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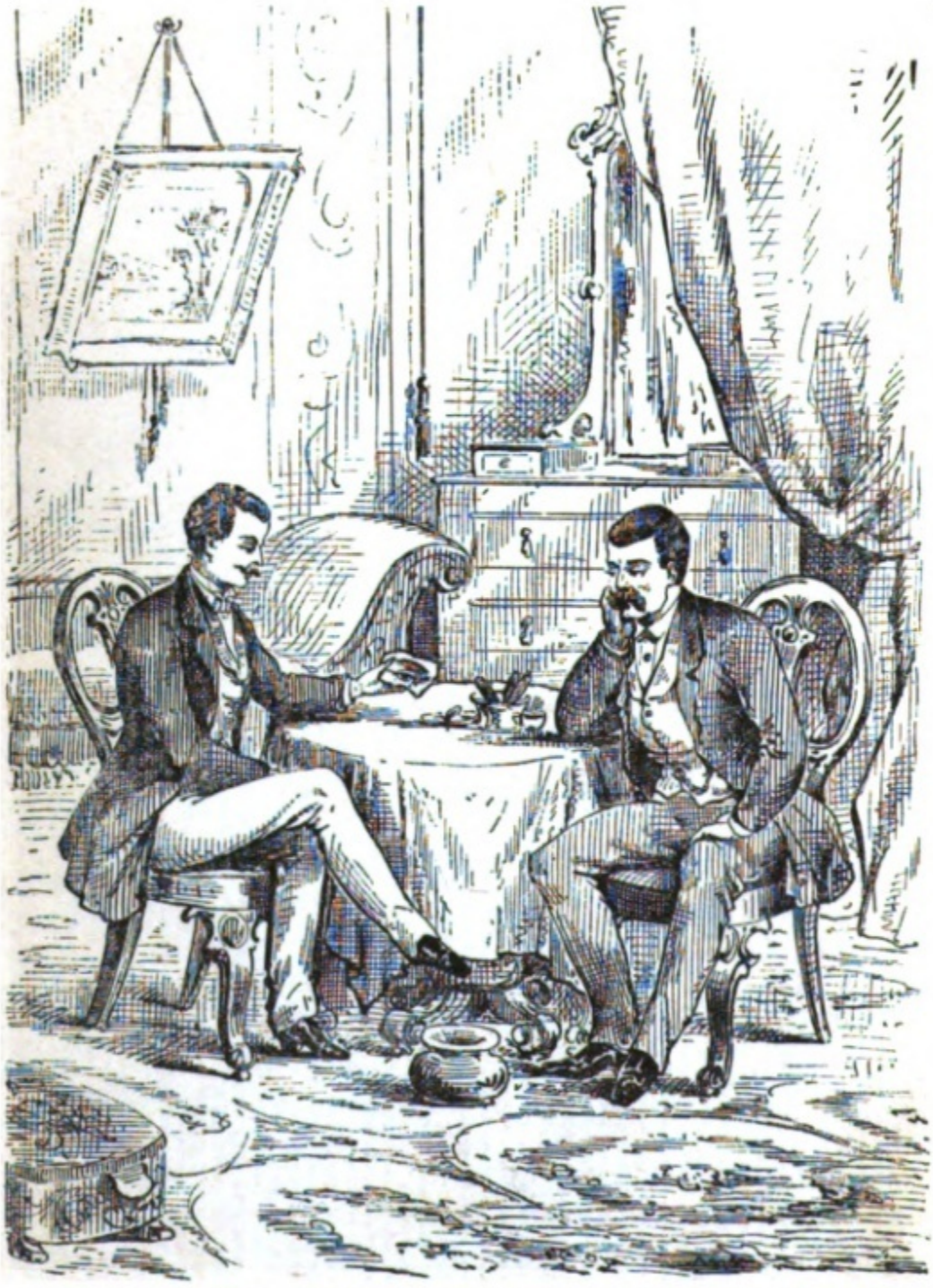

A BIT OF CANVAS—EVIDENTLY CUT FROM A PICTURE—A PAINTED HUMAN EYE.

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BY

LAWRENCE L. LYNCH,

EX-DETECTIVE.

CHICAGO:

DONNELLEY, GASSETTE & LOYD, PUBLISHERS.

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CHAPTER I.

OLD FRIENDS, WELL MET.

It was the first day of September, but it might have been the earliest in August, or the latest in July, so fiercely did the sun shine down upon the city pavements, so sultry was the atmosphere, and so eager was the dust to defy sprinklers, and bestow itself, unsolicited, upon ladies' Summer bonnets, and gents' unmentionables.

It was only ten o'clock in the morning, and yet the pedestrian, walking down the sunny side of Madison street, Chicago, on this first day of September, in the year of our Lord 187—, would have, undoubtedly, exclaimed,—had he been a true Chicagoan,—that it was "hot."

At ten o'clock in the morning, aimless promenaders are but few upon the thoroughfares; but on this especial occasion, at least, one very listless individual might have

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been seen sauntering slowly down from Clark street, occasionally stopping to gaze at some window with a half careless, half critical, wholly lazy air.

The loiterer was a young and handsome man, his face, so much of it as might be seen, under the shadow of a big "Kossuth," was much sun-burned; the eyes were large, and dark, having, even in a listless mood, a certain quaint expression, that at once stamped the man as an "original." The chin was firm, and the mouth, which might have been handsome, or otherwise, was hidden underneath a heavy mustache of a reddish brown color, just one shade lighter than the thick, straight, close-cropped hair.

The young man had the look of an American, a genuine Yankee; but any citizen of Chicago could have told you that his clothes were never made by an American tailor; they had a very foreign look, as if they had been manufactured for some tall English sobersides, and had fallen upon the limbs and shoulders of this big, careless, self-reliant, yet somewhat preoccupied loiterer, by mistake.

Evidently the buildings upon which he gazed were new things to him, for he seemed much inclined to criticise some of the most pretentious, and to find some room for dissatisfaction.

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Crossing Dearborn street, with the sublimest disregard for drays and newsboys, he paused before the "Tribune" building, and scanned the structure with considerable interest. Finally he entered at the great door, through which anxious-looking people are constantly hurrying, and, leaning his back against the wall lost himself for a moment, in watching and pondering the evolutions of the famous "advertisement" system. Shabby-looking women, who had advertised for loans, or for sewing, presented a lettered ticket, and walked away with a doleful face, and perhaps two or three letters. Flashy-looking men, who had advertised for a "lady correspondent," a "refined housekeeper," or a pretty "amanuensis," and who turned away from the box with a big pocket of letters, and a coarse joke, at the expense of the unknown writers; sharp-looking men, who wrote "ads." for "partners" and "business chances" and handed them to the clerk, together with the required change, in an off-hand manner, plainly betokening that they knew what they were about, and, that it was something worth knowing too.

All these the stranger surveyed, with an amused twinkle of the shrewd dark eyes, and then turning himself about was suddenly aware that his self-absorption had caused him to commit a blunder; he had turned upon

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a young lady who was just entering the building, with such force as to almost throw her off her feet. While he was offering to the young lady a hurried apology, three young men entered the office, and he felt rather than saw that one of them had stopped short and was gazing fixedly at him. Having made his peace with the injured fair one, he turned, and confronted the new comer. In another instant, two hands were outstretched, and the latest arrival was saying in quick, cheery tones:

"Rob Jocelyn! By the powers! Where on earth did you come from, and where have you been,"—"and where am I going," supplemented Jocelyn, whose eyes were now dancing with mirth and glad recognition, and whose big brown hand was shaking the smaller white one, of his friend, with unmistakable warmth. "Glad to see you, Neil, glad to see you—don't ask where I've *been* now,—it makes me sweat to think of it."

"Well, I won't," declared the new-comer, with a mellow half laugh. "And I won't ask where you are going, for, by George, I don't intend to lose sight of you just yet."

"Good enough," cried Jocelyn, with beaming countenance. "If that's the case, come along; I have been prancing up and down these hot streets for two long hours, and I want a cigar and a glass of lager in the shade."

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The new-comer laughed again as if well accustomed to the odd expressions of his friend, and then lifting his hat to wipe the perspiration off a forehead that was white as a girl's, he turned toward the companions who had entered with him.

"Here you are, Bathurst," said one of them, turning from the clerk's window with a packet of letters in his hand. "Lots of missives from fair ladies; we will see what we *will* see, now."

Without replying to this somewhat enigmatical speech, the young man addressed as Bathurst turned toward his new found friend and performed the ceremony of introduction.

"Jocelyn, this is Mr. Arteveldt," motioning toward the young man with the letters, "and this," turning toward the other, "is Mr. Fordham."

The gentlemen exchanged salutations; the keen eyes of the big stranger scrutinized Messrs. Arteveldt and Fordham, very closely, and then he said, in a drawling tone, quite different from that in which he had addressed his friend Bathurst,

"Glad to meet you, gentlemen;" after which he turned to Bathurst and said in the same tone, "Don't let me come in the way if you are engaged with your friends,

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Neil, you can look me up at the Tremont, later, you know."

"Not a bit of it," said Bathurst, briskly, "we only met by chance, as you and I did, and I must have a long talk with you, off hand, so come along. Arteveldt will excuse us."

"Oh, certainly," replied young Arteveldt, carelessly; "it's too deuced hot to have any thing special on foot this morning; in fact I have not had my breakfast. You will be on hand for the North Side to-night, won't you, Bathurst?"

Neil Bathurst hesitated for a moment, and then replied, "No, I think not. Not if Jocelyn is at my disposal. I haven't seen him in three years, Arteveldt, and I don't want to quit him; he is liable to slip me like an eel. You'll make my excuses to the Ruthvens to-night; I don't think they will take it amiss, as I am almost a stranger to them."

"Oh! of course I can fix it with *them*," replied Arteveldt. "But I am sorry you won't be with us, you will miss seeing some deuced nice girls."

Neil Bathurst shrugged one shoulder impatiently.

"I leave the girls to you," he said, half scornfully. "Come then, Jocelyn, *en avant* for somewhere."

He nodded to Arteveldt, lifted his hat to Fordham, and turned away, followed by his friend

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"Which way?" he asked, as they stepped out upon the hot pavement.

"Any where," replied Jocelyn, "provided it's cool and they keep good beer. I'm as thirsty as a herring."

"Then what do you say to the 'Gardens;' they are cool, and the tap is good; besides, if you want to see any one, man or woman, that's the place to find them?"

"Oh, I am not looking for any one," replied Jocelyn, indifferently, "at least, not for any one I am likely to find in that way. It's all one to me where we go, but let's get *somewhere* quick."

"All right," rejoined Bathurst, with the cheery laugh that seemed habitual to him. "We will go to the 'Tivoli Garden,' it's not far; why old man you *are* a stranger in Chicago; you have not been here since the fire?"

"No; and I'll be blamed if it don't seem odd to me, after wandering all over Europe for a few years, to come back to the old city I knew so well, and find it as strange to me as was Greece or Rome. By the way, how long have you been here, Neil, and when did you quit the New York Agency?"

"How do you know that I have 'quit' the Agency?" asked Bathurst, with a side glance at his companion.

"How did I know? Well, that's a question. Didn't

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I go to the Agency straight as soon as my feet touched New York bottom, and didn't they tell me that you had left them in spite of themselves, and were, or they supposed you were, operating in Chicago?"

"Well, to tell the truth, I quit simply because I wanted a change and because I had overworked. I have been knocked on the head with a jimmy, stuck in the ribs with a bowie, and perforated in divers places with bullets since you 'sailed away in a gallant bark,' and neglected your friends for five long years. Eighteen months ago they sent me here to work up a forgery case. It took me three months, and then I sent back my papers, and remained here. I have been figuring, to some extent, as a private gentleman, and that is how you found me in company with that fop, Arteveldt and his chum. But, here's the 'Tivoli,' Rob. Come in, and we will refresh the inner man."

They passed in at the Clark street entrance, and Jocelyn uttered a half whistle as he dropped into a chair, and looked about him.

"Why!" he exclaimed, giving the table an emphatic tap with his forefinger, "it's a regular German '*Bier Garten*,' and on a grand scale too."

"Nevertheless you can buy a Delmonico dinner here, and eat it off this same table."

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"And all the pretty girls come here, don't they?" queried Jocelyn, continuing his survey and gazing with considerable interest in the direction of the ladies' *salon*.

"A good many pretty ones do, that's a fact," replied Bathurst indifferently, "and some deuced ugly ones, too."

"Don't look at them, Neil; don't look at them!" said Jocelyn, with great solemnity; "here comes the beer. Now then."

And he drained off his glass in a twinkling.

"I tell you what! old man," said he, setting down his glass with emphasis, and letting his eyes rove over the groups of ladies scattered about at the tables beyond him. "It won't do to try and compare notes *here;* I shan't be able to stick to my text at all."

"Good Lord, man!" exclaimed the other, "you are not woman mad to that extent."

Jocelyn leaned back in his chair and indulged in an exercise that was something between a laugh and a series of chuckles.

"Well, you know, Neil, I always had a fancy for pretty faces, on my own private account."

"No! *did you?*" sarcastically interrupted Bathurst.

"And," pursued Jocelyn, without seeming to notice

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the interruption, and with a flourish of the hand peculiar to himself, "I like 'em yet! *very* much; but lately I have had another reason for studying the faces of pretty woman. Do you hold your old theory about faces?"

"Assuredly."

"Well, you always were a queer fish."

"Thanks," laughed Bathurst, "same to you."

"Oh, I know I have my oddities, at least that's the general opinion. Well, let's go around to my quarters at the Tremont; we'll order up some good wine—I have 'brought over' some prime cigars — and talk things over. By the way, according to your face theory, how do you make out yon chaps we have just left?"

"Who, Arteveldt and Fordham?"

Jocelyn nodded.

"Well, you see, I apply my theory to strangers; these fellows I know pretty well; tell us what you thought of them; you gave them a pretty close quiz?"

"Well," said Jocelyn, meditatively, "I should say that yon Arteveldt was three parts fool, and the other chap tolerably sharp, pretty conceited, and thoroughly knavish. Ergo — if you were any one else I should wonder what you were doing in such company."

Bathurst laughed carelessly. "Well, you have hit

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them off as well as I could have done," he said. "Arteveldt belongs to a very old and highly aristocratic family, is the only son of a widowed mother, and all that — widowed mother lives on the avenue, in a palace, and has a regular bonanza fortune — therefore, of course, Arteveldt is accounted a good fellow by the men, and a great catch by the women; he is too *pretty* to suit my taste, and always has a few love affairs on hand. He is fond of drink and fond of *cards*, too fond of them; he dropped some two thousand, over across the way, only last night; and don't seem much phazed either. The other fellow I don't know so well; he is a newspaper jockey of some sort, always has a 'scheme' on hand, and is Arteveldt's right bower."

"Just so," dryly. "Well, let's drop them and strike out for the Tremont."

Bathurst beckoned to the waiter, settled their small indebtedness, and the two, passing out through the ladies' entrance, turned their faces toward the elegant hotel known as the Tremont.

They had been sworn friends and allies, as well as brother detectives, these two; friends since the very day that had brought Neil Bathurst, then a mere lad, into favorable notice among the operatives of a certain Eastern agency. One of its officers had picked him up, as it were,

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a runaway gamin, and had found him so quick-witted, agile, and altogether useful, that he had been retained in the service, and, at the age of fourteen, found himself fully launched as a boy detective.

At that time Rob Jocelyn was a tall young man of twenty-four, and a skillful detective, high in favor among New York officials. From the first he had been much attracted toward the bright youth, and when, three years later, the two were sent to Chicago, to follow up an almost hopeless clue, they became sworn friends, as their work brought them, for the first time, in close, constant companionship.

That was before the great fire, since which Robert Jocelyn had not set foot in Chicago, until the very morning on which our story opens.

So successfully did the two operate together, that on their return to Gotham they were once more sent out to work in unison; they passed two years in ferreting out various "absconders" to the Pacific slope, and again returned to headquarters. A year later Robert Jocelyn was despatched to Europe to ferret out a case in a foreign port, leaving his friend, then a handsome young fellow of twenty, for an indefinite time.

At twenty, Neil Bathurst had been a slender young man, just a little above the medium height, with short

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cropped curly hair, black as darkness, and soft as silk, with dark blue eyes that were capable of as many expressions as the orbs of the veriest coquette, a complexion fair as any girl's, hands white and slender, a firm, red-lipped mouth, shadowed by a small black mustache, and strong, even, white teeth that were somewhat prominent when the lips parted in a smile. This was Neil Bathurst at twenty. Neil Bathurst at twenty-five was a trifle firmer in build, a trifle browner in complexion, and otherwise, outwardly, unchanged.

When they had gained the privacy of Robert Jocelyn's cozy room, the latter turned toward his young friend, and, letting two firm brown hands fall upon his handsome shoulders, surveyed him with a world of honest affection shining in the quaint brown eyes.

"You young dog," he exclaimed, swaying him gently with those powerful hands. "You villain, I'm gladder to see you than if you were my grandmother, or my Sunday sweetheart. There," letting him go suddenly, "sit down, sit down, we will see if your face-reading talent can do me any good."

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CHAPTER II.

A WOMAN'S EYE.

"I don't suppose that you ever wondered at my not writing, seeing that I never did write a personal letter, to your knowledge?" quoth Mr. Jocelyn stretching out his limbs to their utmost, leaning as far back as possible in his chair, and puffing lazily at one of his imported weeds.

"No, I can't truthfully say that I did," answered Bathurst, who was perched, boy fashion, upon the arm of a big chair, looking very wide awake and eager. "My only query was, whether you were dead or alive, and you may wager that there was a commotion among the fellows when it was announced that 'Big Jocelyn' had sent back his resignation from some remote corner of France, and was not coming back for the present. After such confounded splendid work as you had just finished too."

"Well," said Jocelyn giving an uncommonly strong pull at his cigar, "if you will get off that chair arm, and stop looking so deucedly like a big interrogation point, I

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will try and make things a little clearer. For be it known, I came to New York just four days ago, fresh from the briny, and I arrived in Chicago this blessed morning for the express purpose of hunting you out."

"Did you, though," queried Bathurst, with an expression, half pathetic, shining in his blue eyes. "But that was good of you—and how lucky that I met you at the 'Tribune.'"

"Yes," laconically; "saved me a hunt in strange places, and I have had about enough of that sort of fun for awhile."

"Well, here we are at all events," said Bathurst, flinging himself at full length upon a sofa and turning his face toward his companion. "I'm all ready to listen, Rob, so blaze away."

"You see," began Jocelyn in a more subdued tone than he had yet used, "I think the very nature of our business makes anything tame after awhile, and I was at best fond of change, and new ground to work over, so when I found my seaport affair winding up so grandly, I began to reflect that I had not begun to see Europe yet, and to look about me for an excuse for remaining longer on the other side of the big pond. Owing to the nature of my business I had kept away from Scotland Yard, but

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I now began to meditate paying a visit to our English contemporaries."

"Yes," put in Neil, eagerly.

"And, in fact, I did visit them eventually."

Neil suddenly reared himself upon his elbow.

"Did you see that fine fellow, Ferrars?" he asked, eagerly.

"No, I didn't."

Neil dropped back with a regretful sigh.

"I'm sorry" he murmured, plaintively; "I never heard of a braver Englishman. I want to know more of him."

"You unearthly enthusiast," said Jocelyn, smiling benignly across at him. "No, I did not see Ferrars, for a good reason. Ferrars was not in London, he was not in England, and nobody knew just *where* he *was;* he had been working some private case and had been dealing directly with his employer. They had not had a report from Ferrars in months, that was three years ago. Well, I did not need any assistance from English detectives, and I was just Yankee enough to be glad of it. To abbreviate—at about the time when I sent home my last report and found my occupation gone, something occurred that stirred up all the police of London, and curdled the blood of the phlegmatic citizens. Of course

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you heard of it at the time. It was the murder of that old Jew, and his still older sister, by his young wife."

"Yes, I remember something of the event, and that there was a large reward offered by the Crown. Did they ever find her?"

"I should rather think not. My boy, I have ransacked all England, France, Germany, Italy, Greece, Corsica, and the uttermost parts of the earth; I have searched three years for that very woman, and for once in his life Rob Jocelyn has found his match."

Neil made no comment, but the intensity of his gaze betokened his eager interest.

"The old man was a member of a very strong and wealthy secret order of Jews, and they doubled the reward offered by the Queen. Well, to make a long story short, I negotiated with them. Of course they wanted Ferrars, but as he was out of the question, and my credentials were good, they finally decided to let me handle the case for them; I was to have my expenses, in any case, and two thousand pounds if I succeeded; that is to say, the Jews would bear my expenses, and if I found the woman I would receive one thou' from the Crown—you see the murdered man left a large estate to the Crown—and one from the Jews. I was satisfied with this, for I wanted to see all these countries, and could afford to squander a

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year or two in this way. So we struck a bargain, and I have been a wandering Jew ever since."

"And your case."

"Is still a mystery; I can't find the woman."

"Nor any clue?"

"Nor any clue."

"What had you to begin with, Rob?"

"That's the queerest part of it; I had—only one eye."

"Only *what!*"

"Only one eye, Neil, one painted eye," said Jocelyn, beginning to take things from his pocket with great rapidity. "My boy, there was not one trace of that woman after she had committed the deed; she may have ridden away on a broomstick, for aught I or any one couuld find out to the contrary. I could not even get an accurate description of her. As for the picture—well, as I said before, I got one eye." He had been searching through a small pocketbook, and now produced something carefully folded away in oil silk, which he removed rapidly, and then leaning forward placed in the hand of the astonished Neil a bit of canvas, evidently cut from a picture, a painted human eye.

"Think of it, Neil!" he said, as Bathurst gazed intently upon that one dismembered organ of vision. "How can a man hope to outwit a woman of barely

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eighteen, who, with her hand yet red with the blood of her victims, can think so far that she will stop her flight to cut and slash the tell-tale picture, which, if left intact, might have brought her to justice long ago. Bah! it only strengthens my belief in the superfine cunning and viciousness of a vicious woman. Men may be good, bad, and indifferent, but *women!* by the Lord, they are either angels or devils." Then, with a sudden drop of the voice, "What do you think of that eye?"

"Why, I think as a clue it's vague," replied Neil, with his own orbs still fixed upon it. "You can't tell by this if it were black or gray."

"True, and no one *could* tell if it were black or gray."

"It's a handsome eye," pursued Bathurst, "the eye of a passionate, fearless woman, I should think. Tell me all the points you have, Rob. By George, I feel uncommonly interested!"

"Well, my inquiries only served to convince me that she is the very evil one. First I gathered this general outline: She is below the medium height, *petite* in fact, and slender almost to fragility; has tiny hands and feet, of course; eyes as you see, for I assured myself that they were both alike; features oval; complexion brunette; mouth small and full lipped; teeth—and here is a possi-

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ble point—teeth very even, very white, and more prominent than is exactly in accordance with the rules of beauty; nose straight, small, and thin of nostril; hair black and straight as the hair of a young Indian. Then I went in for details, and here I was puzzled. No one knew her intimately, and no two had formed the same opinion of her character, habits, and personal peculiarities. One old woman avowed that she was always scowling, another had never seen a frown on her face; she seemed a sort of human chameleon, and to have persuaded every one that she was of their favorite color. From a mass of the most contradictory statements that a man ever listened to, I sifted out about this: She *was* a fascinating woman, one of those purring, insinuating, soft-mannered felines. And she had certain odd movements of the head and neck, a mixture of birdlike nodding and serpentine twisting—I should think—peculiar to herself. She had, too, a very soft, childlike voice, and could sing like a mavis. She seemed to have an inborn hunger and thirst for masculine admiration and outside adornments, but there was plainly no lover in the case. Madam Elise Schwartz was in love with no mortal, save herself, when she killed her husband and ran away with all his rare jewels."

"Ah! she did take the jewels."

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"She did that. The old fellow was a miser as well as usurer; he had hoarded up a fine lot of rare stones, many of them unredeemed pledges, I presume, and she had had nearly twenty-four hours the start when the bodies were discoved."

"And the picture; was there no other fragment, not a single other feature intact?"

"Intact! well I should say not; why, man, it was in chips, little bits of rags, as if chopped with a hash knife."

"And you have been wandering all over the world with only one painted eye and a turn of the head for a clue?"

"Exactly."

"And what brought you back to America, Rob?"

"The belief that the thing I failed in over the water may turn out a success on this side."

"You think this cunning sorceress may have sought fresh fields?"

"I think it quite probable."

"Well,—so do I. Of what nationality was she, Rob?"

"Nobody knows; she talked the most perfect French and purest English."

"That makes her coming to America still more probable. Rob, are you working upon any system, or do you

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intend to pursue every dark-eyed woman with a twist of the neck, until you find the right one?"

Jocelyn arose and stretched himself before he answered. "Not quite so bad as that, Neil; I *have* a system, and it will yet run down my game. Now let's talk of yourself."

"All right, Rob, but you must let me study this eye a little; it *has* one peculiarity."

