdness entered, holding an envelope in his hand. He looked at the men in the office, and then went up to the old man and asked, "Is this Mr. Pierce?"

"Yes," was the answer. "Is that letter for me?"

The boy handed him the envelope and said, "Mr. Silvige said I was to deliver it to Mr. Pierce himself?"

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"That's Mr. Pierce himself," Farebrother answered, while Ezra Pierce said nothing, but tore the letter open with a single fierce movement of his fingers.

He read the note at a glance, and then said to the boy, "Tell Mr. Silvige that I will come down at once."

"That's all right," the boy responded, taking his departure promptly. "I'll tell him."

Ezra Pierce looked over the letter again. Then he turned to his son, "You can come with me, Winslow," he said, lowering his voice. "Mr. Silvige wants to see me to arrange for to-morrow.

"It's pretty cold outside, Mr. Pierce," said Farebrother. "Hadn't you better go down by the rear elevator, and get in at Silvige & Cusachs's back-door? Besides, you are not so likely to be seen that way."

"I intended to go down by the rear elevator," answered his employer, "but I don't know as I'm ever afraid to be seen anywhere."

The father and the son took their hats and were about to leave the office, when Ezra Pierce paused.

"Mr. Arrowsmith," he said, "what's the balance at the bank to-day?"

The old book-keeper opened the check-book again and answered, "Not quite two millions."

Then the father and the son went out together.

When the door had closed behind them, Farebrother said to Arrowsmith, "The old man's go-

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ing for Sam Sargent, is he? He's ready to put in that two millions to-morrow where it will do the most good."

The old book-keeper shrugged his shoulders silently and went on with his work. Presently he laid down his pen and turned around.

"If you want my advice, Mr. Farebrother," he said, "I'll give it to you. It's this: close out your flier to-day—since you have made enough to pay for your Christmas presents. Take your profit now, for you don't know what may happen to-morrow."

"That's so," responded Farebrother. "Maybe you're right. Sam Sargent is as smart as they make 'em; and he's bound to get back at the old man, sooner or later."

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II

After a protracted conference with Silvige & Cusachs, his chief brokers, Ezra Pierce and his son returned to his own office for a few minutes. Then they set out to walk home together, as they always did when the weather was fine.

It was on the stroke of four by Trinity clock as they crossed Wall Street and passed before the steep decline of the Sub-Treasury steps. At the corner of Nassau Street they were checked by a temporary blockade of cabs and carts, but in a minute or more the vehicles were skilfully disentangled. The last carriage to get out of their way was a brougham, through the open window of which father and son caught sight of the good-natured, sensual face of Sam Sargent, with a serious expression on it at first, giving place to an ironic smile as soon as his eyes fell on Ezra Pierce.

"Father," said Winslow, "weren't you surprised to find that Doctor Thurston knew Mr. Sargent?"

"Did he know him?" his father answered. "I wasn't aware of it. But it is the doctor's business to know all sorts of people. And it would do Sar-

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gent good if he knew more men like Doctor Thurston. But he is a man of low character himself, and he prefers low associates."

"Is he as bad as that?" the son asked.

"I don't mean that Sargent has friends in the criminal classes, of course not. He knows some of the best men in New York, and they seem to tolerate him, for some reason. But he is a fellow of common tastes; he likes fast horses, for instance, and other fast things, I've no doubt. I distrust him, too. He is a mere speculator, with no real understanding of the needs of the country. I I don't see as he's any better than a gambler."

"I remember hearing a sermon when I was a freshman, I think," said the son, "in which everybody in Wall Street was called a gambler."

"That preacher did not know what he was talking about," answered Ezra Pierce, as they turned into Broadway and faced northward. "There are gamblers in the Street no doubt—there's Sam Sargent, as I've said—there are the fellows who watch the ticker foolishly day in and day out—the kind of men who believe in luck!" There was an infinitude of scorn in the harsh voice of the father as he spoke this last word.

"Don't you think there is anything at all in luck?" asked Winslow, doubtfully.