"Oh, you have found that out have you? Well that same eye is photographed upon my mental vision. I should know it anywhere."

"So should I," replied Neil Bathurst, thoughtfully; "at least I think so—if it still wore that peculiar, indefinable expression, the brows are very straight, and the lashes very long. Well, take your eye, Rob, I will call for it again some day, perhaps."

The two friends remained together all day, and attended one of the popular theaters in the evening. They made no further mention of the case that was baffling astute Rob Jocelyn, but when alone at last, Neil Bathurst found himself thinking busily of the beautiful murderess, and trying to fancy just how the face belonging to that eye would have looked. But he never once gave a thought to the stupid little social party given by an unpretending North Side family, nor of the "pretty

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girls," who had been so lauded by young Arteveldt—and yet, had he but known it—because of that absence from the Ruthven's little gathering he was soon to find himself beset with difficulties, and groping blindly for a lost link which that evening at the Ruthvens, could have supplied.

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CHAPTER III.

LENORE.

While Messrs. Jocelyn and Bathurst were discussing their beer at the "Tivoli Garden," a heavily laden passenger and mail train was disgorging itself at the Michigan Central Depot.

People with anxious faces were hurrying to and fro, others were lounging in listless attitudes, "seeing what they could see," or waiting for expected friends, or — victims. Streams of passengers were hurrying down the long platforms, and pouring out from the various entrances, and industrious porters and enterprising hackmen were waylaying them after the usual fashion; runners were crying their various hotels, apple women and pop-corn vendors were clamoring for a hearing. In short, there was the usual scramble and push, the noise and confusion of a monster city depot.

Into this Babel of tongues and sounds, there stepped —among the last of the passengers—a young lady. She was quite alone, and one glance would have sufficed to

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SHE WAS DRESSED IN AN UNPRETENDING YET JAUNTY SUIT OF BUFF LINEN.

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assure the observer that she was entering the city for the first time.

She was dressed in an unpretending yet jaunty suit of buff linen, and on her head was perched a hat of coarse white straw with bands of black velvet, one side of the brim drooping over her face, the other turned up and ornamented by a curling ostrich plume which curved defiantly above the crown, giving a piquant look to the fair face beneath it.

It *was* a fair face. Hair of a deep chestnut color—that would lighten to perfect bronze in the sunlight—was drawn off the forehead, and clinging close to the head in rippling waves, was twisted into a careless knot at the nape of the white neck; a rounded, but nevertheless firm chin, that had one tiny dimple in it; mouth small and red as a rose, with a beautifully curved upper lip, and full pouting under one; teeth small, white, and regular; nose, neither Roman nor Grecian, but small, slightly *cretonne*, and altogether *piquant;* eyes that must, in some moods, have seemed strangely at variance with the little nose—large eyes, dark hazel in color, with strange lights and shadows lurking in their depths; beautiful eyes, with long dark lashes, and delicately penciled brows that were almost straight; a low, broad forehead; a complexion that was almost colorless, save for the ripe bewitching lips, yet

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had no unhealthy pallor; she was small in stature, with plump little hands, dainty feet, and gracefully sloping shoulders.

As she stepped lightly down from the Pullman platform, holding in one little gray-gloved hand a lady's small traveling bag, she paused, and, while others hurried on, gazed about with a look of fearless inquiry. Then she began slowly moving onward in the same direction with the crowd, casting sharp glances at each lady whom she met, and never once looking at the men.

Finally she stepped in at the open door of the ladies' waiting-room, and looked about her eagerly; then she turned away, looking a trifle disappointed, and quite at a loss what to do next.

At this moment a small figure, clad in navy blue cambric, entered at the upper door, and hurried towards her.

"Oh! Nora!" panted she, as she gained the side of the young traveler, and seized her hand between both her own. "*Have* you really come? I'm *so* glad. And I thought I would never get here, for the bridge was turned —"

"Turned!"

"Yes, turned for the boats, you know."

"To be sure, what a stupid thing I am. Kate, it's high time I came to the city, don't you think so?"

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"Of course I do," laughed the little lady, "so come along now. No need to ask how you are, you never looked better."

"Same to you, Katie; but I did begin to feel like a lost lamb, I assure you, when I did not see you anywhere."

"Well, I'm here now, hand over your checks, country girl, we will have your baggage sent straight up, and then take a car ourselves."

"Good! I'm so glad you are not an aristocrat, who rides in a carriage; that would not be *quite* a novelty, but—this will be my first ride in a street car."

"The idea!"

"Well!" laughed the brown-eyed country girl; "I don't see that it's very absurd, since all of my life that has not been spent at a university, has been passed in a village of a few hundred inhabitants, where my two little rats of ponies, and my basket phaeton, are reckoned very grand, and where the sound of the locomotive is only heard from afar. As they say in the play-bills, 'this is positively my first appearance in any city.'"

"And you won't *disappear* for an age, will you, Nora?"

Suddenly the laughing eyes became clouded, and the girl thus appealed to turned her face away from her

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companion to conceal a strange, half-scared expression that rested upon it.

"I don't know, Katie," she finally said in an oddly constrained manner. "Now that I am left alone in the world, I may fancy becoming a feminine wandering Jew; but," with a little rippling laugh, and suddenly recovering her composure, "I promise, if I ever do disappear, that I won't ride away on a broomstick."

"I think you are the oddest girl I ever saw," said Kate Seaton, half petulantly, as they entered the baggage room and began to negotiate with burly porters for the conveyance of the luggage of the fair arrival.

Lenore Armyn stood gazing unconsciously up Lake street, as her friend closed her bargain with the expressman, and gazing, she murmured under her breath, "This *is* chaos. I *could* 'disappear' here, I think. It surely must be easy to lose one's self in this great Babel. But oh! I pray heaven, the necessity for so disappearing may never come."

Are there such things as forewarnings? All day long, and often through the gay evening, that word, "disappear" seemed sounding in the ears of Lenore Armyn, and even then, as she stood gazing out on busy Lake street, the shadow was upon her. The shadow of

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a fate that was to make her a being doubly accused, doubly hunted, for weeks and months.

At nine o'clock on that same evening Clarence Arteveldt stood ringing at the door of an unpretending "two story and basement" brick, situated not far from Lincoln park on the "north side" of the city.

He was speedily admitted by a tidy housemaid, for Mr. Charles Ruthven, the master of the house, was only a book-keeper in a down-town wholesale house, who, upon a salary of two thousand a year, supported a wife and sister-in-law, not to mention a small Ruthven, and at present, a half-sister of his own.

The housemaid and a small bond slave, whose especial duty it was to minister unto the stentorious-lunged young Ruthven before mentioned, comprised his retinue of servants. But the Ruthven parlors were always bright and cheerful, and Mrs. Ruthven was one of those charming informal little hostesses that are the especial delight of society young men, who love to lounge in a friend's parlor, where they can throw off restraint, and feel at home among the pretty women of the little household clique.

The occasion of this present gathering was a double one: first, the arrival of Miss Armyn, the beloved school

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Arteveldt was noting carefully the faces of the few ladies of the party who were strangers to him.

At last he singled out Miss Armyn as the especial object of attention, and leaning lazily upon the piano, gradually dropped out of the conversation going on about him.

"Ah, I have caught you, sir," cried Miss Seaton moving nearer him. "You are looking at my friend, Miss Armyn, and you have not been introduced. Come," laying a light hand upon his arm.

But the young man drew back, saying, as he looked down at the frank face upturned to his, with one of his irresistible smiles,

"Not yet, Miss Seaton; don't be in such haste to get me off your hands; your friend is playing chess; see how intent she is. If you should present me now, she would not know me from one of her pawns when the game is done, besides—"

"Oh! besides *what*, sir?"

"Besides"—with a half laugh, as he turned away from the piano and led her toward a *tete-a-tete* in the bay window—"I would rather talk with *you;* sit down here and let us gossip. You shall tell me about the ladies I don't know, and I will make awful comments."

"I dare say you will," laughed Kate Seaton, not at all

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averse to a chat with this handsome young fellow, with the weak reputation and strong financial vouchers. "Well, sir, whom shall we dissect first?"

"Why, your dearest friend, of course," laughed the young man; "that is the way all gossips do, is it not?"

"Just as if you did not know that Lenore Armyn is my very dearest friend. You artful fellow."

"Is she?" carelessly. "Then you can introduce her at a distance. Who *is* Miss Armyn?"

"My dearest friend, I tell you, my most intimate school friend."

"Oh!" in a tone of covert sarcasm. "But that is not all you can say about her?"

"I should think not," indignantly; "she is the loveliest, best, bravest, brightest girl in the world."

"Really!" elevating his eyebrows; then with a glance at the young lady in question, "well, she is certainly a beauty, Miss Kate—I don't know about the other qualities."

"Well, I do. I know she is good and I know she is brave, and when you know Lenore Armyn you will not need be told that she is not a fool."

There came a time when Clarence found good reason for recalling these words of Kate Seaton—"When you

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"YOU ARE LOOKING AT MY FRIEND, MISS ARMYN; AND YOU HAVE NOT BEEN INTRODUCED."

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know Lenore Armyn you will not need be told that she is not a fool."

"She *is* brave," continued Kate, now fairly launched and determined to do her friend justice, "and at school she used to do and say the most independent things; she is a true friend, I can tell you, but—I would not want her for an enemy. I shall not forget how she exposed one of our teachers who had been ill-using some of the younger pupils and committing no end of abominations on the sly. Lenore said never a word until she had found evidence enough to insure her discharge twice over, and then she exposed her in presence of the whole school. And oh, but didn't she talk to her and to the other teachers. Lenore hates deceit."

"Does she?" glancing at the fair absorbed face, bending above the chess-board. "Where is her home—does she reside here?"

"Why, no! she is an orphan and can't exactly be said to have a home now, since her mother's death. Her mother died six months ago."

"Six months! Why, she wears no mourning!" said he, surprised.

"No. It was her mother's wish that Lenore should not wear black. I don't exactly understand why. I never saw Mrs. Armyn."

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"Indeed."

"Yes, 'indeed.' We were together at school for nearly four years, but I never visited Lenore, nor she me, until now. Mrs. Armyn must have been fond of the country, for she lived in a wee little village away up in Michigan. Lenore spent all her vacations alone with her mother, who was always something of an invalid, and I, of course, passed mine here. We have always been correspondents, and now, since her mother is dead, I hope we shall be companions, for Lenore does not intend to live longer in Fairlee. In fact her mother wished her to sell their home and leave the village."

"A strange mother, I should say."

"So I thought, but Lenore does not want to live there; she has some money and is not compelled to work, but she wants very much to find an occupation."

"Am I to understand that Miss Armyn is paying her first visit to the city?"

"She is paying her first visit to any city."

"Um-m—she looks very self-possessed for a—rustic."

"She *is* self-possessed, it is her nature; but come the game of chess is at an end, let us go to Lenore."

And they sauntered toward the chess table where Lenore Armyn now stood, talking lightly with her late opponent, and fingering the chessmen carelessly.

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The ceremony of presentation having been performed, Kate Seaton slipped her hand from the arm of young Arteveldt, and turning toward the gentleman who had lately risen from the chess table, said,

"Mr. Fenno, those good people about the piano have been waiting for you; they want a tenor and can't sing a quartette without one, so surrender, you are my prisoner."

And laughing lightly she led him away captive.

Left alone Clarence Arteveldt turned toward the beautiful girl who stood before him quite at ease, and with smiling face. There was nothing to criticise in the manner of this young lady he had just denominated "rustic;" she knew just what to do, and did it with perfect grace; she conversed with a fearless frankness, a raciness, and skill at repartee, which was as refreshing as it was surprising, to this worldly-wise young dandy. She seemed unconscious of either admiration or criticism, and entered into all the gayities of the evening with a zest and abandon, most charming.

When the evening was at an end Lenore Armyn gave her hand to Clarence Arteveldt with a smile and a jest, and never dreamed of the shadow he would cast over her young life, while he took his way home, mentally vowing her the loveliest girl he had ever met, and little guessing, that because of her his days were numbered.

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CHAPTER IV.

THE DURAND ROBBERY.

At noon, on the day following that of the meeting between the two detectives, Neil Bathurst sat lunching in solitude at his favorite restaurant. He was sipping his coffee in a pre-occupied manner, and now and then would knit his brows and entirely forget the viands before him.

"Strange," he muttered to himself. "It's incomprehensible to me! Rob can't have fallen so suddenly upon the trail of his fair murderess, and yet what else can have caused him to quit the Tremont so suddenly? And to leave no word for me; he is on a trail of some sort, of that I am sure; and I wanted his help so much just now."

Just here his meditations were rudely broken in upon. A hand fell lightly upon his shoulder, and a familiar voice said in his ear.

"Bathurst, old fellow, you are the man I came after, your professional services are wanted; have you finished this?" meaning the lunch as yet almost untasted.

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Neil Bathurst shook off the hand and looked up rather ungraciously at the speaker.

"Hang it, Arteveldt," he said impatiently, "what do you want, and why will you persist in talking about my profession?"

Arteveldt dropped down upon the seat nearest Bathurst, and leaning toward him with his elbows on the table, said,

"Don't go off at a tangent, Bath.,—you know blamed well that I have not given you away, and don't mean to. None of the boys to whom I have introduced you know that you are not a "heavy swell." Some friends of mine have been robbed and they want a shrewd detective; they sent me for one, and I came straight here in the hopes of finding you, just as I have, only not quite so glum. I have a carriage outside, will you come?"

"If it's a case, of course," replied Neil, rising quickly, and beckoning a waiter. "Bring my bill, Charlie. Arteveldt, I beg your pardon for my rudeness, I have been a little upset this morning."

He settled his score; then they hurried out and were driven rapidly away.

"What is your case?" asked the detective in a low voice, as they rattled over the stone pavement.

"They are family friends," replied Arteveldt, flush-

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ing slightly, and unperceived by Bathurst. "Old lady an intimate friend of my mother's, and all that. Well, the old man is rich as a Jew, and not over cautious. Yesterday, quite late, he negotiated the sale of some real estate on the West Side, and received in payment something like twenty-five thousand dollars. Well, last night it was stolen, and the thing was done so neatly that they did not discover the loss until a short time ago, when old Durand went to get the money to deposit with with his bankers."

"Durand!" repeated Bathurst reflectively, "is that not the name of the heiress Fordham was chaffing you about a few days ago?"

"Well, yes," admitted Arteveldt with an uneasy laugh, that was noted by his companion, "Miss Durand is one of my lady friends, but it's the old gentleman who wants *you*."

"Which means that I am not to cast any languishing glances toward the heiress, eh?" sarcastically.

"Pshaw," ejaculated Clarence Arteveldt, contemptuously, "my affair with Miss Durand is old, and never was serious. You can 'languish' after her as much as you please." Then, with sudden animation, "By the powers, Bathurst, but you should have been with me last night. I met the loveliest girl that Chicago sun ever shone on."

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"I should say you had made that statement twenty times in as many months concerning as many ladies."

"Well, I'm in earnest this time."

"But I thought you expected to meet several strange beauties."

"Well! and so I did. There was Mrs. Warren, a blonde, pussy-cat sort of a widow, and a Miss Van Something from Washington, but *this* one, Miss Armyn, is fresh from the country, as innocent of city wickedness and folly as a very babe, and as sweet as—as——"

"Your last love at first sight," finished Bathurst, dryly.

"Oh! you may laugh. I am in earnest this time."

"You are in earnest every time," carelessly; "but let us change the subject. How came you on hand at the scene of the robbery?"

"Why—the fact is," with sudden embarrassment, "I had a sort of half engagement with Au—Miss Durand, for last evening, which I quite overlooked in going to the Ruthven blow-out, and I called to make that right."

"Oh! Well, mark my word, Arteveldt, you will yet come to grief because of your too frequent changing of sweethearts."

Without knowing it, Neil Bathurst had uttered a prophecy.

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"Bah!" cried Arteveldt, snapping his fingers at an imaginary Nemesis, "you are a modern raven, but here is Michigan avenue, and here we are."

At that moment the carriage drew up before a stately residence fronting the lake, and Neil Bathurst followed his guide up a flight of marble steps, through a magnificent vestibule, the door of which swung open at their approach, across a wide hall, and then, into a magnificent library, hung with forest green, and rich with volumes of merit in costly bindings, wall statuettes and bronzes, antique tables, cavernous, ease-inviting, satin and velvet cushioned chairs, and all that could beautify and adorn the library of a luxury-loving man of wealth.

At a word from Clarence Arteveldt the liveried servant, who had ushered them in, disappeared, and in a very few moments the rosewood door swung inward and James Durand, the master of the dwelling, appeared upon the threshold.

As he moved toward them, young Arteveldt advanced to meet him, saying:

"Mr. Durand, this is Mr. Neil Bathurst, late of the New York detective force; if any one can help you in this matter, he is the man."

The old gentleman extended his hand to Bathurst, in

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a hearty way that won that young man's admiration straight, and said, kindly:

"Glad to see you, sir; very glad! have heard of your skill in several cases. I will be glad to get your theory on the subject of this robbery."

"Then, sir," said the young detective, bowing respectfully, "will you allow me to examine the receptacle from which the money was taken, as well as the surroundings, before I listen to anything about the case."

"Certainly. The money was taken from a desk in my sleeping room, and that, as well as every door, was closed, and locked again. It was a cunningly devised robbery, sir.

"See," continued Mr. Durand, as he led the way up stairs, "supposing that they came in at the front, there would be two doors locked and bolted; then here," throwing open a door leading off the hall on the second floor, "there is the drawing-room door, then the chamber door, and last, the triple lock of my desk."

Neil Bathurst paused at the outer door and examined the lock in silence, then he entered the drawing-room, and began a grave scrutiny of the contents of the room. It was richly upholstered in bronze velvet, the two opposite sides being filled by two enormous wardrobe dressing cases, with great mirror doors, and pearl-handled drawers

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and lower openings. Opposite the entrance door was one leading into the bed-chamber; in the niches on either side this door, were lace-draped toilet tables; opposite these, on either side the outer door, were two splendid full length mirrors; in the center of the room stood two great dressing chairs, and this was all.

After a brief examination of the dressing cases, the detective turned his attention to the lock of the inner door; then he entered the chamber and carefully scrutinized the desk, examined the windows, to assure himself that they were not accessible; peered behind the hangings and two tall cabinets, to see if there were other doors opening from the room, and then went back to the drawing-room, where Mr. Durand and young Arteveldt were conversing, threw himself down in one of the big chairs, dropped his chin upon his breast, and thought.

After a long silence he lifted up his head and asked, gravely,

"How many servants have you, Mr. Durand?"

"Seven," replied the old gentleman, looking somewhat surprised at the question.

"And members of the family?"

"Myself, wife, daughter and daughter's companion."

"At what hour did you receive the money from your purchase?"

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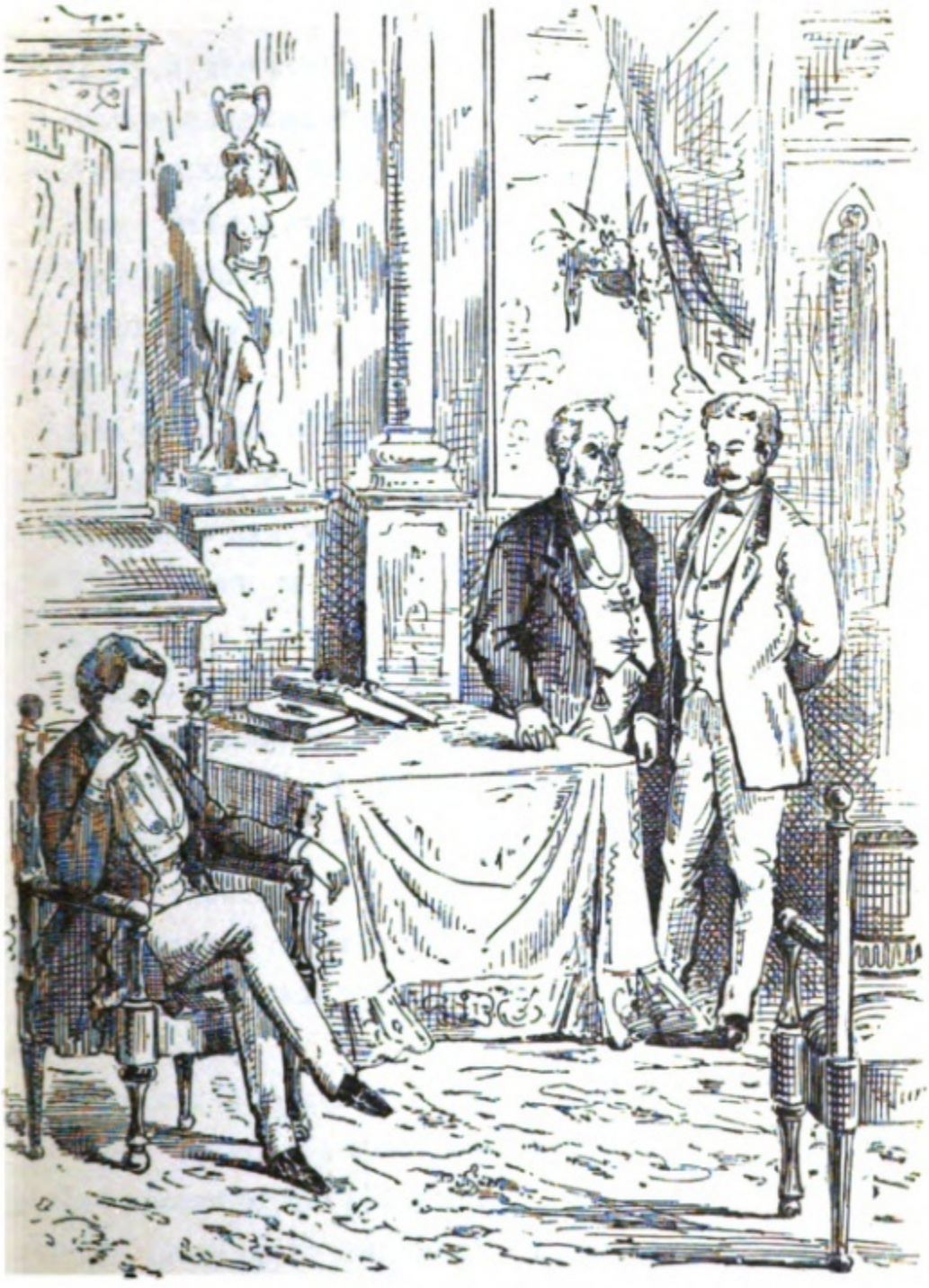

HE THREW HIMSELF DOWN IN ONE OF THE BIG CHAIRS, DROPPED HIS CHIN UPON HIS BREAST, AND THOUGHT.

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"Early in the evening. At about six o'clock."

"And you locked it away immediately?"

"As soon as my visitor had gone."

"Yes. Where was the business transacted?"

"Down stairs. In the library."

"Who saw you conceal the money?"

"No one."

"Not your wife?"

"No, sir. I was alone in the room."

"And who saw you receive the money?"

"The papers were all drawn up. There were no witnesses."

"Did you mention to any member of your household that you had received this money?"

"Let me see — I did say at the dinner-table — we dine at half-past six — that I had sold the Fulton street house, and received the money; but not in the presence of any servant, I distinctly remember that."

"Then only your wife and daughter heard the statement?"

"And my daughter's companion."

"Yes," absently; then, after a moment's silence and moving nearer to the old man,

"Mr. Durand if you desire me to find your robber, you must allow me proceed in my own way."

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"Certainly, sir. I do desire you to find the thief, not so much because of the money lost as from principle. No citizen does his duty, who leaves a stone unturned in a case like this. It was no ordinary thief who entered my house last night. Is not that *your* belief?"

"I will scarcely venture an opinion yet," replied Bathurst, with a slight smile. "I have scarcely taken a look at the grounds. Do any of the members of your family, or any of your servants know the nature of my business here?"

"I think not, sir. Miss Aura is not yet out of her room, and my wife is quite ill from the fright caused by the idea of a burglar so near her. Mrs. Durand is excessively nervous."

Neil Bathurst took up his hat suddenly, and turned toward the door.

"Then I will leave the house before this visit becomes known, and Mr. Durand I must impose myself upon you as a *guest* this evening. Can you manage it?"

"Oh, easily! You and Arteveldt can come together."

"Then will you announce to your family that Mr. Arteveldt will come, bringing a friend with him?"

"Certainly, sir," looking puzzled. "But may I ask—"

"Ask no questions now, sir. Let me do my work in my own way. As soon as we are well out of the house

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you will please announce to your servants and all of your family, that you are every moment expecting a detective to investigate the robbery."

"But, sir —"

"Within an hour's time a man will come who will wish to go over the entire premises, perhaps to interview every member of your family. Let him do whatever he wishes, and ask him no questions. At six o'clock I will be with you as a guest. You can then assist me by talking of this affair whenever one of your servants happens within hearing."

"But you surely don't —"

"Above all, don't confide to your wife or daughter any thing that I have said and am saying to you."