"Nothing at all," the father responded, forcibly. "Luck is a fool's word. It is the excuse of the incompetent. There's really no such thing as luck—and there can't be. There are opportuni-

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ties every day for every man, but only the man of sense and determination knows how to avail himself of them. These poor wretches who spend their lives trying to guess whether Transcontinental is going up or going down, they believe in luck; but when a man is putting Transcontinental down, he knows better—he has made sure that there isn't any luck one way or the other."

"I see the difference, I think," the son said. "The men who merely take chances are gamblers, and the men who make chance do as they please, they are—"

"They are the most useful men in the community," interrupted his father. "They are the real power in Wall Street—not the mere speculator, who is of very little account. And bear this in mind always, Winslow—the men who rule Wall Street are the greatest benefactors of humanity the world has ever seen. They are the men who are developing this mighty country of ours, who are opening up new States to the oppressed millions of Europe, who are building the great railroads and bridging the great rivers and establishing the water-works of great cities through all the mighty West. I see speeches made in Congress sometimes by Western men denouncing Wall Street. They are as ignorant as your clergyman was—and there's less excuse for them, for they ought to know, if anybody does, that it is Wall Street that has made the West. Without the millions that the Street has been pouring out

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for years the West wouldn't be better than a barren waste to-day. I've done my share of the good work, too, and I'm proud of it, of course, but I'm too old to expect gratitude for it from anybody. Yet I do get angry when I hear people abuse Wall Street just because they choose to be blind to the great good the Street has done to the whole country."

"The preacher I heard," said Winslow Pierce, "didn't take that view of it. I wish I'd known then what your opinion was, and I half think I'd have gone up after the sermon and told him where he was wrong."

"He has this excuse," Ezra Pierce admitted, "that he judged the Street as if there wasn't anybody in it that wasn't like Sargent. Well, there is. Sargent represents the worst side of Wall Street—not the best. It's men like him who delay improvements—who stand across the path of progress. That's one reason why I want to get rid of him."

"I don't see how a man of his character can be really in your way, father," remarked the son.

"He has powerful friends," the elder man declared, "and somehow he seems to have a knack of talking them into helping him. Two or three times he has interfered with schemes of mine. But after to-morrow I don't know as he will ever want to oppose me again. That will be a lesson to others, too!"

"I suppose that's the reason you refused his offer of settlement?" the young man inquired.

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"Partly," his father answered. "You heard what I told Silvige & Cusachs. But my real reason was that I can get all he offered me to-day without paying him for it."

"Can you?" Winslow began, admiringly. "I wish I could see how, but—"

"I'll show you how," the old man interrupted. "He offered to make a pool and let me control it, and put Transcontinental up again to fifty."

"And he was willing to resign the presidency in your favor, and—" Winslow suggested.

Ezra Pierce's voice was nearly always loud. It was rarely moderated even indoors. Now it overbore the milder notes of his son.

"The presidency? He's offering what he hasn't got—or won't have long. If Transcontinental goes down to four or five to-morrow morning—and it is bound to—Sargent will not be able to borrow the money to pay the January coupons on the bonds. The company hasn't cash enough in the treasury to do it. Sargent is trying to arrange for a loan. He thinks he knows where he can get it; but it is one of my friends he is negotiating with, and when the time comes he will find that the money is not to be had. Then we shall foreclose. The stock is mostly in the hands of small holders, and they won't give us much trouble. My man will be appointed receiver. We shall reorganize after a while; and when the new company is formed I intend to put you in as first vice-president."

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"Oh, father," cried the son, pleased at the prospect of his future distinction.

"So far as possible I always keep off boards—it frees me from responsibility," Ezra Pierce declared. "But I must have some one there to represent me. So I shall put you in. And it will be a good thing for you—you will see how a great enterprise can be set on it legs again and made profitable."

"Do you think I am competent, father?" was the young man's next question. "I've had no experience, and—"

"I have the experience, haven't I?" the father said. "I guess I've experience enough for two. And remember the advantages you've had. Why, Winslow, if I had the education you've had, I should be the richest man in New York to-day! And even if I'm not, you shall be some day!"