"Upon my word," ejaculated Mr. Durand in undisguised astonishment. "I am all in a fog as to your meaning, but I'll follow your directions *to the letter*. For, by my soul, I believe you know what you are about."

I hope I do, sir," answered the young detective, gravely. "Come, Arteveldt."

And bowing to his employer, he hurried from the house, followed by the silent but admiring young man of pleasure.

In less than half an hour every member of the Durand household was aware that a detective was soon to appear

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upon the scene, and all were excited, anxious, or curious, according to their various dispositions. Still another half hour, and a stout, middle-aged, roughly-dressed man stood ringing at the door of the Durand mansion.

Presently down stairs rushed the footman, bursting into the kitchen with the announcement: "The detective has come! he is upstairs now. He is going to examine every door and window in the house!"

"Oh my!" cried the cook, letting fall a big spoon in her consternation. "What *do* he look like?"

"O, a biggish man with sandy hair and whiskers. He looks to *me* like a man who drinks."

"La!" cried the cook.

"Yes; and I heard him say that he must see all the servants."

"Well, let him," sniffed the housemaid. "I don't s'pose none of us are afraid. *We* didn't steal Mr. Durand's money, goodness knows."

"Didn't you, my girl?" drawled a voice directly behind her. "Well, you don't talk like a dishonest girl."

There was a chorus of little cries in various keys, from the members of the kitchen cabinet, as they turned their eyes toward the doorway, where stood the detective, smiling benignly on them.

"Of *course* I don't suspect any of *you*," resumed he,

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THE KITCHEN AT MR. DURAND'S.

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coming toward them as he spoke. "But some of you might accidentally help me to a clue, don't you see?"

Then he turned his attention to the fastenings of the doors and windows, which he examined with great care.

Next he insisted upon peering into the cellar, the pantries and closets, and, finally, he lounged down in a big splint-bottomed chair, the especial property of the cook, and began talking of the robbery in a pleasant, off-hand, careless fashion, interlarding his discourse with frequent compliments and comments of an irrelevant nature, calculated to edify his audience, and render them quite at ease.

It would be difficult to tell where the discourse left off and the questioning began; but, when, after an hour spent in the kitchen, the free and easy detective at last lounged up to the library, where Mr. Durand awaited him, he was in full possession of every idea entertained by the servants below stairs, in relation to the robbery.

"I have done with the servants, Mr. Durand," he said, standing respectfully before the old man. "Now, if you please, I will see your daughter's maid."

Mr. Durand rang the bell immediately, and made no comment.

"Send Miss Aura's maid to me directly, Jacobs," he said to the bowing footman, who promptly appeared.

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In a short time the maid, a simpering affected little being, with very few ideas beyond her calling, entered the room.

A very brief interview seemed to satisfy the detective. And then he said, "Now, if you please, I will see your daughter and her companion."

In obedience to the command of her master, the simpering girl tripped away, and then the detective asked, "How long has this young lady, Miss —"

"Annin," supplied Mr. Durand.

"How long has Miss Annin been in your daughter's employ?"

"She has been with us some two months."

"And — pardon the question, sir — is she a favorite with yourself and Mrs. Durand?"

Mr. Durand hesitated a moment, and a look of annoyance flitted across his face. Then he replied: "Candidly, my wife does *not* like the young lady, although I see nothing to find fault with. If Miss Aura is more content with her society than without it, she should not be unwelcome to me."

The detective made no reply to this speech, and they awaited in silence the appearance of the two young ladies.

They waited so long that at last Mr. Durand arose,

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and, with a muttered exclamation of impatience, stretched out his hand toward the bell rope.

As he was about to ring, the door suddenly opened, and a young lady entered the room quite hurriedly.

"I beg your pardon, sir," she said, addressing Mr. Durand, and never once glancing at the detective, "I have kept you waiting, but it was because of Miss Durand; she is quite indisposed, and begs that you will excuse her from coming down."

"Indisposed!" cried Mr. Durand, in evident surprise, "this is the first I have heard of it."

The young lady made no answer, but stood respectfully before him as if awaiting his commands.

"I am sorry that Miss Aura is ill, Miss Annin; is it anything serious, do you apprehend?"

"Oh no, sir," replied Miss Annin promptly; and just for one instant there was a queer glimmer in her eye, a glimmer which the detective did not fail to notice. "She will be better by evening, I think; it is a sort of nervous headache."

"Well, well, poor child, another time must do then. You will give this man any information that you can, Miss Annin. He is investigating this robbery, you know."

She bowed her head and then turned to the detective, saying simply,

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"I am at your service, sir."

Miss Annin, the hired companion of Aura Durand, the heiress, was a decided brunette. She was by no means a beauty, and yet one would have paused anywhere to take a second look at Miss Nina Annin. Her nose was too large and too prominent, her forehead too low, and not broad enough; but her eyes were large, dark, and handsome; her teeth white and regular; her hair, dark, glossy, and abundant, was manifestly all her own, and she wore it in a simple and becoming fashion; her head was well shaped and was poised somewhat haughtily upon a slender neck and above gracefully rounded shoulders. She was below the medium height, neither slender nor plump, just one of those firm, compact, little bodies that impress you at once with the idea that the owner thereof has a decided will of her own, and a pretty sure method of making it tell upon others.

All of this the detective comprehended at a glance, and as she turned her eyes full upon him, he was conscious of a vague impression that the face was not quite unfamiliar to him.

After all, he seemed to have little to say to Miss Annin, and the little that he did say seemed to elicit no very satisfactory replies. When he had signified that he had no more to ask, and the young lady had bowed and

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retired from the room as composedly as she had entered it, he turned toward his employer, saying,

"For the present, Mr. Durand, I have finished my investigations here. If you will now write for me the address of the party who paid you the money last evening I will take my leave."

Mr. Durand silently complied with his request, and then said,

"May I be allowed to ask a few questions, not so much pertaining to this case as to your system?"

The detective bowed.

"Then will you tell me why you have so carefully examined every door and window of the house? Was it in the hope of finding some trace of the robber?"

"Not at all. I wished to assure myself as to the possibility or impossibility of entering your house either by door or window."

"Well?" expectantly.

"I find that your bolts and bars should be burglar-proof; no thief entered last night, either by door or window."

"Why, sir, how about the open street door?"

"The thief may have been secreted before your doors were locked, or even in the daytime,—but—I am not at all convinced of *that;* if such were the case, however, he

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would naturally leave by the most accessible door; namely, that opening directly upon the street."

"You have questioned my servants and addressed a *few* questions to my wife and Miss Annin; pardon me, but I could not quite see the drift of your conversation—sometimes it seemed a little irrelevant."

"No doubt," drily.

"Why did you dismiss my daughter's maid, and afterward her companion, so summarily?"

"Because—there was nothing more to be gained from them."

"Your questions seemed to me quite unimportant."

"They were unimportant. I have been questioning faces, not minds, in my examinations to-day, sir. The mind, the tongue, soon learn to dissemble, to guard a secret well, but the human face is a window. The quivering of a nostril, a chance gleam of the eye, a movement of the hand, or head, can convey to me more meaning than will hundreds of words. For years I have made the human countenance my study, and I have been well repaid."

"And what have you learned from the faces of my servants?"

"That I must look farther before I find a clue to this mysterious burglar. Your servants are honest."

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"Then we are at sea again?"

"Not quite, sir; but Mr. Bathurst must take the next step. I will now go."

And without another word this rather eccentric personage took his leave.

"These detectives are a queer lot," muttered Mr. Durand, as he went thoughtfully up to his wife's sitting-room. "And if I am not mistaken this man has a suspicion after all."

"It's a queer trail to strike," thought the detective as he walked briskly away from the avenue. "But I will follow it up for all that—the only person in that household who has roused a suspicion in my mind, is the rich man's daughter, Miss Aura Durand."

As if undecided where to go he turned at the corner of State street, and looked up and down. As he did so, his eye fell upon a man lounging before a confectioner's window, and, seemingly, intent upon counting the cakes within.

"Upon my word," muttered our detective, with a sudden start. "Here he is." And he hurried across the street, and was soon within speaking distance of the stranger, who was a tall man with a slouching hang-dog air, a shabby costume, and a head of brick-colored hair, that fell down almost to his collar. The face was smooth

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shaven, except for a dab of red beard upon the protruding chin, and was further ornamented by a patch just under the left eye. The nose had a very inflammable look, and a shabby beaver hat worn very much over one ear completed the *ensemble* of the veriest "bummer" that ever trod the flags of State street.

There was the usual bustle and hurry upon the street, and having surveyed the lounger to his satisfaction, our detective managed to wedge himself in among the foot-passengers in such a manner that when opposite the red haired man he was suddenly brought up against him with considerable force.

"What the dev—"

The stranger suddenly checked his wrath as his eye fell upon the detective; and then the two gazed at each other in silence for a moment.

"You couldn't tell me the way to the Tremont House, could you, stranger?" asked the detective, with a comical drawl.

The man thus addressed turned away suddenly, and retreating until his back could be brought in contact with the confectioner's wall—said, with a jerk of the head, in that direction. "Maybe I've got the address in my pocket, pardner; come hither and see."

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"YOU COULDN'T TELL ME THE WAY TO THE TREMONT HOUSE?"

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Thus invited, the detective approached and said, in a low, quick tone,

"Rob, old man, I spotted you by accident, didn't set out to run you down. If I am in the way I'll move on."

"You are not in the way, Neil," said the disguised Jocelyn. "I am after a chap who is up stairs now with a lady. Just stand here and talk while I wait—that is if you are not in a hurry on your own account."

"I'm in no hurry now, Rob," replied Bathurst. "I have two good hours before me, and, as usual, am restless while idle from necessity. Lord, man, what a make-up, and you have sacrificed your mustache, too. That's a confounded shame."

"Had to do it," replied Jocelyn, indifferently. "You see I tumbled up early this morning and came out; almost the first man I saw was a party who must have crossed the water very lately, he is a swell gambler and a rascal of the finest cut. I knew some of his games in London, and am ready to wager that he is here for no good. I've been shadowing him all day and don't intend to let up until I find out his game."

"All right, Rob, but don't let me lose track of you—I am looking up a queer job myself and may call on you for assistance."

At this moment a man and woman came down the

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stairs near them, and Neil Bathurst knew by one glance from Rob Jocelyn's eye, that this was the game.

A carriage was standing just below them, the man hurried the woman towards it, assisted her in, lifted his hat gracefully, and turned away; walking swiftly up State street, while the carriage rolled off in the opposite direction.

Without a word Rob Jocelyn turned his face northward and walked swaggeringly after the man, while Neil Bathurst sauntered slowly down the street as if following the carriage. Scarcely noting whither his feet turned, after the carriage had whirled out of sight, he paced on, lost in thought.

A crowd of people were gathered upon a corner listening to the lively chatter of some street vender, and to avoid these he turned down one of those streets of doubtful repute that are so plentiful in Chicago. It was comparatively quiet here and our hero moved on, still lost in a labyrinth of cogitations.

As he was passing a somewhat showy house before which a carriage was standing, a sudden movement of one of the horses attracted his attention, and looking up quickly, he saw that it was the very carriage which had driven away from the State street restaurant.

"Ah!" muttered he, "Rob's Englishman is not

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above the *demi-monde* it seems, and yet the woman *can't* live here. I have got into a bad locality, and will turn back."

He was suiting the action to the word, when his steps were arrested by a loud shriek, which seemed to come from the upper rooms of the gaudy house.

He paused irresolute until the sound was repeated.

"Help! help!" cried a woman's voice. "Murder! *Murder!* MURDER!"

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CHAPTER V.

AN ADVENTURE AND A WALLET.

"Murder!"

The startling cry sounded doubly weird and awful, because of the afternoon sunlight that was bathing the housetops.

But no such thought occurred to Neil Bathurst as he bounded up the steps and gave the door a vigorous push.

Contrary to his expectations, it was not locked, and flinging it open, he rushed up the stairs, at the head of which he encountered a group of women, who were huddled together near a door, upon which their horrified eyes were fixed.

Rightly guessing that this was the door of the room from which the cries had come, he hastened toward it, and putting his hand upon the handle, found that it was locked.

The women fell back at his approach, and hearing groans and curses, from within, the young man promptly applied his shoulder to the door and exerted all his strength to break the fastening. It was but a flimsy

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affair, after the fashion of city tenement-house locks, and at the third vigorous push the door yielded.

Entering the room, Neil Bathurst found himself face to face with a man who had evidently turned away from his victim to secure his own safety. Guessing at once that this was the assassin, Bathurst stopped short in the doorway, thus cutting off his retreat.

With a howl of rage and fear, the cornered man sprang to seize a huge dirk-knife that lay upon the floor near his victim, but the detective was too quick for him. With wonderful agility, he seized a chair that lay between them, evidently overturned in the affray, and, as the villain stooped to recover the knife, he dealt him a sudden blow that laid him prostrate.

Instantly Bathurst was on one knee beside him, at the same time saying, over his shoulder to the frightened women:

"Come in, quick, and attend to the lady—I must secure this man."

Even as he spoke, his quick eye rested upon a wallet which lay upon the floor before the bed, half open, and exposing to view a bundle of papers, which seemed to be its only contents.

He had possessed himself of the knife, and assured himself that the man before him was not shamming but

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actually stunned, and now he arose and turned toward the bed, saying:

"Run for a doctor, some one, and for policemen."

"They are coming, sir," replied the oldest of the women, who now stood beside him.

Bathurst glanced again at the woman; she was living, but evidently bleeding inwardly; he could hear the tramp of policemen on the stairs; there was no time to lose; with the instinct of a true detective, he bent down and, unnoticed by any of the women, secured the wallet, with its contents, thinking, as he did so, of Jocelyn and the foreign gambler.

In less than five minutes the house was alive with people, and the usual scenes, attending such occasions, ensued. The stunned villain, who had struck the death blow, recovered, to find himself in the grasp of two powerful policemen. A doctor soon appeared, and, having promptly cleared the room of all unnecessary occupants, he proceeded to examine the victim, and then apply such remedies as might serve to lessen pain and keep the feeble life spark alive.

Having given to the policemen a brief account of the affair, or as much of it as he had taken a part in; and, having seen them safely on their way to the station house with their prisoner, Neil Bathurst re-entered the house

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and began to look about him. A group of excited women were conversing in low tones, in a little room just at the head of the stairs. He ascended slowly, and seeing that the door of the room which held the seemingly dying woman was closed, he approached the group at the opposite end of the hall.

Among the faces turned to him, he recognized two as belonging to the women who had been huddled about the door when he had first entered the house, and, after looking from one to the other for a moment he beckoned the younger of the two to follow him, and went down stairs.

Somewhat reluctantly the girl obeyed him, and presently they stood alone in a little, half-darkened, back parlor.

Neil Bathurst was well aware of the character of the house in which he stood, and he knew therefore how best to approach the girl before him.

Crossing the room he drew back a curtain, letting in a strong light, and then drawing forward a chair, and throwing himself into another opposite, he said, in a matter-of-course tone:

"Sit down there please, and tell me what you know about this affair."

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The girl took the seat indicated, and then said, with a coarse laugh:

"You are quite airy in your demands. Why don't you ask some one else for information? Who *are* you, anyway?"

"I ask you because I choose to do so, and if you don't want to answer the same questions in a police court, you had better be frank now. I am an officer, and I've had my eye upon this house for some time."

"You—don't mean to arrest me?" faltered the girl.

"Not if you tell me what I want to know and don't lie about it."

"If I tell you the truth, may I leave the house unmolested?"

"You may."

"All right," with a look of relief. "Then what do you want to know?"

"Do you know the woman who has been stabbed?"

"Never saw her until she lay there half dead."

"You live in this house?"

"Yes."

"And she comes as a visitor."

"She came to-day. We were in the parlor—two others and myself. We didn't know when she drove up, we were playing casino at the back of the room."

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"Who?"

"Kitty, Annie, and myself."

"All right! go on."

"I don't suppose that the carriage had been standing there two minutes, when we noticed it, but the lady was already inside. We knew that a man had been up stairs, waiting for some one, for nearly an hour, and we had heard him tramping up and down the room as if he was getting mad."

"Well!"

"Well—as we were talking about the carriage, the old lady put her head in the door and said it was half-past four o'clock. She expected callers at half-past four, and that meant that we must get out of the parlor. The girls went down to the dining-room, but I went up stairs——"

"You did?"

"Yes—did you examine the rooms above?"

"No."

"Well, if you do so, you will see that there is a room opening off from the one in front, where the man and woman met. The room is a sort of closet or lumber rooom for everyone in the house. We all put our trunks in it. The old lady keeps her linen there, and there is an old dressing table there too, which has an excellent glass; the window gives a good light, and we often use

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the table and glass, and dress our hair there. There is a door, as I said, opening into the front room, and a transom over it. Some time ago a pane of glass had been broken in the transom, and so the thing has been filled in on the front side with a gathering of crimson moreen. Well—the occupants of the front room are not likely to know that it is very easy to hear their conversation, if one is in the lumber room, do you see?"

"Yes. Go on."

"Well, I was going out this evening, so I ran up to the trunk room to dress my hair, while there was plenty of daylight. The man was talking very loud when I entered the room, and they did not hear me open and shut the door."

"I suppose not," dryly. "You listened—well, tell me every word you overheard, and, remember, no exaggerations or false statements. I have seen the woman up stairs before—and you can't lie to me."

"So!" cried the girl, with the air of one who has made a discovery. "You were shadowing her, were you? That's how you were on hand at the right minute."

"Never mind that," replied he with some impatience. "What did you hear?"

"I can't give you the exact words, but this is it in a

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nutshell. The two were old partners of some sort, and must have been up to a good many games together. It seems that they had planned to get some money from some victim (an Englishman) who had shown a full purse. The man had found the victim and then sought her services. She had got into the Englishman's good graces, and had promised the man to get possession of his pocket-book this very day and bring it to him. Well, when she produced the pocket-book, it had no money in it, only papers. The man had been drinking, I should think, and he flew into a fearful rage; they both became very angry. She told him that she was glad the scheme had failed, and that she would never do any more dirty work for him. Then I heard him spring at her and say, 'D— you, I'll have your life then.' There was the sound of a struggle, and then I knew that he had struck her; she screamed and I heard her say, 'You have killed me!' Then I rushed into the hall and cried at the top of my voice, 'Murder! murder! murder!'"

"So it was *you* who cried 'murder!'"

"Yes. Why, bless you, he had stabbed the breath out of her; she could not have screamed so."

"True!"

At this moment the mistress of the house entered the room.

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"How is the lady, madame?" asked the detective, rising.

"The chances are even," replied the woman in a hard voice; "she may live, she may die. Are you the man who broke in the door?"

"Yes, madame."

"Then come up and see the woman."

Bathurst rose to follow her, but paused, and, as she passed from the room, laid his hand upon the arm of the girl and whispered,

"Remember, not a whisper as to my business, if you want to be safe yourself; and you had better leave this house to-night."

"Trust me for that," replied the girl. "I will be safely away within an hour, and I won't give you away."

Thus assured he hurried out and up the stairs, to find the mistress of the house standing at their head, looking somewhat irate.

"I should think this was no time for trifling with silly girls," said she, testily. "I don't know who you are, but you seem to know how to act promptly. How is this affair to terminate?"

"You have just said — in life, or death."

"I don't mean that; how will it affect *me*?"

"Not much, I should fancy," with covert sarcasm.

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"Not much, indeed; my reputation in this quarter is ruined."

"That's a pity."

"Well, I won't stay here long—and what is to be done with this woman! *I* can't keep her on my hands—she must go to the hospital."

Without making a reply to this unfeeling speech, Bathurst turned on his heel and entered the front room.

Before the bed stood the doctor and one woman, evidently a neighbor; he approached, and standing beside them, looked down upon the injured woman.

It was not a young face, evidently; the woman had passed her thirtieth year, but, in health, it must have been a handsome face even yet. She might have been a weak woman, but she did not *look* like a wicked one. She was well, but not expensively, dressed; and on the third finger of the slender left hand she wore a plain gold ring, that looked as if it had not been removed for years, so firmly did it seem embedded in the flesh of the small finger.

For a few moments they talked of the woman and her chances for life or death. Then the detective asked,

"Will it lessen her chances for life to remove her to the nearest hospital, doctor?"

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"If she lives beyond to-morrow," replied the doctor, gravely, "she will be better off there than here."

"She won't get any too good care *here*," said the woman who seemed a kindly disposed, officious person.

"Can't you look after her until to-morrow?" asked Bathurst.

"Well,—yes, I might.'

"Then I will see that you are not the loser by it."

Thus assured, the woman declared herself ready to undertake the charge.

Bathurst was assured that the physician was all that could be desired, and, feeling that the patient was in good hands, he turned his face homeward.

More than an hour had passed since he had first entered the house, and he felt as he hurried on that he would be late in keeping his appointment with Arteveldt, at the Durand mansion. The day had been warm and his disguise was somewhat burdensome.

When at last he reached his own rooms he threw off the paddings that had given him an appearance of stoutness, and the wig and beard that had, together with various pigments and little brushes, transformed him into a middle-aged man, and heaved a sigh of relief.

"I am getting into business again with a vengeance," he muttered as he commenced a hurried toilet. "I

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would like to look into the contents of that wallet for Rob's sake—but it can't be done to-night. I must now cultivate the friendship of Miss Aura Durand."

At that moment there came a sounding rap at his door, and in another instant Clarence Arteveldt in full evening costume stood before him.

"Hurry up, Bath.," he cried impatiently. "Old Durand has sent a message to the house desiring us to come in time for dinner. I have been here twice before and found the door fast locked."

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CHAPTER VI.

AURA DURAND.

Neil Bathurst was busily thinking, the while he arrayed himself for the evening, that was to be an admixture of pleasure and business. But when finally he interrupted the flow of Arteveldt's small talk by a carelessly spoken question, not even the keenest observer would have suspected him of having a care more important than the careful arranging of his lavender tie.

"So you are really smitten with that little country girl?" he said, arranging the knot of the aforementioned tie with much apparent care. "Miss,—what did you call her name?"

"Miss Armyn," enthusiastically. "Yes, Bath., I *am* smitten—and it may be as well that my engagement with you and old Durand keeps me from making an idiot of myself by rushing over to the North Side again to-night."

Bathurst laughed good naturedly.

"You omit to mention Miss Durand" he said. "You did not find her unforgiving did you, when you called in the morning with your pretty excuse?"

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deuce of a bore to be trying to tell a fellow how a girl looks."

"Especially when you are thinking about the 'looks' of another girl," laughed Bathurst. "Well, come along Arteveldt, I am ready to go and inspect these two fair damsels on my own account. Are you sure that you have never mentioned my name in connection with my business, to these young ladies?"

"Of course I am! Do you suppose I have forgotten the turn you did me in Boston, two years ago, or nearly that? I never *blow*, except when I am drunk, and not then unless the party is under my eyes; and I'm not likely to get drunk to-night."

"Nor ever, I should think, after your Boston experience," replied Bathurst, dryly.

"Well, I don't know about that; as Dick Swiveller would say, the 'Rosy' has many charms for fellows like me," replied the other, carelessly. "All ready, are you? Come along, then, we shall be late at the 'Mansion' as it is."

They hurried out of the building, sprang into a waiting hack, and drove rapidly away.

There was little affinity between the two young men; and their present intimacy was hardly of Neil Bathurst's seeking. Two years previous, while employed in shadow-

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ing a party of gamblers and confidence men, in the good city of Boston, the young detective had rescued Clarence Arteveldt from their clutches.

Arteveldt was visiting the "Hub," for the first time, and in seeing the sights had fallen in with the gang of villains; already they had fleeced him out of much money, and, having enticed him into one of the very worst quarters of the city, were about to complete their work, by robbing him systematically of watch and jewels, of which he wore some most valuable ones. They had made him blind and stupid with drugged liquor, and would have found him an easy victim. But, suddenly Neil Bathurst came down upon them with a sufficient force to capture the entire gang, and rescue young Arteveldt. Bathurst took charge of the young man, his money and valuables, and when, at last, the effects of the drugging had passed away, sent him home intact, and with some excellent advice—which, of course, the young spendthrift did *not* follow.

But, while Clarence Arteveldt forgot the advice, he remembered the man; and when, some months later, he encountered his benefactor in the streets of Chicago, he pounced upon him forthwith, dragged him home to the Arteveldt mansion, introduced him to his mother, and declared his resolution to be the young detective's "host

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and right bower," during his stay in the Lakeside city.

This arrangement, however, scarcely suited Neil Bathurst. He accepted the hospitality of the Arteveldts for a short time, because there seemed no alternative, but Clarence Arteveldt, the darling of the *boudoir*, was hardly a congenial companion for the young man who abhorred insipidity, and whose life had been too full of adventure and peril to enable him to enjoy the trifling amusements, and safe excitements that made up the sum of existence for the young man of indolent habits and bounteous wealth.

So he broke away from the Arteveldt thraldom to the extent of establishing himself in a suite of bachelor apartments on Dearborn street, and kept quietly out of young Arteveldt's way whenever he had anything practical to employ his time.

Not that he was not fond of gaiety and the society of the fair sex. He loved both, provided they were of the right quality. But he found the one extreme of dinners *en règle*, in stately dining-rooms, where he invariably found himself slipping off from morocco-covered dining-room chairs, owing to the upholsterers' reckless disregard for the center of gravity, or, later *tête-à-têtes* with stately, much furbelowed damsels, in stiff-backed parlors, when

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the same slipping process was repeated, with only the variation of a smaller and still more provoking chair, with a satin, instead of morocco surface; and the other extreme of suppers, *en passant*, at questionable, down town restaurants, and the society of champagne drinking, slang talking maidens of another class, were equally distasteful to him.

The first he pronounced stupid, the last, vulgar.

It chanced that during the time of his stay beneath the Arteveldt roof, Miss Aura Durand had been absent from the city, and as he had invariably declined all invitations to make her acquaintance since, Neil Bathurst was inwardly wondering what sort of young lady Miss Durand would prove herself to be.

"That was a queer suspicion of mine," he thought, as they rolled toward the Durand dwelling, "if it *was* a suspicion—and yet, stranger notions than that have led to the discovery of greater crimes. If what I have heard from that scamp Fordham be true, the young lady is really fond of this scapegrace beside me; in which case, she was, probably, in the sulks this morning; after a charming fashion woman have, when they fancy themselves aggrieved."

So thinking, Neil Bathurst arrived for the third time that day, at the door of James Durand's splendid home.

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Meantime, the heiress of the Durand wealth was standing before a magnificent mirror in her beautiful dressing-room, surveying with satisfied countenance her own reflected image. And this is what she saw.

A girl, small of stature, and apparently about twenty years of age. She was plump; cavilers might have called her a trifle too plump for her height, and yet, looking upon the rounded, baby-like shoulders, and the arms so full and tapering, with the dimples in elbow and wrist, one could scarcely wish her embonpoint less.

The head, rising above a full, white throat, was covered with an abundance of blonde hair, that lighted up to pale gold under the glare of the gaslight; it was short above the white brow, falling in crinkling waves almost to the delicately arched eyebrows, thus concealing the forehead, or nearly so, while the remainder was drawn carelessly back from the face, and dressed, low upon the neck, in braids and loose curls.

The eyes were strangely in contrast with the hair, being of intense darkness, the sort of eyes that, without really being black, are always called so; and justly, too, when fringed by dark lashes, and shadowed by jetty brows. In the matter of brow and eyelash, Miss Durand's eyes were certainly defective, for the former were too thin, and not heavy enough, while the latter

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were likewise thin, and too short to be pretty, or to shadow the otherwise lovely eyes effectively. The nose was small and straight, the mouth rosy and smiling; but here again the caviler might have found fault — the teeth were white, even, and small, *too* small, for when the face was in repose the corners of the mouth had a compressed look, as if its fair owner were forcibly keeping back a secret. The complexion can be best and easiest described by the stock phrase, "Lilies and roses," simply perfection; and as no mortal, whether male or female, had ever seen the lilies darken, or the roses cease to glow, it were unfair to suppose that their bloom was not the gift of nature.

This was Miss Aura Durand as she stood before her mirror, arrayed in a wonderful garment composed of wonderful shades of green.

At first one might have considered it strange that she should have so decided a taste for green of every shade and degree — her dressing-room was hung with sea green, her boudoir might have been the home of a Naiad, and her chamber, with its white canopied bed, had the appearance of a snowy tent in a shadowy forest; but when one considered how remarkably becoming was the color to the mistress of all that green richness, they ceased to wonder, but never to admire.

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"Your recreant knight, and his friend, have arrived, Miss Durand," said a mocking voice at her elbow, and, turning, Aura met the cool gaze of Miss Annin.

"Plain black and scarlet fuchsias," exclaimed the heiress, glancing critically at her companion's toilet. "You certainly look well, Nina, but I don't see why you will affect such rigid simplicity, as the expense of your wardrobe does not affect *your* purse."

"Because I am no fool, Miss Durand," snapped the companion, ungraciously. "I don't choose to incur remark by dressing like an heiress — if I *do* finger the purse of one; my silk is as *rich* as yours, if it *is* plain, and I fancy I know what does and does not become me," with an approving glance at the scarlet fuchsias in her bodice.

Aura Durand turned away from the mirror tranquilly, seeming not to have noticed the disrespect in the tone of her companion.

"Dress is not to the point," continued Nina Annin, with less asperity. "Do you know who the friend is who is here with Clarence Arteveldt?"

"Certainly," flicking off an imaginary speck of dust with the daintiest of handkerchiefs. "It is Mr. Bathurst, who visited at the Arteveldts while I was in New York."

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"Then you didn't happen to hear in New York who Mr. Bathurst is?" ironically.

"Who he is?"

"*What* he is, then."

"Bah!" cried Miss Durand, with a shrug of her pretty shoulder, "I don't know what you are talking about."

"Then I'll enlighten you. Mr. Bathurst, the dear friend of Clarence Arteveldt, is *a detective*."

Aura Durant was standing at a dressing table with her back to the girl who made this sudden announcement; for one moment she stood motionless and silent, then she turned swiftly to face her companion, with a scornful smile upon her lips.

"How dramatic you are," she said, coolly. "How do you know that he is — a detective?"

"No matter! I *do* know it."

"Don't add mystery to your dramatic effort; it's unnecessary with me. *How* do you know?"

"Oh, I can tell you," said Miss Annin, flinging herself down upon an ottoman, and bending down to examine the toe of her dainty boot. "I went into the drawing room this morning to look for a letter I had dropped somewhere — and as the room was darkened I let in a little light to aid my search. As I stood at the window I saw

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Clarence come up the steps and behind him this detective Bathurst."

"Well?" impatiently.

"Well! I know him for a detective in this way. When I was playing at a certain theater in New York, once upon a time, this identical man arrested one of our best ladies, took her off the stage in all her gauze and spangles, and when one of the ballet girls, struck by his handsome face, asked who he was, the manager said, 'That is one of the ablest detectives I ever heard of. I verily believe he would hunt down a shadow; he has never been known to fail.'"

Miss Annin paused, and looked up to note the effect of her words. But Miss Durand's next remark was hardly what she had expected. "You should be careful where you drop your letters," she said, coolly. "And it must have been uncomfortable for that young woman to be taken to the lock-up in her stage clothes." Then, as if the idea had suddenly occurred to her, "You don't suppose he will know you?"

"Hardly; considerable difference in the appearance of Miss Annin, the companion, and 'La Florette,' in pink tights and a shower of spangles, not to mention a wig of the most impossible yellow."

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"Then I don't see what all this fuss is about," said Aura, with a positive sneer. "By the way, why didn't you tell me this before?"

"Because I didn't see fit," retorted Nina Annin, rising to her feet. "Are you going down now?"

"Certainly. So this detective is handsome?"

"Very."

Aura Durand turned toward her mirror, once more gazed at the image reflected there, and then, as if satisfied with the view, turned about.

"Come," she said, "let us go down."

When they had reached the hall, she paused suddenly. "Wait a moment," she said, "I have forgotten something."

As she re-entered the dressing-room, Nina Annin glided after, and through the partially closed door saw Aura take from her dressing table a small vial, lift it to her lips, and then turn away.

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CHAPTER VII.

WHAT THE WALLET CONTAINED.

Late that night, Neil Bathurst sat alone, pondering over the events of the day and making copious entries in a plethoric note book.

Rob Jocelyn had often laughed at him "for a garrulous note maker," to use Rob's words. But Bathurst had found that his habit of jotting down everything that came into his mind, or under his observation, concerning a suspected party, or those connected with parties or cases coming under his eyes, had often stood him in good stead, and, that seeming irrelevancies had been in truth, most apropos and useful in many cases.

He wrote rapidly, and for a long time. Finally he paused and turning back the leaves, reviewed his work, to see that no item was omitted.

There was a most minute description of the doings of that day, from the moment when his luncheon had been broken in upon by Clarence Arteveldt, to the time when, having bidden farewell to Aura Durand and the other members of the family, he had turned his back upon

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Arteveldt, and hastened, alone, to his rooms, at eleven o'clock at night.

His *memoranda*, commencing the incidents and impressions of the evening just passed were characteristic.

Here is an extract:

"Evening, 6:30.

"Landed at door of the robbed mansion precisely on time for dinner, which would have been a heavy affair but for the beauty and vivacity of Miss Aura Durand, and the *nonchalant* grace, and general 'interestingness' of her companion, Miss Annin. These are *not* ordinary girls, and form a decided contrast, both in manner and appearance. Doubtless they are aware of this, and of its effectiveness."

Here followed minute descriptions of the two girls, after which he had written:

"I begin to realize the absurdity of suspecting Aura Durand of any connection with the robbery. She is idolized by those old people, they see no faults in her, and I am prone to confess—neither can I—unless—it may be that she is a little too fond of that gay Lothario, Arteveldt; and yet, she lavished not a few of her sweetest smiles upon ungrateful me. I was aware of a few—a *very* few glances that indicated some sort of an understanding—or *mis*understanding between Arteveldt and

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the heiress. I can't quite make them out, but of one thing I am sure, those two fair young ladies were so ceremoniously sweet to each other that I know there must be some other bond between them than the silken one of love—and yet, why should this be—it looks like another improbability—can it be that I am becoming a maniac on the subject of glances and tones?

"My visit to the Durands to-night may have been a social success, but from a professional standpoint it was *nil*. I am still at sea in regard to the burglary—*was* it a burglary?"

The young detective sat for a time absorbed in thought, then, suddenly rising, and throwing back his hair with a boyish gesture, he muttered:

"Now for the wallet; I wish Rob was here to help me."

He took the wallet from his pocket and placed it upon the table before him.

It was smaller than the ordinary wallet, and of the finest bronzed leather.

"Looks like a piece of foreign extravagance," he muttered. "Silken lined—and—hallo! what's this?"

On the inside leather was the embossed initials, J. B.

"J. B," read the young man. "Wonder if these are the initials of the owner."

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THE LONG WALLET.

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The wallet contained a number of letters, a couple of pictures, and what appeared to be a collection of addresses, dates and *memoranda*.

Putting aside the latter, Bathurst applied himself to the letters. Glancing over the dates of these he perceived that they extended over a number of years. They were all in one hand-writing, evidently that of a woman, a fine, clear Italian hand, as unusual as it was beautiful.

They were all addressed to a "Mr. Jason Bradwardine," and nearly all bore foreign post marks.

The first of these letters, addressed from an obscure German village, were grateful, impulsive, yet guarded little missives, expressing unbounded faith in the person addressed, but full of fear of some unknown person, or thing; they were all brief, and not one of them contained a name or even an initial. They bore no signature whatever.

Arranging them in order, the earliest dates uppermost, Neil Bathurst began their perusal.

"Kindest of friends," so ran the first letter.

From this little foreign hamlet, seeming to me to be out of the world, I address you. Again and again I give you my poor thanks for your kindness to most miserable me. What could I have done without you? How escaped from the cruelty and persecution, the ignominy and utter horror that surrounded me? I owe you everything and thank you for all. Thanks

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to you, my little inheritance is at command. I want for nothing, it will suffice for me and mine. My darling one—all that is left me now—is well, is beautiful; ah! what will she be by and by. Some day the tables will be turned; some day *she* may possess the strength I never had.

My letter is addressed in fear and trembling. If it should fall into other hands. *Their* hands!

My friend, I write no more. You have my benediction, my gratitude—all I have to give. I pray to the Virgin to comfort you always. Amen.

In fear, in sorrow, in gratitude,

Yours, ————.

"Here is mystery," quoth the detective. "Let's see—that letter is fifteen years old, as I live."

There were several more letters written in much the same vein, bearing the same post mark, and dated one and two months apart. Then came one which ran as follows:

Dear friend, kind friend, forgive me that I have not heeded your advice. I can stay here no longer; my days are filled with fear, my nights with vain repinings. I begin to fear *myself;* I have now the opportunity, I *must* embrace it. Once in that foreign land across the ocean, the fear will fall from me, I shall feel myself in a new world, I shall rest. Write no more to me here; when this reaches you I shall be on the ocean. I go with good people who will care for me, and we will be safe. I have promised never to let you lose sight of me, but for this I would say it were best to pass now, out of your life. Best that you should forget me. But my promise I will keep. When I have found a home in that far-off land, you shall hear from me, until then, best of friends, farewell. Once more forgive me, I *could* not stay longer when there is *so much* to fear.

Thus abruptly the letter ended.

"Mysterious but interesting," commented the deteo-

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tive. "Let's see what happens next; wish I had the other side of the correspondence."

Taking up the next letter he resumed his research.

My Friend of Friends:

Six months since last I wrote you. But your goodness is not forgotten. There has been much to prevent writing. First, the search for a place to sit down in and say, "this I will call home;" afterward sickness that, but for my beautiful comforter, I would have prayed might end in death. Even yet I am not strong. This is a wonderful new land, and we live in a wee, small hamlet in the province — no the State of *New York*. Everything is new and strange, but my dear one thrives and is happy. Here there is no musical variety of title, no royalty, almost no aristocracy. It is as if one were *citizeness* of the French republic.

I have taken a new name—what an effect *mine*—my *real* one—would have here—address me thus—*Mistress Bourne*, Elm Valley, New York, in the United States. Adieu.

"Ha, ha, ha!" laughed Bathurst, "I wonder if he did. 'Mistress Bourne — *in the United States.*' What fun for our Yankee postmasters."

The next letter was in an entirely different vein. Bearing date four months later than the one announcing the safe arrival in a new world, it began as follows:

Villain, Betrayer—insult to the name of *friend:*

Know yourself unmasked; know yourself foiled, and that by a weak woman. Did you think that love such as mine ever sleeps? Do you think a *mother's* vigilance ever fails? Bah! I mock at you for I am transformed. I am a tigress. Stand before me now, and I will plant a dagger in your heart. I *can!* I *will!*

Your emissary has failed. He will return to you empty-handed.

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Know him for a bungler—a fool. I did not suspect him as *your* tool. I thought him sent by another. What fixes the guilt on *you?* Just a scrap of your own hand-writing discovered by me, no matter how. *You* would steal my child. It can be but for one purpose; do you think I do not know what that is, and why you thirst for that young life? How I loathe myself that I ever called *you* friend. Fool that I was! You plotted like a serpent, you thought to surprise me among strangers; to find me unprepared. As if I had not lived for years in fear and watchfulness. Know you not that habit becomes second nature?

I have no fear in addressing you thus. After to-night this place will know me no more. The last link that binds me to the past is now broken. The woman who has been will be no more.

The future—that future in which you will stand unmasked—rests in stronger hands than mine. Jason Bradwardine, *beware of it!*

"Now, who but a woman would have sent an enemy such a defiance as that?" said Bathurst, as he laid aside this last letter, "and if this man *is* Bradwardine, what a precious fool he is for carrying about such a letter. How completely he must have duped the woman in the outset, and what a female Ishmael she must have been—must still be, if she is yet in existence. Is the man that Rob Jocelyn is shadowing Jason Bradwardine? and if so, is Jason Bradwardine still in search of this woman of mystery and her child?"

Then he picked up the *memoranda* and examined that, but it was still more unsatisfactory. There were the merest jottings, names of several towns of England and France, together with unexplained dates. Two or three foreign addresses, with only the initials of the names;

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the name of a church that might have been anywhere. A great many jottings of this sort there were, and Bathurst laid them down with a sigh of weariness.

"They are dry as dust," he said with a yawn, "and altogether beyond my comprehension to-night. I will let these notes stand over."

He took up the two pictures and contemplated them thoughtfully. One was the face of a woman, young and lovely, a soft southern face, with dusky eyes, and clustering curls above the forehead and about the throat. The other was the picture of a man with a handsome Saxon face, possessing more of beauty than of strength.

The photographs were finished in the same style, and looking at the reverse side of the cards, he found that they were taken by the same artist—probably at the same time—taken in Paris, France.

"There seems to be considerable of the 'foreign element' about this affair," thought Bathurst, as he carefully replaced letters, pictures and notes in the wallet. "There seems to have been a wrong somewhere, and perhaps Rob Jocelyn may be on the trail of a criminal. However, if these papers are valuable, I shall find it out. Now for bed. I can trust this part of the matter to 'our wonderful advertising medium.'"

Thoroughly wearied with the day's adventures, he

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prepared to retire, and had soon forgotten all thought for the morrow, in sleep. Early the next morning he was stirring, thoroughly refreshed and ready for whatever might transpire. While still busy with his toilet, a tap on the door announced the newsboy with his morning papers.

"Now to consult the 'ads,'" he said, as flinging aside his hair brush, he hastily opened the "Tribune."

If the contents of the wallet were of value, the loser would most likely avail himself of that convenient medium, the morning paper.

"An honest man might put the matter in the hands of the police," so reasoned the detective; "but few men, even though honest, would care to make the manner of the theft public. The chances are, that he will advertise, in any case, and from the nature of the 'ad,' one may judge as to the value of the documents, and the honesty of the man. If he be acting fairly, I can save him from the blackmailing that would have been inevitable, had the papers fallen into the hands of any of those women, and, if I find that Jocelyn has grounds for his suspicions, we may be able to spoil Mr. Bradwardine's little game."

Bathurst had expected to find an advertisement something after this fashion,

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"If the person who took a wallet containing papers, etc., from a gentleman, on yesterday afternoon, will return the same to owner, said person will be rewarded, and no questions asked."

Or else a large reward would be offered, if the papers had a money value. Perhaps an appointment would have been made. Perhaps a threat implied.

But no such advertisement appeared in the morning papers, nothing that could be construed into a covert hint. Nothing open or implied, that could possibly be referred to the owner of the lost wallet.

Neil Bathurst pondered for a few moments, and then took up the paper again.

This time he ran his eye over the column of the "wanted." Through all the long list of male wants, his eye traveled, and then he commenced a perusal of the column headed, "Wanted, Female Help."

In a moment his eyes fell upon these words:

WANTED, A FEMALE DETECTIVE, ONE thoroughly acquainted with the city, and who is not connected with any agency. Address, V. Tribune Office.

"So," laughed the detective. "Is this the long looked for? If Mr. Bradwardine wants a female detective he is sharper than the common run of swell foreigners. Well, of course, some one will apply." And whistling softly, he resumed the task of brushing his hair.

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CHAPTER VIII.

A CLEVER REPORTER AND A VEILED FEMALE.

Dr. Rice came forth from the questionable house in which lay the wounded woman, who had become an object of interest to Neil Bathurst. As he came briskly down the steps, a young man, faultlessly attired, and wearing immaculate mutton-chop whiskers, approached.

"Good morning, sir," said this personage. "I presume I am speaking to Doctor Rice?"

"You are," replied the little doctor, somewhat stiffly.

"Pardon my presumption," said the mutton-chop young man, as he adjusted a pair of gold-bowed spectacles. "I am a newspaper man, and as such, know, by sight at least, a great many of our prominent professional men. This is how I recognized you."

"Ah!" replied the doctor, in a mollified tone, "happy to meet you, sir. Can I serve you in any way?"

"Frankly, sir, you can," replied the young man, in a manner so charmingly respectful that it went straight to the doctor's heart. "In my capacity of reporter, I would like a statement of the case which you have just left—

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"GOOD MORNING, SIR. I PRESUME I AM SPEAKING TO DR. RICE?"

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the woman who was stabbed last evening. I knew that from you I would hear nothing save the truth, while the inmates of the house would give a garbled account, if they did not indulge in absolute fiction. Can you spare me a few moments?"

The doctor consulted his timekeeper gravely, and then replied,

"I can give you ten or fifteen minutes. Yes."

"Then may I ask you to step into the nearest restaurant? We can get a glass of wine and a cigar, and talk at ease."

"Certainly," replied the doctor, with beaming countenance; "certainly, sir."

The "nearest restaurant" was just around the corner, and in a few moments the two were seated cosily at a little table, with a bottle of wine between them, and cigars ready to hand.

After listening to a somewhat tedious statement of the events of the previous evening, the reporter asked, as he made a little entry in his note book,

"And—how do you find the injured woman this morning?"

"Better; much better."

"There is no clue to her identity, you say, or to the cause of the assault?"

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"Nothing definite. The woman who keeps the house says that she believes a girl, who left last night very soon after the stabbing affair took place, could have given some information, as she was in the room next to the one where the thing happened. She also says, that she believes the man who was the first on the scene, the one who rushed in and broke open the door, you remember, is at the bottom of the mystery concerning the sudden departure of the girl. For her going was a surprise to all in the house."

"Ah, indeed! then the affair remains a mystery?" said the reporter. "Doctor let me fill your glass."

The doctor allowed his glass to be refilled with the consciousness of a Betsey Prig, as he replied.

"Not *quite*. My patient was able to talk some this morning; was quite excited, in fact; I judged it better to let her talk a very little as there was evidently something on her mind. From a few disjointed assertions, and by asking questions which she could answer in monosyllables, or by a feeble gesture, we gathered something of her meaning. It seems there was a strife about a pocket-book containing some papers. She signified that the pocket-book was thrown down on the floor near the bed; was lying there when the man struck her, and she fell. She wanted it, but it was not to be found.

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She does not think the man took it; and one of the women declares that she saw the stranger, who was first on the scene, stoop down and pick up something near the bed. His movement was so quick she could not see the object, as she was peeping in at the door, afraid to enter. The sick woman is very anxious about the wallet — but it is not to be found; who has it is more than I can guess."

"Really!" making an entry in his note book. "There seems quite a mystery here. Will the woman recover, doctor?"

"I think so. I think—she will. She will be removed to the hospital soon. She signified her wish to be removed, this morning. She is not without funds. Mrs. O'Grady, a neighbor, who volunteered to look after her while she stayed in the house, and who seems an honest soul, took charge of a purse which contains considerable money. I think we will take her to the Sisters Hospital, and the money as well as the woman will be in good hands."

"True, quite true," shutting up and pocketing the note book as if the business portion of the interview were at an end. "Doctor, I owe you a thousand thanks. Permit me to refill your glass."

The doctor permitted him, and shortly the two men

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separated with many expressions of politeness and a friendly shake of the hand.

"That's a fine young fellow," mused the doctor, as he watched the spectacled young reporter pass swiftly down the street. "But—why, bless me, if I ever thought to ask his name, or the name of his paper."

That afternoon a boy rang the bell of the house where the wounded woman lay, and asked for Mrs. O'Grady. That good woman appearing speedily, the boy put a note in her hand, and sped away. Opening the envelope Mrs. O'Grady found in her hand a crisp ten-dollar bill, and a scrap of paper upon which was scrawled:

"To Mrs. O'Grady, for her care of the lady who was stabbed."

"Humph," muttered the woman, "I suppose it is from the sandy haired man what made off with the wallet. Well, *this* is clever of him, anyhow." And pocketing the money she went back to her charge.

At dusk of that same day Rob Jocelyn, still in his disreputable disguise, was lounging within sight of the genteel private boarding house which he had ascertained to be the temporary home of the man he had been shadowing for two days. It had not taken the jovial expert long to decide upon the room which was occupied by

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MRS. O'GRADY HOLDS IN HER HAND A CRISP $10 BILL.

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his quarry, and his eyes were now directed toward the window of that room.

"He is lighting up and closing up things," he muttered. "Acts as if he intended to stay in-doors to-night."

As he thus mused, a female form came down the street on the opposite side, and, pausing for a moment, as if peering through the dusk to ascertain if she had found the right number, passed up the steps and rang the bell. As the door opened and the gaslight from the hall lit up the form in the doorway, Jocelyn observed that the visitor was tall, and dressed entirely in black. In another moment the door had closed upon the dark-robed figure, and the detective again turned his eyes toward that upper window. Suddenly he gave a violent start, and exclaimed, under his breath,

"Ah, ha! there she is, in the man's very room, as I live! You should look to your blinds, good sir. Ah! he *is* closing them. All right; Mr. Jocelyn, here you stay until that tall lady comes out again, if you have to give Morpheus the go-by until two in the morning. And lighting a cigar he moved carelessly up the street for the space of a few yards, when he again halted.

For more than an hour he stood at his post, and then his vigilance was rewarded. The vestibule door swung

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open, and the dark-robed lady came forth and moved away in the direction whence she came. Swiftly and noiselessly Rob Jocelyn crossed the street, and was soon close in the wake of the vailed woman. For some distance she held to a straight course, and then she abruptly turned a corner, looking back quickly as she did so. Several blocks more were passed, and suddenly the paces of the woman became more leisurely.

"Hang me!" muttered Jocelyn, who was sometimes prone to indulge in slang; "I verily believe my lady is 'fly' enough to suspect my racket. Lord! there she bobs around another corner!"

And around the corner dived Rob Jocelyn in pursuit. On and on went the vailed woman, and on and on went Rob.

"Devil take me," he muttered, "if I don't believe she is going to Bridgeport!"

But she did not go to Bridgeport. As she neared a corner she quickened her pace almost to a run, and disappeared from view.