"I don't know how my education will help me to be the vice-president of a great concern like the Transcontinental Telegraph Company," the son returned. "I didn't pay much attention to electricity, and—"

"It's a pretty poor education you've had if it does not fit you to be at the *head* of anything," declared the father. "At your age I was—Winslow, do you know what I was doing at your age?"

"No, sir," responded the son, "at least, not exactly. I know you began as a boy in a country store."

"At your age," his father continued, when he was able to make himself heard after they had crossed

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the broad space in front of the Post-Office, "I was a tin peddler in Vermont. I was only just twenty-one when I had saved enough money and made enough to buy my horse and wagon. The stock I managed to get on credit."

"No," his son said, "I didn't know you had ever been a peddler."

"I wasn't a peddler long," Ezra Pierce asserted. "Within two years I had a chance to buy into a clothing store in Burlington—and I was senior partner in five years. And when I'd made thirty thousand dollars I sold out and took my money to Boston."

"That was where you first met mother, wasn't it?" his son inquired eagerly, wondering whether he might not now find an opportunity to tell his father about his own love-story.

"Yes," said Ezra Pierce; "it was in Boston, right after the first battle of Bull Run. She had come down from the old place in Maine to meet your uncle Gideon, who had been shot through the body just at the end of the fight. I'd done business with Gideon, off and on, for four or five years, and I looked him up, and I found your mother taking care of him. And when he died, that fall, from the wound, I got her to agree to take care of me."

"So it was Uncle Gideon's wound in the service of his country that brought you and mother together?" the son commented. "How strangely Providence brings good out of evil!"

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"Your uncle Gideon had a good business head," Ezra Pierce asserted. "He was making money even then. If he hadn't been a violent Abolitionist, and gone off to the war on the first call for troops, I don't know as he mightn't have been living to-day. And if he was alive now, I'm sure he'd be one of the richest men in Boston."

"Mother clings to his memory even now," said Winslow.

"I've wished he was alive more than once," Ezra Pierce continued, "for your mother's sake. That was when I was down myself, for I haven't always been rich since we were married, Winslow. Twice I got caught by a twist in the market, and found myself with worse than nothing. I hadn't a dollar, and I owed thousands. But as nobody knew what my losses were, my credit was as good as ever. So I was able to go in again and make another fortune before any one found out that the one I had had was gone. You see, there is always money to be made by a man who knows how. Sometimes the chance is bigger than it is at other times, but there's always a chance for a man with his eyes open. And the bigger the place the bigger the chances, and the more of them. That's why I came to New York the year you were born."

"October 23d, 1869," responded Winslow. "I'm twenty-two now, and I've never regretted being born here."

"Twenty-two? So you are," said Ezra Pierce,

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"and I am fifty-seven. Well, I have given you a better start than I had—and you must do what I sha'n't have time to do, I'm afraid. I may die before I can finish."

"I shall try to do whatever you set before me," the son said.

"I know that, my boy," the father answered. "And what I propose for you won't be hard. I want you to take a foremost place in this great city of ours. I mean you to be very rich, of course, and I expect you to take the position your wealth and your education entitle you to. It will be easier for you than for me. Neither your mother nor I ever cared for the frivolities of fashion; we have never made a bid for society. I have been too busy, too absorbed in more important matters, and your mother found her interest in the church. Perhaps we have made a mistake—but I don't know as we have. Perhaps we have been negligent of your interests. But you are young, and you haven't any enemies."

"Have you any enemies, father?" asked Winslow in surprise.

"Every successful man must have enemies," said Ezra Pierce. "And I have been more successful than most men. The people I have passed in the struggle do not love me for leaving them behind. And I have no patience with fools either; I know what is best, and I say what I think frankly. Perhaps I have been too intolerant sometimes, as your mother says I am; but, at

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any rate, I have never been mean enough to seek popularity — there has never been any necessity for that."

"But I wasn't very popular either in college," his son returned. "And how can I gain popularity here, if you haven't it?"