Striking into a dog-trot, Rob rounded the corner in hot pursuit, when, to his astonishment, he ran almost into the arms of the flying fair one, who now stood composedly under the glare of the gaslight streaming from a huge double lamp.

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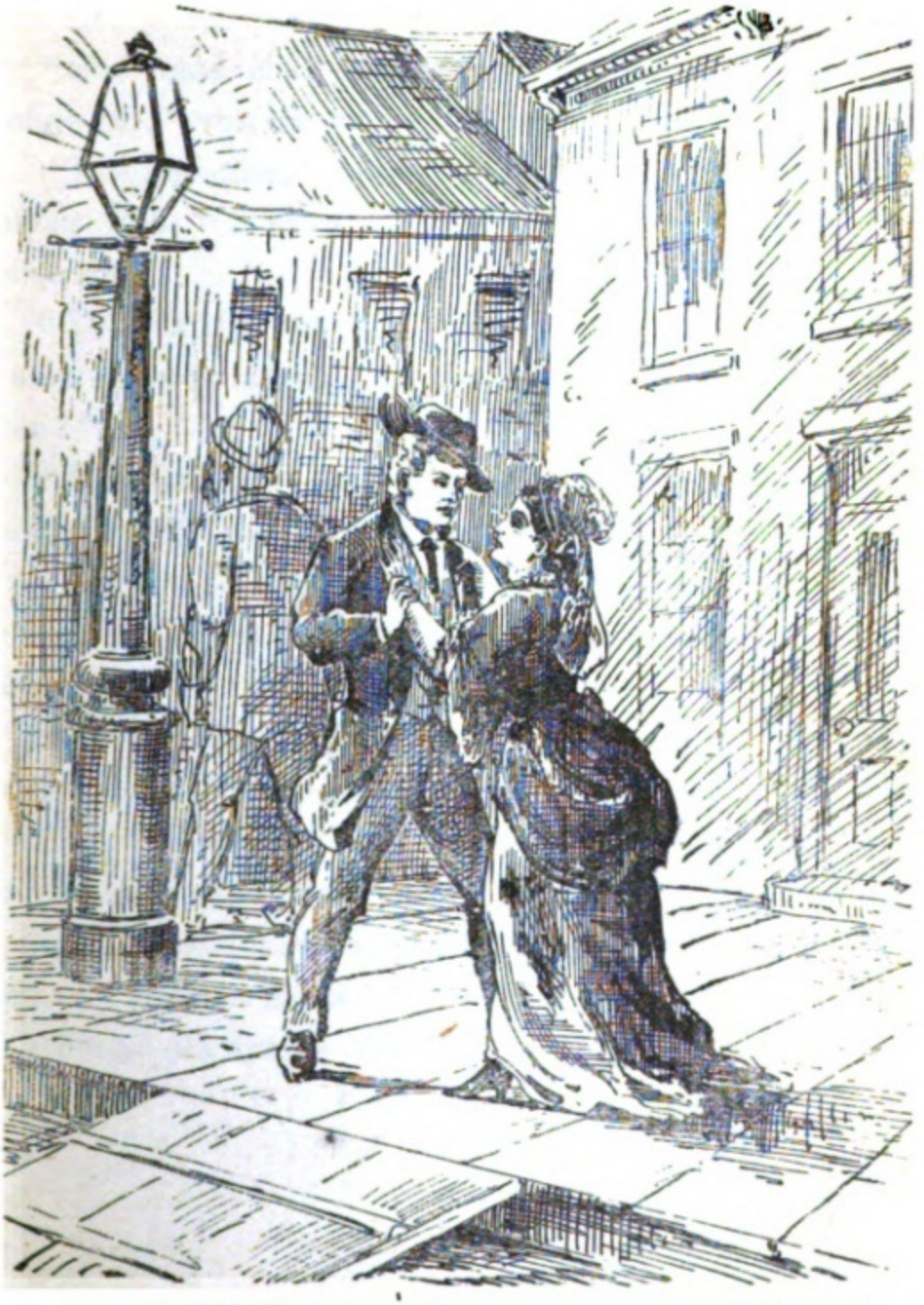

"I HAVE FOLLOWED YOU; BUT IT WAS OUT OF ADMIRATION."

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"Sir," said she, putting out a hand as he paused before her, "you have been following me — why?"

"True, madam," answered the ready-witted but perfidious Rob, "I have followed you, but it was out of admiration."

"You flatter me, sir," replied the vailed damsel; "how can you admire one whose face you have never seen?"

"Ah, madam! But your step is grace itself; and now, your voice — ah, what music!"

"Ah, sir!"— her voice broke suddenly, and her form seemed shaken with emotion. She reeled as if about to fall.

Instantly the ready arm of the gallant Rob was extended, and the reeling form was encircled.

Then his ear was smitten by a peal of laughter from an unmistakeable tenor throat, and, as the hand of the fair *ignis fatuus* tore away the filmy vail, the voice of Neil Bathurst cried in his ear —

"Sold! old man — *Sold!*"

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CHAPTER IX.

MR. AND MRS. ROBBINS.

For a moment Rob Jocelyn stood staring, transfixed with astonishment. Then, as the laugh of Neil Bathurst rang out afresh, his countenance suddenly relaxed, and his own voice was lifted in an uproarious burst of merriment.

"Stop, for the Lord's sake, man," cried Neil, suddenly recovering his gravity; "stop, or we will have all the cops in the neighborhood down on us."

"Powers alive!" panted Rob, struggling to subdue his merriment, "how you *have* sold me! Where on earth did you get that trick of the voice, Neil?"

"Let's move on, and I'll tell you," said Bathurst, taking his friend's arm and facing him about. "There now, we look quite proper, and I don't feel so much like a forlorn female. Where did I learn to talk like a woman? Well, Rob, I found that I could 'make myself up,' as theatrical people say, into a very respectable woman, therefore I put myself into the hands of a first-

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class ventriloquist; and I have found my accomplishment a most valuable one."

"Well, you *do* make a fine figure of a woman," admitted Rob, with a critical glance. "A little too tall to suit *my* taste, but then —— How did you strike the fancy of your fellow up on the avenue?"

"Pretty well, I should think," replied Neil, carelessly. "Where do we go, Rob. I *have* led you a deuce of a dance."

"I should think so," grumbled Jocelyn. "My feet are about worn out. I have been on the go almost constantly since yesterday morning. Can't you stand that toggery until morning, Neil?"

"If necessary, yes."

"Well, it is necessary. We can't get a hack in this God-forsaken quarter, and I can't go back to town in an old car. I'm all ready to fall to pieces now. Let's finish the night together — take up our quarters in the nearest hotel, and have a chance for a long chat. You can be my wife, or my grandmother, whichever you please."

"Not at all particular," laughed Neil. "I have nothing especial on hand, and am willing to be your grandmother or anybody for the sake of a comfortable talk with you. There is a little hotel half a block away; come along, and don't forget that I am a lady."

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Within fifteen minutes thereafter, the two detectives were comfortably established in a shabby-genteel suit of rooms belonging to a third-rate hotel, and the ink was not yet dry where the dirty register bore in sprawling characters the names, "Mr. and Mrs. Robbins."

If one could have peered into the room occupied by the two "Robbinses," they might have beheld the rather unusual spectacle of a lady lounging in one chair, with her feet upon a second, and puffing out clouds of smoke from a strong, black cigar, while her companion, stretched full length upon a sofa near by, contemplated the performance with perfect satisfaction.

"I say, Mrs. Robbins," queried this latter individual, when, a little later, they sat at supper, which had been served in their rooms. "Where did you get the sorrel wig?"

"Sorrel!" sniffed the aggrieved one, scornfully. "It's blonde, you great blockhead, strawberry blonde. I'm shocked at your ignorance."

"Oh! is it," quoth Rob, meekly. "Looks sort of reddish to *me*, but I won't contradict a lady."

"Well, Rob," said the bewigged Bathurst, resuming his natural tone,—"lets send away the supper things and get down to business; I have got some queer things for your ears."

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"Clear away it is then. Just pull that cracked bell. Oh, I forgot; I'll do it myself."

When at last the supper was cleared away and the two friends had lighted fresh cigars, Jocelyn said:

"How is it that I find you in this toggery, and running down my quarry, old fellow. Did you ever see him before I piped him yesterday?"

"Never," replied the "old fellow" composedly.

Jocelyn gave a long whistle, and then relapsed into silence and smoke. Several moments were passed thus, and then removing the cigar from between his lips, Neil Bathurst said:

"I'll tell you how I came to call upon our swell friend to-night, Bob; but first, I want you to give me an account of your business with him since yesterday."

"That won't take long," replied Jocelyn, drawing up his chair. "I can't make the fellow out. From State street he went directly to the Clark street gambling house."

"*The* gambling house! which one?"

"Well, you know I am not quite up to the names of things here yet. It was on the corner of——"

"Oh! you mean Mike's?"

"Mike's; yes, I remember the name now. Why it must be the old Mike ——"

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"Mike McDonald, of course; he ran several smaller places when we were here together."

"Well, no matter,—he, my man, went there, and I was not far behind. He began to play, but was betting light. Pretty soon I worked myself into a game with him. After a little he became more interested in the play. He had been staking some loose money that he pulled all in a crumple, from his trowsers' pockets. He seemed to have exhausted that resource, and reached for a wallet from his inner breast pocket. All at once he started and exclaimed:

"'D—— me—I've been robbed!'

"'Lost your pocket-book, stranger,' I asked, thinking it was a dodge.

"'No,' he said, looking black as a thunder-cloud, and slapping down a well-filled wallet on the table between us. 'Worse than that.' Well, he ransacked his pockets, muttering curses all the while, muttering them so low, and between his teeth, I could not catch the form of the words more than to know that he was consigning some person or thing to a very warm place. He paid no attention to anything that was said by the men around him, and I knew that he was too much upset to play anymore, so I thought it best to leave ahead of him. In the rummage for the lost article, whatever it was, he dropped his

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handkerchief on the floor. I could not pick it up without being seen by the others around the table; so as soon as the eyes of the owner were turned away I pocketed it coolly under their very noses. Then I gave them a wink and ordered drinks for the crowd. After which I left as soon as I could."

"Well; and then?"

"Then I had to hang out about ten minutes before my man came down. When he did come he walked straight into the nearest saloon, ordered a schooner of beer or ale, and sat there for nearly an hour without so much as changing his position. I tell you, he looked black. Finally he gave himself a sort of a shake, and ordered some more ale. This he drank and then marched straight to the 'Tribune' office."

"Exactly."

"As he had seen me, I did not, of course, follow him inside the building, but I lounged near enough to see that he wrote an 'ad.' and handed it in at the clerk's window. After that he walked over to Wabash avenue, hailed a car, and went south. I jogged after until the thing stopped to take up some more passengers, and then I hung on the tail end and escorted my man to his boarding house. I waited about until I heard a supper bell ring, and then, as I knew he would be engaged for a few

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minutes at least, I made off and snatched a hasty meal at the nearest restaurant. I had not been back at my post five minutes when he sallied out and then began a chase. From seven o'clock until one we went from theater to theater, from restaurant to restaurant, stopping in each place just long enough to overlook the guests, and then on to the next. I observed that he visited no places that were not patronized by ladies—and, of course, it did not take me long to figure out the fact that he was looking for some one, and that some one was a woman."

"Did he find her?"

"Not he. He went home at one o'clock, and walked the floor for a full hour, without taking the trouble to close the blinds."

"And to-day?"

"To-day he kept tolerably cool. He went to the 'Tribune' office and got a letter or two, which he answered then and there, and mailed at the post-office. After this he wandered about looking in at shop windows and eyeing all the women. After dinner, he stalked about the streets in much the same way, and then went home, took his supper — I suppose — and waited for you. That's all; now give us *your* story."

"Hold on a bit, let's take a look at that handkerchief," said Neil; "you have it with you, of course?"

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"Of course," producing it from an inner pocket, and putting it into Neil's hand.

He unfolded it slowly. It was of silk, soft, fine, and white; instantly the quick eye of the young detective discovered a bit of fine embroidery in one corner. It was a name embroidered with woman's hair; a name, and after it an initial. Looking close at it Neil Bathurst read "*Jason B.*" Then he bent toward his companion.

"Old man," he said, gravely, "you did a good thing when you nabbed that handkerchief."

Then, without waiting for a comment from Rob Jocelyn, he related his experiences of the past two days, omitting nothing.

As usual, when deeply interested, and upon his professional mettle, Rob Jocelyn, throwing off his ordinary manner of whimsical carelessness, became grave, silent, and alert. He had listened silently, and when, at the end of his story, Neil Bathurst produced the wallet containing the mysterious letters to Jason Bradwardine, he drew his chair close to the table and examined every document from first to last, without uttering a word.

Bathurst lighted a fresh cigar, and leaning back comfortably, watched his friend's countenance.

When the memoranda had been carefully scanned, and the photographs closely inspected, Jocelyn turned

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two keen, earnest brown eyes upon his friend; and Neil, who knew well the meaning of that intense look upon the usually *debonair* face, said:

"I see, Rob, you think we have stumbled upon a strong case."

"I think," replied Rob Jocelyn, with slow gravity, "that this man is Jason Bradwardine, and that Jason Bradwardine needs a *guardian*."

"You think he is here in search of this mysterious mother and child?"

"It is not improbable. Did you look closely at these notes and figures? See, they have been jotted down at different times; there are numerous shades of ink, and a variety in the size of the strokes, indicating that different pens have been used. Here are some entries that have evidently been made while moving, probably written while riding in cars, or a carriage. Now then, here are some dates with curious marginal notes, or words. Did you look these over very carefully?"

"No; to tell the truth, I did little more than glance at the notes. I was very sleepy, and expected to run them through again with you."

"Why did you not think of comparing some of these dates with the dates of the letters?"

"Why didn't you think of connecting our friend

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"OLD MAN, YOU DID A GOOD THING WHEN YOU NABBED THAT HANDKERCHIEF."

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Bradwardine with that 'ad.' for a female detective?" retorted Bathurst, with a good-humored laugh. "Hang it, man, one brain can't hold everything. You and I may possess very good heads, as heads go; but haven't we proved more than once the truth of the old adage?"

"'Two heads better than one,' quite true," replied Jocelyn, gravely. "We have done some hard thinking together, and if you came to go over these papers the second time you would hardly have overlooked this matter of the dates. Let us see. Just refer to that pile of letters, will you. For a test, take that letter of defiance, the last one; what date does it bear?"

"April 7, 18—."

"And here, under my very eye, is the same date; and here another date, some forty days later, most likely to mark the time when the letter was received. This man must have relied much upon his memory. Wait a moment; he sent an emissary, she says in her letter. Well, here just above the memorandum of April 7, is another, listen: 'Feb. 18th I. sailed.' What do you make of that?"

"By Jove! 'I.,' must be the fellow who came over to steal the child."

"Precisely. Now then, below I find this: 'May 21st, *Failure*.' That means the man's return, eh?"

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"It looks like it."

Upon further examination of the letters and notes, they found that the latter bore entries corresponding with the dates of the letters, or the time at which they were received. Beyond this their combined efforts could make nothing out of the *memoranda*, or notes.

For more than an hour they talked of Jason Bradwardine and his probable intentions and movements. Then Jocelyn said, "Well, Neil, we will work up this case together, as we both have leisure."

"No, Rob," said Bathurst, shaking his head. "This is your case. And you are just the man to see it through. You always were a 'Squire of dames.' The fact is I want to remain in the city. I have got one or two notions in my head. Notions so odd and altogether vague, that I dare not repeat them even to *you*. But I want to stay here a while, and go in for society. Whenever you really *need* my help I am yours. Bradwardine, or Brady, as he calls himself, having employed me to scour the city in search of this woman, I will be able to keep him under my eye, and can keep you posted during the time you will need for your trip to New York. You can gather up all the Elm Valley news; and feel assured that I in the meantime have not lost my grip of Brad-

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wardine. When you come back I will turn him over to you."

Jocelyn was somewhat surprised at his friend's sudden resolve to abandon work for pleasure, but knowing that Neil would explain, in his own way and time, he forbore to comment, and it was decided that he, Jocelyn, should pay a visit to Elm Valley, there to seek information concerning "Mistress Bourne," while Bathurst, who had replied to the advertisement for a female detective, and had been employed by Bradwardine, who gave his name as Brady, to search the city for one Helen Richards, who had stolen from him, so he said, a wallet containing certain papers intrusted to him by a friend and which, because they were held in trust for another, he would pay almost any price to recover.

"I will of course keep up my *character* as a widow with a taste for private investigations, and who knows but that in my perambulations about the city I may come upon your beautiful assassin. She of the eye."

"Who knows," replied Rob; "don't think I have abandoned my search for her. Depend upon it, I shall find that she-devil yet."

"I should like to have a hand in that myself," said Bathurst, little dreaming how closely the fate of the beautiful murderess would be linked with his own.

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CHAPTER X.

A TERRIBLE TEMPER.

We must now leave the two detectives for a time, and see how the world is dealing with Lenore Armyn, the orphan girl, who, as a guest of the Ruthvens, was making the acquaintance of the city, for the first time.

It was no wonderful Phœnix to her, for she had never looked upon those other spires and stately walls now crumbled or vanished away.

Before her arrival, the Ruthvens, or such of them as did not know the truth concerning Lenore, had indulged in more than one jest at the expense of the coming "country girl." But there were no more jests at her expense. The Ruthvens could find nothing to criticise in Lenore Armyn.

True, she was childishly ignorant of every thing pertaining to the city; but she asked questions with such charming, affable *naïveté*, and then received astonishing information with such perfect composure, that her friends could do nothing but admire.

There was no such thing as patronizing Lenore. On

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the contrary, she bore herself toward those who were about her with a gracious friendliness; and to strangers she extended a courtesy actually haughty. Upon Kate Seaton, Lenore's school friend, the girl always lavished a flood of sincerest affection, not unmixed, it must be confessed, with a little, a very little, patronage. But Kate Seaton had been patronized by some one from her cradle up. She was one of those meek, sweet-tempered, lovable girls who never assert their own equality, or superiority, and her sister, Mrs. Ruthven, was of the same sort.

Charles Ruthven was young and gay, fond of society, fond of *fun*, and — a little too — fond of the ladies. His half-sister, Mrs. Warren — the lady so graphically described by Clarence Arteveldt as a "blonde pussy cat widow" — had been but a short time a member of the Ruthven family.

Mrs. Warren was a fleshy blonde, very pretty, and standing upon the border-land of her thirtieth summer. She was well preserved, good-natured, and frivolous — unprincipled, too, in the matter of getting her own way; but, as Mrs. Warren's way was pretty sure to be a pleasant one, no one felt called upon to reproach her for lack of principle.

Mrs. Warren prided herself upon her style and her

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taste in dress, and had calculated upon overwhelming the country girl with the elegance of her toilets. But Lenore, herself well and tastefully arrayed, was not to be overwhelmed by the fashion as embodied by Mrs. Warren, a fact which that lady was not slow in finding out.

The widow was, in her way, an admirer of her own sex—one of those women who must always have on hand several "dear friends" in whom she might confide, and whose confidences she might betray when the love of gossip was strong upon her. Finding that Lenore was not to be led, Mrs. Warren, who had elected her, at sight, one of her chosen "dear girls," was content to stand on an equal footing—even to submit to be ridiculed sometimes, for the lady afforded a fine target for mirth at times, and Lenore was quick to see absurdities. But her laughter was far from malicious; her sarcasm had in it no sting.

In Lenore Armyn's nature there was one most dangerous element. She was entirely devoid of fear, and was lacking in the worldly wisdom which begets prudence. Among the light-hearted pleasure lovers who constituted the Ruthven family, there were none capable of advising Lenore Armyn. And the time was not far distant when the girl would realize this fact. For the present the days were halcyon.

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The Ruthvens were fond of society, and scarcely an evening passed that did not bring its little card party, composed of a few of Charlie Ruthven's friends, together with the ladies of the family and perhaps Miss Van Buren, the Washington young lady, or some other of the female friends of the family.

Mrs. Warren, too, had various admirers, who dropped in occasionally for an evening's chat, or sent the ladies theater tickets. And Clarence Arteveldt had become almost a fixture on the North Side. Since that first evening passed in the society of Lenore Armyn, he had become her shadow. But, while he sought to dazzle Lenore with his wealth, if he could not induce her to fall in love with his "womanishly" handsome face, he was mindful not to pay his court too openly. Accordingly, he planned numerous excursions and pleasure parties, which included the entire Ruthven family, as well as any male friend of the family. There were theaters and drives, steamboat excursions and sails upon the lake, autumn picnics, impromptu suppers, concerts, and lectures—always something; and always Clarence Arteveldt was the leader, the life of the party. At least, he was the leader of the gentlemen; for no eye was brighter, no laugh gayer or more frequent,

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and no repartee so ready and sparkling as that of Lenore Armyn.

It was a new life to the beautiful girl, and she enjoyed it to the full. The home circle was always gay and pleasant; in the day-time there were the parks, the shops, the matinee; in the evening some pleasure always fresh. And everywhere was Clarence Arteveldt. Thus passed three long weeks of the lovely September.

One morning, Lenore, Kate, and Mrs. Warren — or Jess, as she was usually called — started out for a walk.

"We won't go to the Park," said Lenore, authoritatively. "I am tired of it. Let us go down some of those queer Dutch streets, and see the fat women and the babies and the dogs and cats. Let's see low life for once. Come on, girls." And, grumbling a little, but obedient to the stronger will, the two followed Lenore.

Nearly an hour thereafter, and as little Mrs. Ruthven sat humming softly and rocking the cradle of the young Ruthven, who steadfastly refused to close his eyes in sleep, the door was flung violently open, and Jess Warren, pale and breathless, rushed in.

"Oh!" she cried, clenching her two hands, as she invariably did when very eager or much excited — "Oh! Nett, Nett! Lenore is arrested; a policeman has got her — and Kitty, too, I guess."

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Mrs. Ruthven sprang to her feet, almost overturning the baby in so doing.

"Jess Warren, what do you mean?" she cried. "Lenore arrested! you are crazy! What for; *tell me?*"

"What for?" screeched Jess; "why, she nearly killed a man, or else killed him quite. She knocked him down, any way; and she is arrested — *there!*"

For a moment Mrs. Ruthven stood transfixed. Then she flew at Jess, and, shaking her with all her strength, cried out:

"Now, Jess Warren, stop acting like a mad woman; what prank are you trying to play on me?"

"I am not playing a prank," whimpered Jess. "Don't you see how scared I am. I tell you it is true."

"What is true?" stamping her slippered foot wrathfully. "Tell me *instantly*."

"Well, I am going to," cried Jess, beginning to recover herself a little. "You see Lenore dragged us down among all those horrid, nasty smelling Germans, and at last turned down the awfullest, *awfullest* dirty street you ever saw in your life. We tried to coax her to turn back, but *no*, she was *seeing Chicago*, she said, and she must see all of it. So on we went, and *oh* how it did smell! When we had got to the nastiest, *meanest*, DIRTIEST place of all, we heard some one screaming, and

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some one else swearing in awful Dutch. There was a sort of alley-way, and as we came to it there we saw a big man beating a woman with his great, dirty, awful fists. The woman was down on her knees beside a little pile of wood, and a mallet and wedge lay beside the man. Before we could think Lenore had rushed at the man screaming in the *awfullest* way, 'Stop, you beast, you devil; stop, I tell you.' But the man roared out another oath and struck the woman again so hard that she fell over upon the wood. In an instant Lenore had seized that great mallet and struck the man an awful blow upon the head. We could hear his skull crack. Oh, Nett, it was *awful*. And there stood Lenore above the man, and you could fairly see the sparks fly out of her eyes. 'Lie there, you brute,' she said, and I thought she would kick him with her boot. By that time a ragged little girl ran up, and at her heels a big, ugly policeman. I saw him go up and take Lenore by the arm, and then I ran away as fast as I could."

Having finished her "awful" story, Mrs. Warren sat down to recover her breath.

"And Kate," asked Mrs. Ruthven, all in a tremble.

"I tell you, he has got *her* too. Think of it Nett—Kate and that *awful* Lenore locked up in a police station."

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"LIE THERE, YOU BRUTE."

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"Who talks of my being locked up in a police station," cried a clear, vibrant voice, and simultaneously the door swung open, and Lenore Armyn appeared upon the threshold, with cheeks flaming, eyes blazing, and nostrils quivering. "Is it *you*, Mrs. Warren? Oh, you pitiful coward; you would stand by and see a human being killed by a brute and then run away and *lie* about one who dared to interfere. Bah! I *despise* you." And Lenore Armyn turned on her heel and walked straight to her own room.

"Jess, how could you," said Kate Seaton, who had followed Lenore into the room, looking very pale but quite collected. "You have made Lenore *so* angry."

"*I* made her angry," retorted Jess, growing suddenly brave. "I made her knock that man down I suppose, Heavens, I am afraid to live in the house with Lenore Armyn; she is a fiend incarnate. I shall never forget how she looked. But of course you won't say a word against her, not if she kills the whole family some day. It's a pity the policeman didn't shut her up," said the now hysterical Jess.

"If you are afraid to live here you had better change your quarters," said Kate, in a white heat. "Rest assured Lenore will never kill *you*, she doesn't care enough about you one way or the other."

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"*Don't* she?" hissed Jess. "Well, I hope some day to prove more *worthy* her consideration," and she flounced out of the room.

As soon as the door had closed behind her Mrs. Ruthven turned to her sister.

"Kate, what on earth does this all mean! *Did* Lenore Armyn strike a man?"

"Yes, Nettie, she did," replied Kate Seaton, gravely. "She felled him with one blow. He went down like an ox, and he deserved it. But oh, it was terrible to see Lenore. I never dreamed she could possess such a temper. I have seen her eyes flash, and her hands clench, at the mention of wrong or outrage; she was always the champion of the weak. I have seen her interfere between quarrelling children more than once, and shake a boy as big as herself nearly out of his boots. But nothing like this. Nettie, she was livid to the lips—and her eyes, I shall never forget them. She told the policeman what she had done, and he looked thunderstruck; then, as people began to flock around, he told her she had served the brute right, but that she had better go home as quick as possible. 'I wouldn't arrest you if you had killed him,' he said, 'but some one else might if you stayed.' Then I wanted her to run, but she would not; of course I would not leave her, and she walked along

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so steadily all the way, but with that dreadful look of anger on her face. Nettie, I would not wrong Lenore Armyn for the world. If any man ever does, *she will murder him.*"

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CHAPTER XI.

SETTING THE SNARE.

Lenore Armyn kept her room until luncheon time; but when she came down and took her seat at the table she was, outwardly at least, her usual calm self.

When the heat of her passion had died away, she had regretted her hasty speech to Jess Warren, and now she turned toward her, saying:

"Mrs. Warren, I trust you will consider the state of my mind when I so insulted you to-day. I was beside myself. I never knew until to-day what an evil temper I possessed. Will you try and forget my words?"

It is only generous natures that can make or accept apologies graciously and gracefully. Jess Warren was not of this order.

"It's of no consequence," she said, with an effort at carelessness that was an utter failure. "I am not at all offended. Let it pass."

Let it pass. Jess Warren would watch for an opportunity to avenge this insult to her wounded vanity.

"I was terribly angry," said Lenore, turning her eyes

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toward Mrs. Ruthven. "Inwardly, I am angry yet. I think if I should hear that I had dealt that villain his death blow I could not be hypocrite enough to say that I regretted it. I don't like to talk of the affair; let us never mention it, please."

They had planned a drive for the following day. Clarence Arteveldt was to come with his landau and take the three ladies, Mrs. Warren, Lenore Armyn, and Kate Seaton, for a drive in the parks.

"We must make the most of this fine weather," Arteveldt had said; "September is *the* month for pleasant drives, and it is almost gone."

Clarence Arteveldt had been falling deeper and deeper into love's quagmire, and suspense was becoming unbearable. He had decided, over and over again, to declare his love for Lenore, but somehow the right sort of an opportunity had been lacking.

If any one had hinted that he feared a refusal, this drawing-room god would have laughed in derision; and yet, there was a something in the manner of Lenore Armyn, the obscure orphan, that kept him at a distance, and made him fear the ordeal of a test. She was so different from any girl he had ever known; she had such a manifest disregard for wealth and station, he could not

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understand her. But, the more incomprehensible she became, the more he loved her.

As they drove through the city on this pleasant day he was inwardly vowing to put an end to his suspense, and declare himself. He did not just know how the opportunity for a declaration was to be brought about, but, all unknown to himself, he had an able coadjutor.

Mrs. Warren, the artful, was fully aware of the situation. It was plain enough to all save Lenore that Clarence Arteveldt was her lover. And it was plain enough to Mrs. Warren that Lenore Armyn had no love for the young man. She had not been in daily, almost hourly, contact with the frank girl without learning to read her opinion of the men who hovered about her.

"What a splendid catch Clarence Arteveldt would be for you, Lenore," she had said one day. "So rich, and then so handsome. And I think he likes you."

"A splendid catch indeed," the girl had replied, with her ringing laugh. "Why Mrs. Warren! you wouldn't condemn me to live all my days with such an aimless cumberer of the ground as *he*, would you? If one wants a parlor ornament, a China man would be equally attractive, and much less trouble. Think of being married to a *pretty* man!"

Jess Warren was one of those women who like to

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have a love affair on hand, even if it belongs to some one else. And it is probable that she would have put her little cat's paw into this one even, if Lenore Armyn had not incurred her displeasure. But then she would have sheathed the claws, and meddled in a different way. *Now*, she was prepared to scratch.

They were driving south on Dearborn street, when a trifling incident occurred. They had halted at the Madison street crossing, because of the press of vehicles, and the passage of street cars, when Clarence Arteveldt, who sat behind Lenore, put a hand upon her arm, saying:

"Miss Armyn, do you see that handsome fellow there waiting for that car to pass? The one in gray, I mean."

"Yes."

"That is a particular friend of mine." Then, as the carriage started forward, he leaned toward her, saying, in a low tone, "I can trust *you* with a secret; he is *a detective*."

As he uttered these words, Jess Warren, who could not hear them, and was watching the face of Lenore, said to herself:

"What did he say to make her turn so pale?"

"You hardly saw him, Miss Armyn; look again," said the young man, in his ordinary tone. "Don't you call him a fine fellow?"

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"I saw him," replied Lenore, looking directly away from the crossing, where Neil Bathurst stood, all unconscious of the proximity of the carriage and its occupants. "I saw him distinctly; he is certainly handsome. Can't we go faster now?"

They drove upon the South Boulevard, and from thence to the western portion of the city.

"Let's drive in," said Jess, as they approached Union Park. "Let's drive in and get out and see the horrid bear, and go up on the mound; we have driven so far that it will rest us, and Lenore has never been in Union Park on foot. Have you, dear?"

Thus appealed to, Lenore, who had been invariably polite to Jess, on principle, signified her approval of the plan, and they left the driver to meditate at his leisure, while they walked about the park.

Without being being able to tell just how it happened, Clarence Arteveldt found himself walking beside Jess Warren. He was scarcely able to conceal his chagrin at this arrangement, but Mrs. Warren chatted carelessly until the two girls were left out of hearing, then she looked up in his face and said, with her most sympathetic smile:

"Shall I guess your thoughts, Mr. Arteveldt?"

Clarence looked annoyed.

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"You are thinking of Lenore," said pussy-cat, softly, "and no wonder; she is a sweet girl. Take my advice, sir, and don't lose too much time. Half the men who have seen her are wild about her."

"But what can I do?" said Clarence, thrown completely off his guard.

"Do! why make sure of her at once. Don't let some one else come in ahead of you."

"Mrs. Warren," said he, suddenly, "do you think she cares for me?"

"How should *I* know?" laughed the widow. "I would tell you if I could. I like you both, and would like to see you both happy."

"If you could only find out for me," he said, eagerly. "If you could say to me, 'Clarence, I know she loves you,' I would give you anything. I would give thousands for a word of hope!"

"Foolish boy," purred the widow. "Do you mean to say that if I could tell you how to win Lenore Armyn, you would give me — say, five thousand dollars?"

"I do! I do! Only tell me how, and it is yours."

"Listen!" said the woman, moving nearer to him. "I will go and draw off Kate Seaton. Then do you propose to Lenore Armyn without loss of time. If she refuses you, — but of course she won't — I promise that

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she shall unsay her words. She shall be your wife. I can tell you how to win her, *and I will.*"

"Are you in earnest?"

"Perfectly so. If you want my help, do as I say; if you don't, we will drop the subject."

"But if she refuses me?"

"If she refuses you I will meet you this evening, say at seven o'clock. I will go over to Miss Van Buren's and you must call there; then you can offer to escort me home, and I will tell you how to win a wife."

She turned abruptly and called to the girls. In a few moments the positions were reversed, and Clarence Arteveldt had the opportunity he had longed for and dreaded.

Jess found no other chance to speak with him, but his face, as they drove toward home, was not a happy one. As he assisted her from the carriage he whispered in her ear: "I will call at Miss Van Buren's to night at seven," and Jess Warren entered the house with a triumphant smile upon her lips.

Miss Van Buren's dwelling was nearly a block from the Ruthven's, and an hour later saw the widow and Carrie Van Buren standing in its doorway. They had been in close consultation for more than an hour, and Mrs. Warren was now taking her leave.

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"You are *sure* there is no risk?" asked Miss Van Buren, with a foxy look in her eyes.

"Perfectly sure; if you can manage your part as you say you can."

"Oh! that is easy."

"Then the rest will be. Leave me to talk him over. I know just how to do it. His love is perfectly selfish; he will do anything to gain the girl. Trust me to manage him. Our parts will be simple; we have only to look on, be perfectly surprised, and as indignant as we like — and pocket a thousand dollars each."

"I'll do it," said Miss Van Buren, with an emphatic nod; "it's worth some risk." And the pussy-cat went home, content and purring.

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CHAPTER XII.

SPRINGING THE TRAP.

Nearly a week elapsed before the plotters found a suitable opportunity for putting their scheme in execution. Not that it had taken so long to persuade Clarence Arteveldt. For the first time in his gay, dissolute life, that young man had found himself thwarted. For the first time had found a woman who could be insensible to the charms of his person — and purse.

Under the skillful manipulations of Jess Warren, all the worst passions, the lowest and most selfish elements, of an always selfish nature, arose and asserted themselves. The widow knew her man. She understood him as he did not understand himself. He was as wax in her hands. And yet Clarence Arteveldt would have scoffed at the idea of being managed — and that by a woman.

"You have but one flaw in Lenore's eyes," said the artful woman, when, on the evening preceding the day destined to inaugurate a tragedy in the lives of the lover and the unloving, they were rehearsing their programme

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for the last time — "while she admires your charms of person and manner, acknowledges you socially perfect, she asserts that you are lacking in *force*, that you are too prosaic; in short, not enough like a hero in a novel, or a knight in a play. Only yesterday she said to Kate, who, by the by, is a great fool, 'It is no wonder that love seems out of date, when men woo with bouquets and opera boxes, and hob-nob with the ones who slander their own sisters. What man would fight for a woman *now?* One might love a knight who would overcome all obstacles to win the lady of his choice, if only for his very bravery, but sighing swains who accept their *congé*, and then grow misanthropical on champagne and smoke — bah, I don't admire them!' Mark my words, Clarence, give her a taste of the romantic, once show her that you are in *earnest*, and she will forgive you, and love you into the bargain. I *know it*."

This supposed speech of Lenore Armyn's — considering that it emanated from the not over-eloquent brain of Mrs. Warren — produced a marked effect upon the young man, and added new strength to his already sufficiently firm resolve.

"She shall find out whether I am a mere carpet knight, or not," he muttered, as valiantly as if about to

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storm a city. "Everything is settled then. You say that Jeff does not *know?*"

"Jeff knows that we are coming to dine with him, and that we are to bring a lady friend. Also, that you are to be of the party. He told Carrie that he should invite some young fellow, a friend of his, and we didn't dare object, of course. He seemed unusually glad to give this little dinner party; said that he expected to enjoy himself very much."

"But he doesn't know—"

"How exceedingly ignorant and unsophisticated Miss Armyn is? What a question! *You* know that if he *did* he would soon spoil our plans."

"But he won't kick afterward?"

"Not he. Jeff is too philosophical for that."

There had stood in the way of their success a formidable obstacle, in the shape of Miss Kate Seaton. But a way had been found to dispose of her, a way that made the introduction of a new confederate necessary.

Luckily for the plotters, Clarence Arteveldt could suggest an improvement here. His friend, almost shadow, George Fordham, had been assigned an outside part in the plot. Clarence suggested that Fordham be the man who should keep Kate Seaton from doing mischief, and at the same time make the girl an unconscious abettor to

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their vile ends. To this end Fordham, who was but slightly acquainted with the Ruthvens, and who had not been included in the little gathering that welcomed Lenore Armyn to the city, must put himself upon an easier footing among them.

In a home where the formalities were so little observed, this was not a difficult matter. During the week that intervened between the hatching of the plot and the execution thereof, Clarence Arteveldt was, as usual, an almost daily visitor at the Ruthvens, and as his intimate friend, George Fordham two or three times accompanied him, on which occasion he, Fordham, devoted himself almost exclusively to Kate Seaton.

Kate's admirers were not numerous, and the courteous attentions of the good looking young reporter were not unwelcome to her; and when one day, the very last in the month of September, the landau of Clarence Arteveldt, and a light carriage, driven by Fordham, and drawn by a handsome pair of bays, drew up before the door, she was as eager as any for a drive.

It happened that Miss Carrie VanBuren had dropped in, and straightway, with much gay badinage and laughter, the driving party was formed, Mr. Fordham and Kate Seaton driving away in the smaller conveyance and Mr.

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Arteveldt with Lenore, Jess and Miss VanBuren in the landau.

There had been from the first an antipathy between Miss VanBuren and Lenore Armyn, not manifest in the words or manner of either, but felt to a certain extent by both; thus it was there could be nothing in common between the two. But Miss VanBuren was a prime favorite with all the Ruthven household, was second only to Lenore's self, and Lenore Armyn was not the girl to give expression to her dislike for the friend of her friends.

The day was exhilarating, and the party in high spirits. They had driven about for more than an hour, during which time Mr. Fordham, for some reason, had allowed his bays to fall behind the landau, when suddenly the gushing Miss VanBuren uttered a little shriek of rapture and leaned forward, clapping her gloved hands, while she said,

"Oh, *girls!* such a splendid idea. Let's stop and surprise Uncle Jeff! Let's make him give us one of his splendid bachelor dinners! That will finish off our drive and add a spice to it."

Jess Warren turned a beaming face toward Lenore.

"*Do* let's!" she said appealingly. "Carrie's uncle is such a jolly old bachelor, and his rooms are *exquisite*,

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such books, such pictures; won't it be fine, Mr. Arteveldt?"

"Fine indeed," replied Clarence, as if suddenly caught with the idea. "The old chap would be more than glad to have us pounce in upon him. I'm in favor of it if it suits Miss Armyn."

"Anything that is pleasant and agreeable to the rest will suit Miss Armyn," said that young lady, indifferently. "But, Kate and Mr. Fordham?"

"Well, now that we are so independent of them, I must tell you a secret," replied Arteveldt. "The fact is, Fordham declared his intention of taking Miss Seaton for a *tête-à-tête* drive, and when I came out with my *landau* he quite snubbed me. I don't really think they will favor us, but of course we can ask them."

"It is evident that they don't covet our society," said Jess, looking back. "They are out of sight this minute. Well, do we go?"

"Yes; do, do!" said Miss VanBuren.

"Yes, by all means, if you agree, Miss Armyn," added Arteveldt.

"Oh, Lenore! *please* say yes," coaxed Jess.

"As I never heard of Miss VanBuren's uncle until the present moment he can't, of course, be very obnoxious to me," replied Lenore. "I am at your service."

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Thus, with apparent carelessness, was ended the first act in this shameful drama.

Ten minutes later the horses were drawn up before a huge brown stone building, which stood almost in the center of a block of similar commercial looking edifices, in one of Chicago's busiest thoroughfares. The pavements swarmed with people, and street cars, carriages, hacks, drays, and all manner of vehicles blocked the roadway and made frequent stoppings and slow progress a matter of necessity.

"We might get out first and run in to announce ourselves, while you wait for a chance of seeing Mr. Fordham," suggested Miss VanBuren to Arteveldt.

"A good idea," laughed the young man, seeming for the time to have forgotten to consult Lenore. "You two ladies being quite at home can run along; I will escort Miss Armyn."

In a moment the two, Jess and Carrie VanBuren, were out of the carriage and had disappeared up a broad flight of stone steps just beyond. Clarence Arteveldt made a pretense of looking vainly for his friend, and then he said,

"We won't wait out here, Miss Armyn; I will take you in, and set the driver to watch for our friends."

Had Lenore looked back, as she sprang from the carriage, she might have seen Mr. Fordham and Kate Seaton

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coming slowly around the corner, not half a block away.

"Hallo, there is Arteveldt and Miss Armyn," exclaimed Fordham so promptly that a suspicious listener might have fancied that he expected to see them there. "Where are the other ladies? and where in the—beg pardon, Miss Seaton, where are they going?"

Where, indeed!

"Drive faster," cried Kate Seaton; "call to them!" Then, as Lenore and her escort disappeared up the stone steps, she sank back with a low cry, "My God! my God! *where* have they gone?"

Fordham turned toward her a face upon which rested an expression of unutterable astonishment.

"Good Heavens," he cried, in well feigned alarm, "they have gone—but no, I am—I must be mistaken."

"You are not mistaken," cried Kate Seaton, wildly; "I *saw* them. See"—as they came opposite the stone steps—"they went up *those* steps. They are behind that green door. My God, what shall we do? *Lenore Armyn is in a gambler's den.*"

More than once while passing through the streets, in company with her sister and Charlie Ruthven, had the latter pointed to that green, nail-studded door saying:

"Look, girls, there is the finest private gambling

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house in the city; there is the den of the keenest gambler in all Chicago. He is called among sporting men Gentleman Jeff."

Let us follow Lenore, the victim, and with her make the acquaintance of Gentleman Jeff.

They go up a flight of stairs, pausing midway at a door which swings open at their approach; the door is massive and presents a battered appearance, and near the top is a little sliding panel through which one, standing two steps higher on the inside, could take observations. This door opens on hinges that are stout springs, and a colored servant holds it back with some effort. They pass this portal, which Lenore scans wonderingly, and arrive at the landing; here the carpets are like dark moss, and a tall man, plainly dressed and wearing an expression of habitual gravity, awaits them.

Hurriedly Arteveldt performs the ceremony of introduction, so hurriedly that Lenore does not catch the name of the tall man, and then the three pass up another flight of softly carpeted stairs along a broad, dimly-lighted passage, and into a room rich in upholstery, glowing with rare flowers, adorned with pictures, cabinets, book-cases, bronzes, all that wealth could purchase and all in faultless taste. This was the home of no ordinary gambler; Gentleman Jeff had some claim to his title.

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Here waited Jess Warren, Carrie VanBuren, and a young man with pale hair and paler eye-lids, Mr Williams—the friend of "Uncle Jeff."

It was a very pleasant party; everybody talked and everybody laughed, "Uncle Jeff" the least of the party perhaps, but then he was not a man to laugh at doubtful wit. Lenore soon decided upon this, and her keen eye saw that her host was inclined to be quietly amused and somewhat sarcastic at the expense of the widow and his niece. Lenore was a trifle surprised at this, but felt, nevertheless, almost tempted to encourage him in it—any woman can tell you why. She does not feel much drawn toward Mr. Williams. He laughs more than he talks and has not a keen look by any means. Nevertheless Mr. Williams is a cunning young man, otherwise he would not be the friend of Gentleman Jeff.

Presently, surprisingly soon, dinner is served. It is sent from an adjacent restaurant, and noiseless waiters bring in a table, a queer looking table covered with green baize, upon which they spread a snowy cloth. It is a faultless dinner, and Lenore Armyn, seated beside her courteous and entertaining host, thinks that bachelor hospitality is a fine thing. She thinks that there is an unusual amount of champagne at this dinner, and that Jess and her friend are drinking of it rather freely. But

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"bachelors can't be expected to know what is proper at a dinner like this," she thinks; and she drinks no wine herself, although so often urged by Jess and young Arteveldt.

At last dessert is on the table, and now the drama is interrupted by a farce, not counted upon by the conspirators. In the hall, voices were heard in loud altercation, and in another moment the door was flung open and an elderly man appeared upon the threshold. The host looked up, and uttered an exclamation of astonishment.

"Colonel," he said, quickly, "what is the matter? Come in!"

"What is the matter!" cried the man, excitedly. "The *police are coming!* You will be raided within the next three minutes!"

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CHAPTER XIII.

THE FARCE AND DRAMA IN A GAMBLER'S DEN.

The scene that follows this startling announcement is indescribable. All seem panic-stricken; but the terror of Jess Warren, Carrie VanBuren and Mr. Williams passes all bounds.

Miss VanBuren is in violent hysterics. Jess runs distractedly from window to window; and finally flings herself upon the broad chest of the gray-haired newsbearer, imploring him to save her. But the conduct of Mr. Williams is still more extraordinary; he is running about the room, half-bent, peering under chairs, lounges, everything; trying to wrench open cabinet doors, and peer into various drawers, in a distracted effort to secrete himself in impossible places.

"Oh! hide me, Jeff," he implores, tragically. "Don't let me be taken; it would be my ruin. Tell them I never gamble, Jeff! Oh, why did you ask me to come here to meet these wicked women?"

But Jeff is standing erect and silent, watching the three with a queer look in his eyes.

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"Hurry, Jeff," cries the elderly man, making a movement as if about to shoulder Jess. "Bring along the women, we will drop them out of the back window, it's not more than forty feet."

Jess utters a scream of terror, and Clarence Arteveldt, who has been standing motionless and bewildered, starts forward involuntarily. But Mr. Williams makes a frantic dash at the speaker.

"Take *me!*" he cries, holding out two angular arms. "Save *me*, do, dear man! drop *me*, carefully, down first! I'm so *young* to be caught in a gambling house! *Don't* let me be arrested!"

"Oh! oh! oh!" shrieks Miss VanBuren, who is kicking vigorously; "take me out, take me out, don't let me be arrested; open the window and let me jump!"

At the moment of the alarm, they have sprung from the table as by one impulse—all except Lenore Armyn. That young lady has not stirred. She sits in her place, gazing from one to another, with an expression of the most absolute wonder upon her face; but not one shade of fear. She turns her gaze upon the host; he does not look like a frightened man.

"What does it mean, sir," she says, somewhat imperiously. "The police—and all this talk of arrest; what has that young man done?"

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But Gentleman Jeff does not hear her. His eyes are fixed upon that magnificent impromptu comedian, his friend Williams, whose gymnastics are indeed wonderful, and his features are convulsed with some strong emotion, which he in vain endeavors to suppress.

Lenore turns her eyes toward Mr. Williams, and a scornful smile curls her lip. What he says of the gambling house is unnoted by her then; the comedy begins to explain itself; she has not read the riddle of the drama as yet. It has all transpired in an instant; as she again turns toward Gentleman Jeff, his composure utterly deserts him; with a shout of merriment he falls back in his chair and shakes with pent-up laughter. The shout is echoed by the "Colonel," who dropping Jess without ceremony, wipes the perspiration from his ruddy face, and shouts in his turn. Slowly the color returns to the countenance of Clarence Arteveldt, and by degrees the shrieks of the two women grow less. Mr. Williams is the last to recover his presence of mind.

"Won't we be arrested," he whines, piteously. "Won't anybody know that I am in a gambling house?"

"In a gambling house." Lenore comprehends the words now, and for the first time. For an instant her face is ghastly in its pallor; then she turns away and

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waits in silence for the end of the comedy, in which she has no part.

Long and loud is the laughter of the two gamblers She sees Clarence Arteveldt becoming suddenly fierce as he confronts the man addressed as "Colonel."

"Curse you," he cries, wrathfully. "Have *you* played this shameful trick upon us? upon me? How dare you create such a panic; see how you have frightened these women!"

"*Women?*" Carrie VanBuren begins to recover suddenly, and Jess releases the luckless Colonel.

Then it is not true; their private disgrace will not be made public property. There is a chorus of questions, recriminations, exclamations. Mr. Williams suddenly ceases his dramatic efforts, and comes over to Jeff.

"*You* put the Colonel up to that dodge, old man," he said, flinging himself into his lately abandoned seat with a laugh. "By the powers, but it almost fooled *me* for just a minute." And Gentleman Jeff laughs, as he replies:

"Well, perhaps. But you have mistaken your calling, Williams; you should go on the stage."

It takes a long time for the party to regain their composure, and Jess and Carrie are full of wrath because they have been made so ridiculous; but at last they are

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partially calmed. Then for the second time Lenore Armyn, moving forward, addresses her host:

"Sir, I am here as your guest. Tell me, is this a gambling house?"

Gentleman Jeff looked down at her in unfeigned surprise. "Did you not know it?" he asked.

"If I had," retorted she, bitterly, "I should not be here. For heaven's sake tell me what sort of people are these who have brought me here—these women?"

His face became stern.

"Did these two women and this man bring you here by unfair means. Did you not know I was a gambler?"

"No."

"Well," without even a glance at the others, "it is not the first time *they* have been here. If you shrink from contact with a gambler you should shrink from *them*. They have entrapped you. If I had known their game it would never have been played. Shall I send you away now; you will not return with them?"

Lenore's eyes are blazing now with the light that Jess knew so well. It was thus she looked when she had struck down the burly German. Involuntarily the two plotting women drew near together, and away from Clarence Arteveldt, as if to let him bear the burden of their united iniquity alone. Every eye is fixed upon

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Lenore as the gambler awaits her answer. The two men, who do not yet quite understand the scene, are deeply interested. What will she do? what will she say? all are auditors, and all interested, although in different degrees. For a time, a long time, it seems to them all; she says nothing, only her eyes speak unutterable things. Then she speaks, and they are astonished to hear her voice so calm. Calm! it is like the "cling" "ring" of fine steel.