"The world is not as small as a college in a little town of New England," the old man answered, "and men of the world are not governed by the same motives as college-boys. You needn't be scared. When I'm ready to put you forward, you will have all the popularity you need. All in good time. You are very young yet. You must stick to business for a while still. Work hard, and learn how money is made before you learn how to spend it freely."

"I'm ready to work, father," the son said, "and anxious, too. But there seems really to be nothing for me to do in the office, and—"

"I shall find work enough for you soon," the father interrupted. "There is not only the vice-presidency of the Transcontinental before you, but many other positions of importance where you can be useful to me."

"I will do my best," Winslow promised.

"And I shall be satisfied only with your best," his father retorted.

They had walked swiftly, as they always did. This return home on foot every fine day was all the exercise Ezra Pierce could find time for, and he did this as rapidly as he did everything else.

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His thin figure was a little bent, but his stride was still vigorous. His son's step was younger, of course, and it had more spring; but it was not as strong as the father's: it did not suggest the same reserve of vitality.

That afternoon there was just enough chill in the air to make walking a delight. So interested were the father and the son in their discussion, as they sped along side by side, the elder man with his arm thrust into the younger's, that neither noted the descent of the early twilight of winter, and neither remarked the opaline sky in the west, fading into a delicate blue-gray, against which waved the curving plumes of steam from the tall buildings on the other side of the great highway.

So briskly had they walked that they reached the bend in Broadway just as the bells in the steeple of Grace Church began to chime forth the summons to evening prayer.

It seemed to Winslow Pierce as though the time had come when he had best tell his father what he knew had to be told before they arrived home. The hour was propitious, since his father had been speaking to him with unusual affection. Ezra Pierce was profoundly fond of his only son, but it was rare for him to reveal any feeling. Winslow was moved also by the sudden knowledge of his father's splendid plans for his future. It seemed to impose on him an obligation not to keep his father any longer in the dark as to his own projects.

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"Father," he began at last, as they were passing in front of the pleasant bit of greenery before the rectory of Grace Church, "when you were my age, you were in business for yourself. You were doing the work of a full-grown man then?"

Ezra Pierce smiled proudly as he responded, "There were few grown men who worked as hard as I did then."

"You were your own master?" his son asked.

"I've always been that—ever since I can remember," the father replied.

"You were old enough to marry then?" Winslow went on.

"Of course," was the answer. "But I was too busy to think of it. I had no time to waste on any girl in those days."

"Then"—and the son's voice quavered as he continued—"you won't think I'm too young to marry now?"

Ezra Pierce walked on a few paces without replying.

At last he answered, "No; you are not too young now, and perhaps it would be better for you to marry soon. I don't know but what it's a good thing for a young man to be settled at the head of his own household as soon as he can be."

They sped along, side by side, in silence for nearly a block farther, and then Ezra Pierce turned sharply on his son and threw the swift question at him, "Are you in love?"

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The young fellow hesitated, and the color left his lips; but he was finally able to answer, "Yes."

"Who is she?" was the father's next inquiry.

"She is Miss Mary Romeyn," responded Winslow.

"Romeyn?" echoed Ezra Pierce. "I have heard that name somewhere. Oh! he was the president of your college, wasn't he? He died last winter, didn't he?"

"That's the one, sir," Winslow answered. "Mary was his only child." Then, with an effort, he continued, "She—she is not rich."

"What does that matter?" his father returned, sharply. "I can give you enough to support your wife, I trust. If the girl is a fit person for you to marry, it is of no importance how poor she is."

Again they walked on without speaking for perhaps a minute. Then Ezra Pierce thrust another quick question at his son, "Does your mother know her?"

"Yes, sir," the young man answered. "Mother approves of it."

"So you told your mother before you consulted me?" was the father's natural inquiry.

Winslow felt the blood rush into his face and then leave it. He never knew quite how his father would take an apparent slight of this kind. He hesitated half a minute before he was able to collect his wits sufficiently to stammer forth, "M—m—mother found out for herself, and—and

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