"No! I will not go—yet. You say I have been entrapped. Then it must have been for a purpose. Will you give me the right to command in your kingdom for a few moments?"

"I will."

"Then tell those women to leave this room, and your friends as well. I—"

Suddenly Clarence Arteveldt steps forward. "Miss Armyn," he says, hurriedly, "let me speak with you alone. I can explain all this to you. I can make it as if it had never been."

"*You?*" The word falls on him like a lash.

He turns toward the gambler. "For God's sake, Jeff, let me speak to her alone!"

Gentleman Jeff again turns to Lenore. "It must be as she says," he replies, coldly.

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"Let him have his way," she answers. It is strange, that icy voice, together with the eyes of fire.

Obedient to the gesture of the gambler, they file slowly and silently from the room. As Jess passes Clarence Arteveldt she whispers, "Be a *man* now, or all is lost."

When the door had closed, and they are alone together, these two face each other in silence. Still the lurid light burns in the girl's eyes, still her lips are colorless.

Clarence Arteveldt has nerved himself for this, he has been drinking deeply, to prepare himself for this interview. Let come what will he must not falter now, that would be to make himself doubly despised. There is an awful stillness in the room, and then her incisive voice says, "I am waiting."

He would approach her, but she motions him back. "Stand where you are," she says, "and speak; my patience is not boundless."

"Nor is mine," he breaks in abruptly, yet obeying her. "My patience was exhausted. I loved you; I asked you to be my wife. You refused. You thought I had given you up. Instead, I was planning to win you in spite of yourself. There was but one way, and I took it. You will say that it was dishonorable. I know that! I would do more to win you. I have lured you here—into a gambler's den. As we came up the steps George Ford-

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ham was so near that he saw us enter. Your friend, Kate Seaton, saw you too. You and I alone were visiting a gambler's den. What can they think? You know as well as I. But there is a safe way out of this. Let me go now and seek Fordham; let me say to him, 'Miss Armyn is my promised wife.' Say yourself, to Kate Seaton, 'Clarence is to be my husband,' and all is well. In this republican city one may visit even such a place as this, with one's affianced. Once more I ask you to be my wife. I offer you riches and love."

"And — if I refuse, I shall be slandered to my dearest friends; all who have known me as a friend of the Ruthvens will know that I have been a gambler's guest—for the sake of the two good women under his roof, Charles Ruthven must turn from his door that base woman, Jess Warren, and myself; when I go forth, this stigma will follow me, I can not escape from it. And — I am alone in the world. This is what you would tell me."

It is strange to hear her say these things in that calm, frozen way.

"You think my statement as to how I was decoyed here, would weigh as nothing against the fact of my presence in such a place. That the man who is master here would not aid me to set myself right in the eyes of my friends" she continued.

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"I think that you would only blacken yourself by electing a professed gambler for your champion; that would only be to link your name with his," replied the young man, doggedly.

For the first time she faltered. She reeled as if about to fall.

"Say one word," he urged. "Say that I may straightway announce our engagement. Think how I must love you, to have done this. Should I not have some reward for such devotion?"

Strange that such words should restore her courage, her outward calm. One moment she seemed to ponder, then she said, as if thinking aloud, "Yes. *Such* devotion should be rewarded—amply rewarded. Such debts of gratitude should be paid to the uttermost."

"Then say yes," he urges, blindly. "Say you will be my wife."

Slowly she makes answer. "I am at your mercy—now. You can blast my honor—or save it. I realize my peril and your power. I choose to save my honor, even if to do it I must wed *dishonor*. Clarence Arteveldt, *you shall be rewarded!* I will marry you."

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CHAPTER XIV.

UNRECOGNIZED LINKS.

Nearly three weeks have elapsed since the fatal afternoon when Lenore Armyn gave that strangely worded promise to Clarence Arteveldt. October is wearing away, and for the actors in our strange drama there has been a season of comparative quiet. Jocelyn, the eccentric, appears and disappears, after his usual fashion; he has gathered some fragments of information concerning the mysterious mother and child, and is following up these clues; while Neil Bathurst keeps a close watch upon Jason Bradwardine. It seems strange, but is not the less true, that between the supposed widow and Jason Bradwardine, there should spring up a certain friendliness, that might, in time, tend to the further enlightenment of the fair "Mrs. O'Neil."

A good detective must also be a good actor. Neil Bathurst was not only a good actor, he was an educated one; possessed of a slight figure—slight at least, for a man—small feet and hands, and regular features, that, while not effeminate, were by no means heavy; he had been

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quick to see the advantage that his physique might give him over many, nay most, of his profession.

He had practiced the gait, gestures, and style of language common to the fair sex, as an artist studies for a loved profession. He had made feminine dress, and many feminine employments a part of his education, and was not only a capital ventriloquist, but an able elocutionist. He took the most scrupulous care of his hands and feet, and the former were as white and soft as the hands of the daintiest fair lady. Not the best and most skilled of stage "transformation artists" knew better how to apply an army of little brushes, leads, dyes, paints, and pigments, and not one had a larger or more motley collection of disguises, or "make-ups," than had Neil Bathurst. In his profession he was an artist, *par excellence*. Rob Jocelyn had truly said that he made a "fine figure of a woman." True Rob had objected that he was a trifle tall, but then the world is full of equally tall women. Perhaps Jason Bradwardine had a *penchant* for tall women, at any rate, Mrs. O'Neil found favor in his eyes.

Three weeks of September and October were filled, for the young detective, with small incidents that were, unknown to him then, to lead to great results. There were long talks with Jason Bradwardine, numerous

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feints at searches in all sorts of places, for the woman who had stolen the wallet, efforts to obtain some light upon the subject of the Durand robbery, and countless visits in various disguises to the Durand mansion, as well as evenings passed in the society of the two fascinating young ladies under that roof, with whom, as well as with the elder members of the family, he seemed rapidly becoming popular.

One evening, some two weeks after the entrapping of Lenore Armyn, Neil Bathurst stood before his dressing case making an elaborate dinner toilet, preparatory to setting forth to dine at the table of Mr. James Durand. He had chosen lodgings in one of those convenient buildings, where, because of its location and size, the stir and bustle was continuous; the building was situated on a corner, and had, besides the two street entrances, another, opening from an alley or narrow court. It was easy and comparatively safe to go in and out from such a place in the various characters a detective must sometimes assume, and Neil had good reason to be satisfied with his quarters.

In the character of Mrs. O'Neil he had lately returned from an interview with Jason Bradwardine, or Mr. Brady, and he was now engaged in removing the *cosmetique* from his smoothly-shaven face, preparatory to adjusting the

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small, silken mustache, which not even Rob Jocelyn had suspected of being false, previous to the night when the disguised Neil had led him such a chase.

Neil Bathurst was too cunning a detective to put himself under the hands of a barber. He did his own shaving, and no one ever saw him, *in propriâ personâ*, without this small hirsute appendage, he now held in his hand. He had but just adjusted the mustache to his satisfaction, and was about to put away his cast-off apparel, when a tap, which he instantly recognized, sounded upon the door. Hastily thrusting the garments of Mrs. O'Neil into a closet, the key of which he turned cautiously, he admitted the visitor. It was Clarence Arteveldt, looking a trifle pale, and more anxious than was usual for him.

"Where are you bound to-night, Bath.?" he queried, after some rambling conversation. "Seems to me you are getting fond of society. I haven't seen much of you, but have heard Fordham speak of your being at old Durand's quite often of late."

Neil Bathurst made no reply. He was making a mental note. How should Fordham be so well aware of his visits to the Durands? They had never met there, indeed Neil was not aware that Fordham was on visiting

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terms with the family. "I must look into this," thought the detective.

"I never see you any more," complained Arteveldt, "you are always on the wing, it seems."

"Why no," laughed Neil. "It's true that I have only seen you once since your engagement, and then hardly long enough to offer congratulations. Are you as happy as you hoped to be, now that you have won this paragon? And have you come to ask me to be introduced, because if you have I'll make a point of placing *one* evening at least at your disposal."

"It's too late now," said Arteveldt, flushing slightly, while a look of annoyance flitted across his face. "Lenore is a queer girl; she has taken the whim not to be introduced to any of my friends until after the wedding; so you will have to wait."

"Well! I will try and wait in patience," replied Neil, at the same time thinking that Miss Lenore Armyn was, to say the least, an eccentric young lady.

"You will, of course, come to our wedding," pursued Arteveldt. "We will be married within the next three weeks."

"So soon?"

"Well, it's none too soon for me. But it can't be any sooner. I have taken a house in a swell locality, and

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it is being fitted up in fine style. Lenore has grand notions for a country girl, and I am humoring her to the top of her bent. There won't be a finer furnished house in the city. You must go with me to see it some day, Bath."

"All right. And your mother, how does the idea of this new daughter-in-law suit her?"

"It didn't suit her at all at first, and she vowed she would not receive Lenore as a daughter; but of course, she came to terms, as I knew she would. The old lady wanted me to marry Aura Durand, and I don't know but that the girl expected it; but, good Lord! I never intended to marry *her*."

"And yet the world, your world, called you her lover," said Bathurst.

"Well—yes," laughing nervously, "so they did, but a man can't marry all his sweethearts. And Aura can find enough lovers."

"But is it true that she really cared for you?"

"Perhaps—a man can't tell now-a-days. She is a flirt, that I know," then suddenly. "I say, Bath., are *you* getting spooney in that quarter?"

"Not particularly."

"I wish you were—just a little. Aura's a nice girl."

"Oh, very."

"Well!" rising hastily, "I must move on—just

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dropped in to look at you. I escort Lenore and my mother to the Opera to-night. Lenore won't go out at all with me, except when chaperoned by the old lady."

"Discreet bride that."

"I should say so. You will come to my wedding, Bath.? Married in church, you know, reception after at our own house. Lenore won't travel. You will get the cards in a few days. You won't fail to come?"

"Of course I shall come, old man. I am getting quite curious about your eccentric beauty."

"And—I say, Bath.—would you mind—just for a friend, you know—would you mind finding out, what Aura thinks about my marriage. *You* can easily manage that."

Bathurst looked almost angry, but after a moment's silence, replied,

"That's rather a delicate matter; but if it comes in my way I will try and draw Miss Durand out."

In a short time Arteveldt took his leave, and Neil Bathurst sat alone thinking.

"I begin to think that I grow *too* observant," he mused; "I am constantly seeing an underdrift in the manners and conversation of people about me. What can have inspired Arteveldt to ask me to sound Miss Durand. Well, he has piqued my curiosity. I *will*

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sound her. But it is doubtful if I communicate to him the result of my investigations. What sort of a country girl can this be, this betrothed of his, who will only go out escorted by his mother, who can relinquish the glories of a bridal tour, who must have a mansion of magnificence, and who declines to meet the friends of her bridegroom elect; she is carrying things with a high hand now, how will it be when she becomes Mrs. Arteveldt."

How it would be, he little guessed.

"That's queer about Fordham," he muttered, as he lowered his gas before setting out for the Durands, "I must look after him a little."

Two hours later, as he sat near Miss Durand, in the rich man's stately drawing-room, Neil Bathurst turned toward her suddenly, saying:

"Have you seen the young lady who is soon to be Mrs. Arteveldt, Miss Durand?"

The heiress lifted her eyes to his with perfect composure.

"I have not had the pleasure. Have *you* seen her, Mr. Bathurst?"

"No. I have been equally unfortunate. I suppose then we shall have the pleasure of taking our first look at her together."

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"Indeed! How?"

"At the wedding."

"To be sure," with a soft little laugh, "I should be bridesmaid, Mr. Arteveldt and myself were very good friends. I think him one of the pleasantest young men I know."

"I'll tell him *that*," was Neil's mental comment. "Good heavens! if this girl did love him, what an actress she must be." Then he said:

"Arteveldt ran in upon me just before I came here. He tells me that he is fitting up a house in elegant style; they do not intend to travel."

"Indeed! how very odd," then, after a pause, "where is this house of theirs?"

"I did not learn." As he made this reply, he turned his face toward Miss Annin, and saw that the eyes of that young lady were bent upon Aura Durand, in keen scrutiny.

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CHAPTER XV.

TWO WOMEN PLEAD.

Living had been a new experiment to Lenore Armyn since that afternoon in the house of Gentleman Jeff. Clarence Arteveldt had been better than his word; he had taken upon himself the responsibility of explaining this delicate matter to Kate Seaton and had forced Jess to aid him in so doing.

Kate was only too glad to accept any explanation, and when they told her that they had not visited a gambler, but were in pursuit of a fortune teller, who occupied rooms on an upper floor, and that Jess and Miss Van Buren were just ahead and of the party, she was satisfied.

"Don't mention it, pray," Clarence had said to her in private; "the fact is that Mrs. Warren and her friend quite insisted upon going, although I felt that it was not quite the thing; I don't think Miss Armyn ever suspected there was a gambling house in such close proximity."

Kate had never heard of the fortune teller, but she

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readily agreed not to mention what he termed "the escapade." And so the secret was safe.

When, on that memorable afternoon, Lenore Armyn had said, "*I will marry you!*" her traitor lover had started forward with an exclamation of rapture. But she waved him back.

"Wait!" she had said; "reserve your caresses until I am your wife; it is a part of the penance I impose upon you, in punishment for your work of this day."

And since then she had not so much as allowed him to take her hand.

The days now were pretty much the same to Lenore Armyn; her friends marvelled at the change in her, but all felt the influence of her cold, proud reserve, and no one questioned her.

Once, indeed, Kate had said: "I declare, Lenore, *I* don't want to be engaged if I must become so stately and cold; but you are a most *unusual* bride elect."

"I shall be an 'unusual bride,'" replied Lenore, and Jess, who had been a listener, said to her friend, Miss Van Buren, that evening:

"Depend upon it, we have not heard the last of this affair; I wish we had never meddled." To which her comrade had retorted in true woman fashion: "I *told* you it was risky. It was *your* fault."

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The mother of Clarence Arteveldt had indeed opposed this engagement between her son and a girl unknown to society, whose friends were "of no social standing whatever! Only a bookkeeper's family." There had been a warm scene at the Arteveldt mansion, ending in the dogged announcement from the young man, that he "would leave the house that day, or any day she chose to name, and she might disinherit him, or do as she would. But he would marry Lenore Armyn if Satan himself opposed."

Without applying the latter rather uncomplimentary clause to herself, Mrs. Arteveldt had declared her intention of going to see this "scheming girl," and of letting her know that she would not be countenanced by the mother of the man she had entrapped. This happened two days after the strange betrothal.

Early in the afternoon of that same day Lenore Armyn received the following note from her lover:

Dearest Lenore:

My mother is deeply enraged, and declares that she will visit you and persuade you to give me up. Do not be disturbed by what she says. I am independent of her fortune, and she will soon come to terms. I shall permit *nothing* to come between us *now*. Yours, CLARENCE.

P.S. She will probably be there soon after the receipt of this. C.

Having read this note, Lenore went down to the kitchen, where Mrs. Ruthven was assisting in the prepara-

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tions for the usual six o'clock dinner, and walking straight to the range, she thrust the note in among the glowing coals, saying as she did so: "I expect a call from my future mother-in-law; if she should come before I have completed my toilet, please ask her to *wait*."

Mrs. Arteveldt was as good as her word. In the course of the afternoon a stately carriage drew up before the door, and a haughty looking, magnificently attired woman descended therefrom, and rang the bell vigorously.

"I wish to see Miss Lenore Armyn," said this personage, with an annihilating stare at little Mrs. Ruthven, who herself answered the ring.

"Walk in, madame," said that overpowered little lady; "I will call Miss Armyn."

Mrs. Arteveldt cast a glance of disdain about the pretty parlor, as she entered it, and then seated herself with an air of infinite condescension. In a moment Mrs. Ruthven re-appeared in the parlor.

"Miss Armyn will be down presently," she said, and disappeared forthwith.

"*Presently!*" Could Mrs. Arteveldt believe her ears? Was "that girl" actually about to keep *her* waiting?

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YOU WISHED TO SEE ME, MADAM."

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For full ten minutes she sat nursing her wrath, and then the door opened and Lenore came quietly in.

"You wished to see me, madame?" she said, coolly.

Mrs. Arteveldt stared in surprise. This unknown country girl stood before her with the utmost self-possession. She was positively beautiful, and bore herself like an equal. "Are you Miss Lenore Armyn?" asked she.

Lenore bowed.

"I am Mrs. Arteveldt," announced the visitor, looking to see a sudden change in the demeanor of the girl.

"Yes?" said Lenore, with that provoking rising inflection often used by skirmishing women.

"I am Clarence Arteveldt's mother," continued Mrs. Arteveldt, thinking the girl could not have understood her.

"So I supposed;" seating herself with much composure.

"I have called to talk with you about my son."

"You are very good."

Mrs. Arteveldt was losing her temper.

"Miss Armyn, I came to tell you that I could never consent to my son's marriage with you!" she exclaimed.

"No?" with perfect indifference.

"*What!* You do not care?"

"Not in the least, madame!"

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"You — you will marry him in opposition to my wishes?"

"Assuredly."

"You will come between him and his mother? *You*, who have known him for a few weeks only?"

"I will marry him."

"You have no thought for *me*?"

"No. I think only of him."

"I don't believe you; your love is but pretense."

"I pretend nothing."

"What! you pretend to love him?"

"No."

"*Girl!* what do you mean?"

"That I am no hypocrite."

"Then you dare say that you do not love my son?"

"I dare."

"Ah! I shall tell him this."

"As you please."

"Do you think he will marry you, when he knows that you do not love him?"

"Ask him, Mrs. Arteveldt."

Mrs. Arteveldt arose enraged. "Girl, take care. You think that because he is all I have I will submit to this imposition? I never will. You have schemed to entrap my son and his fortune; mine shall not be added

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to it. I will never give you my countenance, and without it society will receive you ill. You have broken up a happy home. I will never forgive my son, or tolerate you."

Lenore arose and faced her, speaking calmly: "Madame, give or withhold your countenance, it is all one to me. I would not give up Clarence Arteveldt if you implored me upon your bended knees. I will marry him if in doing so I lose every friend I have or hoped to have on earth. You say I do not love him;" her voice became more intense, and her eyes flamed. "*Love* is weak compared with what I feel for your son. I care nothing for your wealth, nothing for *his*. The day will come when you will *know* that."

Then they faced each other in silence.

"I will prevent this marriage," said the mother, turning to go. "I have no more to say to you, but I will prevent this shameful marriage. It shall never be."

"You can not do that. The bond between us is too strong. *Nothing but death can divide us.*"

With these words ringing in her ears, Mrs. Arteveldt swept from the room, and from the house. There came a time when, clothed with a new meaning, they haunted her, waking and sleeping.

Mrs. Arteveldt went home, and for three days waged

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incessant warfare upon her son. She commanded, she implored, but her wrath and her tears were alike unavailing. On the third day, Clarence said:

"It's no use, mother; I can't stand this sort of thing. I shall leave the house to-night, and for good. If you can't accept my wife, you can't care much for me. Lenore is not a girl to be ashamed of. There is not another such in all the city. I shall have a beautiful wife, with the manners of a princess. You might well be proud of such a daughter. But if you won't, you won't. Only let me tell you this, if you don't accept her *now*, she will not recognize *you*, once she is my wife."

Then he went away and left her to think.

Mrs. Arteveldt was a vain old woman; she idolized her son; but she loved society, and she knew that her reign was well nigh over; she had counted upon a handsome, fashionable daughter-in-law, with whom she might still attend opera and ball, and who would attract to her drawing-rooms the society which, without the magnet of some younger beauty, would gradually fall away from her and them. If she alienated herself from her son and the wife he had chosen, she must abandon all this. And after all Lenore Armyn was beautiful—she would grace any drawing-room. And Mrs. Arteveldt did not feel at all sure as to her ability to keep so fine and haughty a

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bride from becoming the fashion. Her son's fortune rendered them independent of her. And then after all, Lenore did love her son — what else could her strange words mean.

When Clarence Arteveldt came down stairs, after packing his effects, his mother met him and put a note in his hands.

"Read it," she said in a subdued tone, "and then take it to Miss Armyn."

With a gleam of satisfaction in his eyes, he perused it. Thus it ran:

Miss Armyn:

If you can overlook the fact of our last meeting, I can do the same. I came to you prejudiced. I think I understand you better now. Let us be the friends we should be, considering how soon you will be my son's wife. He will give you this, and when next he visits you I shall hope to come with him. Sincerely, ELLEN ARTEVELDT.

"Mother, you're a trump," said the gratified Clarence. "Now then things will be more comfortable," and he hastened to deliver the note to Lenore.

After that Mrs. Arteveldt and Miss Armyn drove regularly together. Together they attended opera and theater, escorted by Clarence. Together they shopped, and lunched at aristocratic, down-town restaurants. So the time wore on, and there was only a week now inter-

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vening before the wedding-day. Mrs. Arteveldt had chosen the *trousseau*, and the proud Lenore Armyn had made no resistance. The new house was ready for its occupants. Such a beautifully furnished house! It was the talk of the Arteveldt set. It was one of two double houses, as they are called. They were recently-built structures; and had never had a tenant.

A short time after the one had been secured by the expectant bridegroom, the other had been taken, a little to the annoyance of the first renter. The second house was still uninhabited, the lessee being tardy in taking possession. But there was plenty of evidence that the new tenant would soon be settled on the premises. Every day loads of costly furniture were landed at the door, and Clarence Arteveldt learned that it was to be used for a genteel boarding house. He was a little dissatisfied at this, but it was too late to complain, and in the city one can not choose his neighbors.

It was a dreary, drizzling November day, just one week before the time fixed upon for the wedding; Lenore had kept her room all day, only appearing at meal times. Dusk was coming on and a strong wind whistled about the corners.

Just a block away from the Ruthven abode, the street-cars jogged drearily by, and one of them pausing,

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deposited a single female passenger, who hastened on through the wind and rain, heavily cloaked and closely vailed. Before the door bearing the name, Ruthven, in silver letters on a black plate, she paused for a moment, then hurried up the steps and rang the bell.

"I wish to see Miss Armyn," she said, when the door was opened. "Is she at home?"

Miss Armyn was at home, and the stranger was ushered into the parlor.

Lenore Armyn came down, wondering a little who her visitor could be. At the same moment the maid of all work came in, lighted the gas, drew the curtains, and withdrew herself. Then the visitor came forward and gazed eagerly at the face of Lenore Armyn, without removing the vail. Finally she said, as if to herself:

"She is beautiful—*very*."

"Who are you?" asked Lenore, "and what is your business with me?"

"You are about to marry Mr. Arteveldt," said the stranger, in a low, sweet voice.

"Yes."

"It is of him I wish to speak."

"Then proceed."

"Miss Armyn, Clarence Arteveldt is the lover, the *promised* husband of another woman."

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"Well!"

"He is bound to her by every tie of honor."

Lenore Armyn laughed. "Such bonds are frail," she said.

"Frail, indeed!" retorted the vailed one, bitterly. "I have come to you as the ambassador of that other woman. She loves him to madness; she begs you to renounce him."

"She must indeed love him to madness."

"Miss Armyn, you surely can not wish to marry this man, knowing the truth. I swear to you he is false, unfaithful. He has deceived you, and will again."

"You mistake. He *never* will."

"I say he *will*," excitedly; "he is by nature inconstant. Send him from you, Miss Armyn; send him back to the woman he has wronged. You are said to be as generous as you are beautiful ——"

"Then I have been misrepresented. There is no generosity in me."

"What! you do not pity this other one?"

"No; why should I? Has she not been loved by Clarence Arteveldt?"

"Ah! And you hate her for this; you are so jealous?"

Again that odd laugh from the lips of Lenore.

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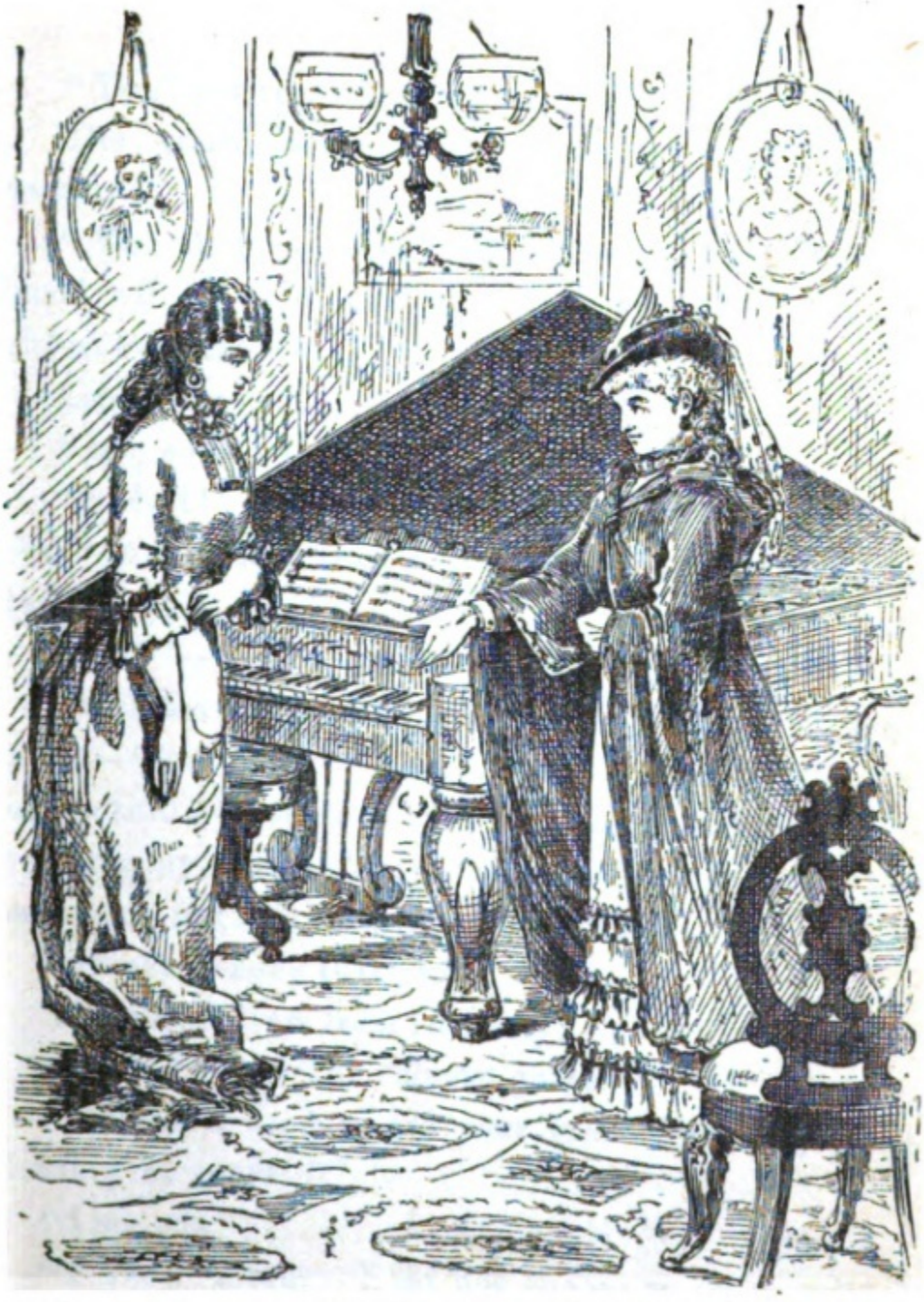

"MISS ARMYN • • • INNOCENT BLOOD WILL BE UPON YOUR HEAD."

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"Yes," she replied; "I am terribly jealous."

The vailed woman moved a step nearer, saying, eagerly:

"Miss Armyn, *listen*. If you marry him, innocent blood will be upon your head; you will drive this poor girl to her death."

Lenore started.

"Is it so bad as that?"

"So bad!" The voice became almost a wail. "My God! it is worse than I can tell you; it is bitter as death."

"Ah!"—this one syllable with a queer intonation.

"It is the wreck of a life!"—the voice growing more tragic—"it is the blackness of despair! And you—you, so beautiful!—*you* do not love him as—*she* does."

Suddenly Lenore Armyn came to her side, and laid a hand upon her arm, saying, peremptorily:

"Please remove that vail!"

The visitor drew back suddenly.

"What! why?" she almost gasped.

"Because I want to see your face. Because you are pleading for yourself."

"I am not."

"I know better. I do not choose to be theatrical.

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If you wish to talk with me, remove your vail and tell me who you are."

"Impossible!"

"Then our interview ends here," turning toward the door.

The stranger sprang forward.

"What!" she cried; "you would look upon my face to glory in my grief. You would like to laugh with *him* over my humiliation."

Lenore turned upon her fiercely.

"What are *you*, that you can impute such motives to me? Clarence Arteveldt will never hear of your visit from *my* lips. If you want me to hear you and believe you, throw aside this mystery."

The stranger hesitated.

"Will you swear to me never to speak of me to him —never to tell any one, under any circumstances, of my visit to you?"

"If you wish it."

"I *do* wish it."

"Then I swear."

The stranger moved nearer again.

"Have you ever heard him speak of any lady friend?"

"Yes; one."

"Who?"

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"A Miss Durand."

"And I am Aura Durand."

She threw back the vail, and Lenore saw the fair blonde face for the first time. For a full minute they gazed at each other in silence, then Lenore said:

"Sit down, Miss Durand. Can it be possible you have come to me on such an errand?"

"Yes. I have the first, best right to Clarence Arteveldt's love; you must give him back to me."

"I can not."

"But wait; you do not know all — I must humble myself still more — I must tell you ——"

"Tell me nothing. It can make no difference."

"It must. It *shall!* Listen ——"

"No," lifting her hand in admonition; "listen I can not. You would only humble yourself uselessly."

"You will not hear me?"

"It would be worse than useless. You are not the first who has tried to make me renounce Clarence Arteveldt. I reply to you as I did to that other one: I would not listen if you knelt before me. Gold can not buy me; threats are of no avail. I will marry Clarence Arteveldt; nothing, save death, can prevent it."

For a moment Aura Durand stood like a statue before her. For a moment she looked as if about to spring

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upon Lenore and clutch her throat with those clinched baby hands. Then her form drooped suddenly, her hands fell at her side; she reeled as if about to faint.

"So be it," she murmured, in a broken voice. "May heaven forgive you. All I can ask then, is that you keep my secret."

"I will keep your secret. Have no fear."

With drooping head, and unsteady steps, Aura Durand went out into the storm.

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CHAPTER XVI.

A STRANGE BRIDAL BANQUET

Neil Bathurst bounded up the stairs which led to his rooms in the big commercial building, three steps at a time. It was the evening of Clarence Arteveldt's wedding, and the detective, who had been "piping" all day had barely time to prepare for the ceremony. Plunging through the great hall he ran upon a half-grown lad who was pounding lustily at his own door.

"Hello, youngster," he cried. "Don't batter my door down. What's the row?"

"Oh! it's you, be it," ejaculated the gamin, taking a close survey of him, by the light from various transoms. "I thought you never would wake up."

"Well, it's me or not, according to who you take me for," replied Neil, at the same time putting a key in the door.

"I takes you for the chap as belongs to this 'ere room —ain't your name Bathurst?"

"That's me, sonny," pushing open the door.

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"Well, then, this is fer you," presenting a crumpled note, and turning to go.

"Who sent it?"

"Dunno;" from the hall without. "Good-by, Cap'n." And Neil heard him clattering down the stairs.

Having closed his door, Neil opened the envelope hurriedly. It contained a half sheet of paper covered with scrawled hieroglyphics, quite incomprehensible to any, save him for whom it was intended. Neil understood it at a glance. It was a letter in cypher, the key of which was held by himself and Robert Jocelyn. Translated, the cypher read thus:

Old Pard.

Be at *Mike's* to-night from seven until further notice. I am up to some "queer shoving" games, and can't work alone. See you later.

Neil uttered a low whistle. "Rob in town again," he muttered. "Where will he turn up at next? At Mike's at seven. Why, that's the wedding hour. By Jove, fate is against my seeing the fair bride. Arteveldt will feel hurt, I suppose, at my non-appearance, but business is business. I can't desert Rob, even for a wedding." And he began a queer sort of toilet, one not at all in keeping for a wedding guest.

"What an odd fish Rob is," he mused, as he prepared himself. "Turning up in all sorts of places, and after

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all manner of game. Who supposed him in the city now. But then—as I had not heard of him for a week, I might have expected it."

Not long after, a flashily-dressed young man came cautiously out from Neil Bathurst's room, hurried down the lesser stairway, and turned his face toward the famous gambling house, familiarly known as "Mike's." For a second time Rob Jocelyn had, by putting in a sudden appearance, prevented a meeting between his friend Neil and the fair Lenore. The fair Lenore! How fair she was, on this, her bridal eve.

There was to be a brilliant ceremony at a stately church, and later, a reception; not at the residence of Mrs. Arteveldt the elder, but at the new home of the bride and groom. This was the wish,—the *whim*, Mrs. Arteveldt called it—of Lenore. And Lenore's wishes were equivalent to commands. She was not to be argued out of this "whim." She would have no reception at the house of her mother-in-law; she would receive her own wedding guests. Mrs. Arteveldt *mere* among the rest.

Clarence had not ventured an objection to this arrangement; in truth he saw none. "What if it is a trifle unusual," he had said to his mother, "we must receive in our own house, and why not on our bridal night? I

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am not afraid for Lenore. She may be ignorant in some respects regarding society, but she lacks nothing that a lady should know. I tell you what, her mother must have been not only a lady, but a most extraordinary woman. Lenore never mentions her, but it is plain she has had no common training. What our city belles must acquire by education, is second nature to Lenore. I believe that Mrs. Armyn was a traveled woman, an educated woman, and that she has been in the society of the best."

Finding all opposition useless, Mrs. Arteveldt had set about the task of making others think that this new departure was entirely to her liking; and she had done one thing more. Feeling convinced that her prospective daughter-in-law would not prove very flexible in her hands, and relieved of the fear that had hitherto haunted her, and prevented her supplying herself with a pleasant youthful companion, she had asked Kate Seaton to come to her in that capacity. She had been pleased and attracted by Kate's pretty face and bright, cheery ways. The girl had a sweet soprano voice, and was also an excellent reader. Mrs. Arteveldt felt that having once extended her stately patronage to Lenore, it would not answer to let any barriers spring up between them. Lenore was fond of Kate, it would put them upon a pleasanter footing

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to have the girl in the house. Then, too, it would render Mrs. Arteveldt a trifle more independent. A young lady who was patronized by *her* must become popular, and Kate, when she had acquired a little more dignity, would become an ornament to society; she would soon acquire this needful dignity under the Arteveldt influence.

Kate had accepted the lady's offer gladly; the Ruthvens were far from being rich, and she had, more than once, tried to persuade her sister to let her go and seek a situation as book-keeper or clerk, in one of the many stores where young ladies were employed, but Mrs. Ruthven would not consent to this. Mrs. Arteveldt's offer was something quite different. Here was an opportunity for Kate to better herself. The argument that was most to the liking of Kate's sister, was contained in a speech made by Mrs. Arteveldt, when settling the matter of wages, or, as she termed it, "compensation."

"You see, Mrs. Ruthven," she had said, "the money I offer her is not much. I named so small a sum because I wish to reserve the privilege of furnishing her wardrobe myself. She will, of course, go out with me, as well as see much of society in my own house. I want her to dress in accordance with the society in which she will be thrown."

The arrangements had all been completed before

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Lenore was made aware of the change in store for Kate. She had not displayed as much enthusiasm over the new arrangement as Kate had hoped for, and expected. But then, Lenore was engrossed with her own affairs.

After all, Jess Warren did not feel elated over the success of her plot. She had not anticipated anything like the present state of affairs. She had not dreamed that Clarence Arteveldt's haughty mother would, under any circumstances, consent to receive Lenore. She had not expected that Lenore would accept the situation with such apparent composure, and afterwards carry things with such a high hand. Since the affair at Gentleman Jeff's, Lenore had treated Jess with marked politeness in the presence of others, and had utterly ignored her existence, if for a brief moment the two found themselves alone.

"Our turn will come," Jess had said at last, to her confederate. "When she is married and holds the purse strings, *we* can unloose them; she won't want facts to leak out when she has begun to taste the sweets of society. And if *she* won't 'come down' the old lady will. Besides, we shall have the advantage of appearing in their drawing-rooms. They won't dare slight us." They were destined to appear *once*, at least, for they were among the first to receive beautifully engraved cards of invitation; first,

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to attend the ceremony of marriage, and after to attend at the reception.

There was one other odd feature at that wedding. Lenore would have no bridesmaids.

Alone they stood at the altar, two splendid specimens of physical beauty. Lenore Armyn was the fairest of all fair brides; stately as a duchess, and cold as the north star. Clarence Arteveldt had never looked handsomer, his cheeks burned with excitement, his eyes flashed triumphantly. More than one fair belle envied Lenore Armyn that evening; more than one of his male friends declared Arteveldt "a lucky dog."

Two fully expected guests were absent from the ceremony, Neil Bathurst and Aura Durand.

It was a brilliant assembly that which gathered under the roof of Clarence Arteveldt's fine new house; not too large, just the cream of the Arteveldt set. The bride's friends being represented by Mrs. and Mr. Ruthven, Kate Seaton and — heaven save us! — Jess Warren and Carrie VanBuren.

Reader, let us mingle with the groups of bright-robed ladies, and clerical looking men, who are gathered in those elegant rooms. Lenore Arteveldt, surrounded by a group of admiring new acquaintances, stands at the upper end of the large drawing-room, her words are very few, and

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her face somewhat graver than a bride's face should be, but she bears herself with perfect grace, and is a good listener.

"Mrs. Arteveldt seems one of your handsome, silent sort," says a gentleman, to Jess Warren, who is arrayed in a wonderful garment of rose color — bought with the price of Lenore's wrong.

"Yes," replied the widow. "Dear Lenore is always silent—of late." The last two words *sotto voce*.

At almost the same moment Mrs. and Mr. Durand are turning away, after having proffered late congratulations to the bride and groom. But Miss Annin lingers near Lenore and Clarence.

"Aura was so disappointed at finding herself unable to come," she says, looking up at Clarence Arteveldt.

"I am sorry that she is sick," replies he. "Hope it's not serious."

"Serious! dear me, no!" laughing prettily. "Didn't you understand her father? Aura is not *sick*. She has sprained her ankle."

"Oh! a sprain! How did that happen, and when?"

"Last evening. Miss Durand was returning from the theater. She slipped in getting from the carriage. They had to carry her in."

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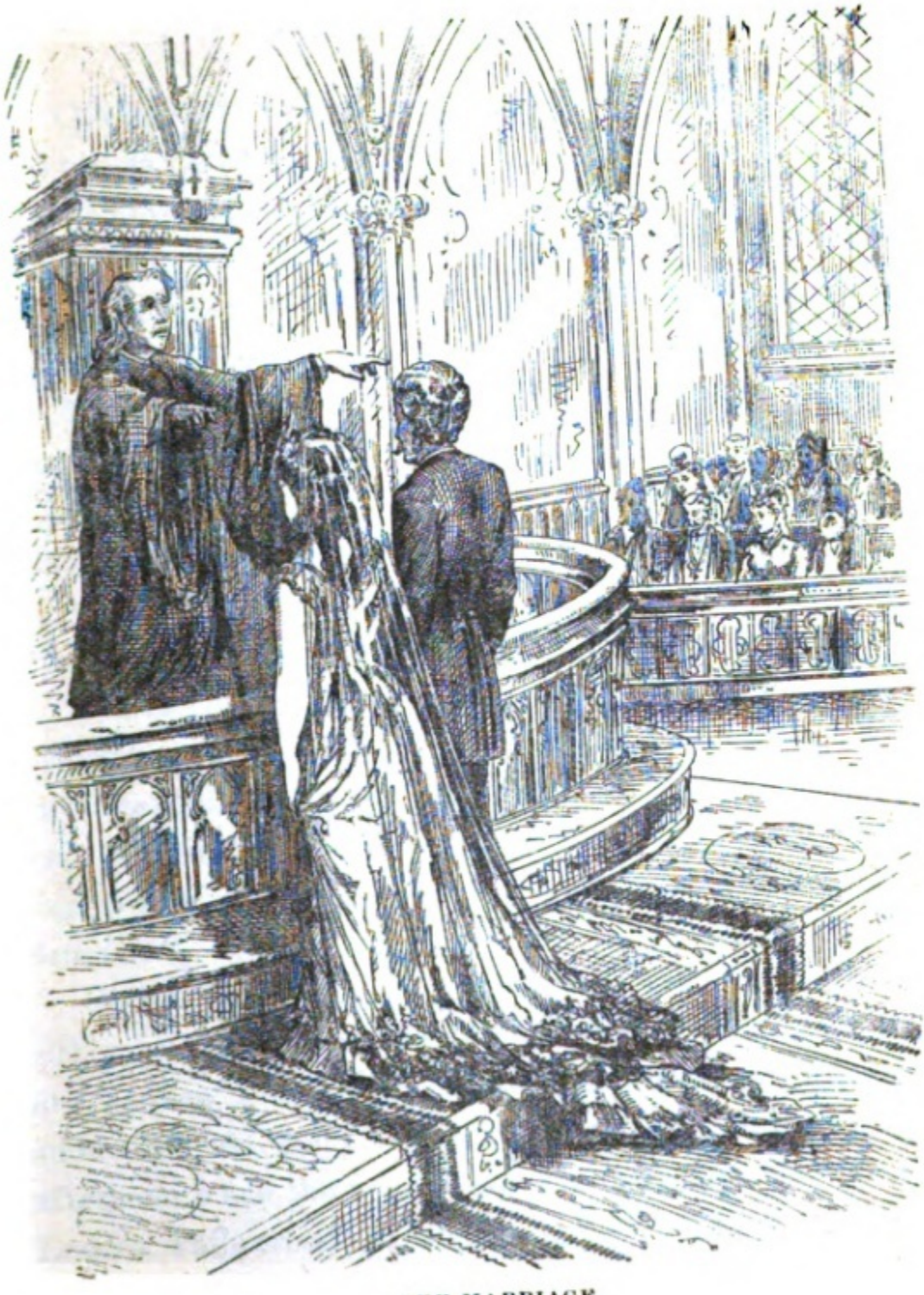

THE MARRIAGE.

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Others move nearer, and Miss Annin turns away. As she passes Lenore, the latter puts out her hand.

"I have not the honor of Miss Durand's acquaintance," she says, looking Miss Annin straight in the eye; "nevertheless tell her that I trust she will find her *injury* can be amended—*in time*."

Miss Annin bows, and then moves away, wearing a queer look upon her face.

"Ah, Miss Aura," she thinks, "there is a peculiar meaning in those words, or I am not good at guessing."

"Miss Durand is not here," said a lady to Clarence, "how is this, Mr. Arteveldt?"

"Miss Durand has sprained her ankle," replied the bridegroom. "I am sorry not to see her here; that makes two disappointments for me, to-night. My friend, Bathurst, is absent, too. You remember him, Lenore," turning toward her and speaking in a lower voice—"*The detective*."

Carrie Van Buren has approached, and, unnoticed by either, stands close at the bride's elbow. She hears the low spoken words, and she see Lenore Arteveldt start suddenly. At once her thoughts fly back to the sunny afternoon when the young man had been pointed out to Lenore, while crossing Dearborn street. Without making

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her proximity known she silently turns away and seeks out Jess Warren.

"Clarence," says the bride, a moment later, leaning toward him, and speaking in a low tone, "will you arrange that Mr. Fordham shall escort Jess Warren and Miss Van Buren to the supper-room? I want them to sit next us."

"But, Lenore —"

"Don't argue, please. You are in your own house. You have only to speak to Mr. Fordham; and I insist upon it."

"Then, of course, it shall be so. But I thought you would prefer Kate —"

"I *don't* prefer Kate; she is best off with your mother. Go now and find Mr. Fordham."

Obediently, yet reluctantly, he leaves her side to do her bidding.

The guests are merry; the bride is fair; the groom triumphant. The moments speed by on golden wings.

At last comes the summons to the bridal feast. The table is laden with delicate and costly viands, rare exotics charm the senses and perfume the air; fruits of every clime are heaped about, a profusion of gorgeous color. There is the glitter of rare and costly plate; the sparkle of clearest crystal; wines glowing with golden and ruby

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fire, are flowing freely as water. The guests are very merry—they are feasting, jesting, laughing, quaffing the glowing wine. From the lower end of the table, a gentleman rises up, wine-glass in hand, it is Mr. Hale, the lawyer and friendly adviser of the elder Mrs. Arteveldt.

"Ladies and gentlemen, a toast," he says. "Let us fill our glasses to the health, long life, and future happiness of Mrs. and Mr. Clarence Arteveldt."

There is a rustling, a murmur of approbation, and the gurgling of wine flowing into many glasses—then— a sudden hush—and startled eyes are turned toward the upper end of the table. The *bride* has risen to her feet; her head is thrown back defiantly; her face is as colorless as the whitest ivory. In one hand she holds a wine-glass, full to the brim—the other she extends in a commanding gesture. "Before you drink that toast, hear me," she says in full, firm tones. "Hear *how* Clarence Arteveldt won his wife. Before you drink to him, know of what he is capable,—know that I, who stand before you to-night with a heart filled with loathing for the man whose wife I am—was *entrapped* into this marriage. All unfamiliar with the city and its wickedness, I was led by that man," pointing to the bridegroom, "and these, his confederates," signifying Mr. Fordham and the now

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guilty-looking women on either side of him, "into a *gambler's den*. Then I was told that the one way to save myself was, by becoming the wife of the wretch who had thus entrapped me. Otherwise my friends should know that I had been a gambler's guest, and my honor would thus be blackened. Uuknown to myself, I stood that day where no *good* woman ever stood before. But *there* behold two women who lured me into that place, with their own eyes open. Two women who were not there for the *first* time, nor for the *second*. On *them* let the *shame* fall! Thus far their scheme has been successful. Clarence Arteveldt will hardly slander the woman who bears his name and has been the chosen *friend* of his *mother*. He has won me for his wife—but his wife in name only. *His* roof can never shelter me! I would die sooner than receive aught from his hand. He won me by fraud—but he can hold me by neither fraud nor force! Before God, I swear that never shall his hand touch mine! Never will I hear his lips call me wife! Never shall his eyes look upon me after this hour! Clarence Arteveldt, this evening has seen your triumph—this night, and all the future, shall witness mine. When to-morrow comes let then your friends and guests say, *whether or no, your wife has avenged herself.*"

The words rush from her lips like living fire. So

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"BEFORE YOU DRINK • • • HEAR HOW CLARENCE ARTEVELDT WON HIS WIFE."

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sudden, so unexpected are they, that they strike every listener dumb. Clarence Arteveldt sits like a man of stone, but his face tells its own guilt. Not one who looks upon him there doubts that Lenore has spoken the shameful truth. And the faces of Jess and her confederate, and of George Fordham, corroborate her story. Already Lenore is avenged, for these four evil ones stand before their fellow-mortals as targets for derision and scorn. For a moment the stillness is death-like; then the mother of Clarence Arteveldt falls forward in a swoon. This breaks the spell of silence, and stupefaction. They turn toward Lenore, but the place where she stood is vacant. The bride has disappeared. They raise the lifeless form of Mrs. Arteveldt, and remove it from the scene of confusion; they talk in low, horror-stricken tones. Clarence Arteveldt is the last to come out of his trance; blinded, stunned by a rush of strong emotions—fear, rage, baffled passion, despair—he reels like a drunken man. He stands alone, this wretched bridegroom. The numerous friends who a moment since sat at his board and quaffed his wine, stand aloof now, and favor him with glances of curiosity or aversion; they are all against him to-night, to-morrow,—when it will be too late,—they will talk pityingly of him, and try to endow him with the virtues that he had not. All around

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the board see the full glasses—filled for the toast destined never to be honored. Clarence Arteveldt starts forward and drains his glass, refills it, then fills it again. As he drinks, a hand falls on his arm; he turns. It is his mother's lawyer, Mr. Hale.

"What is to be done, Arteveldt?" he asks, in a dry, unfeeling voice, as if he were acting from a sense of duty, not sympathy. "Your mother is in a swoon, shall *I* act for you?"

"Yes, act, for God's sake."

"Then go to your own room, and leave that wine alone."

The bridegroom turns away with an angry gesture, and fills and drains another glass.

"Stop, man," cries the lawyer, sternly. "Don't you see that you are damaging yourself still more in the eyes of all these people? Come out of that frenzy and tell where your wife has gone. If you can explain this thing to your own credit, for mercy's sake do so."

Down goes the wine glass with a crash, it lies at the feet of the deserted bridegroom, shivered to atoms.

"Did you not hear her?" he cries, throwing out his hands wildly, "why look for her? Neither you nor I will ever find her. I might have known it, I might have understood her better! I was a blind fool; she has ruined

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me, body and soul—I have lost her; that is all that I care for! She is gone, *gone*, GONE!"

The last word ends in a despairing shriek, he reels backward and falls, striking his head against the carved leg of his own dining-room chair. Then Mr. Hale assumes command of everything. Presently the house is quiet, the guests are gone. A physician has been summoned, and in obedience to his command, Mrs. Arteveldt is removed to her own house; she is borne to her carriage, accompanied by the terrified Kate Seaton.

Clarence Arteveldt is compelled to retire to his own room, yes, compelled, — the darling of the drawing-room, the handsome, the wealthy, the weak-headed, traitor-hearted husband of an hour, is half mad. Rage, disappointment and wine, have mastered his reason; for the time, at least, he is a maniac and requires a keeper.

At last they are all gone, the doctor, the lawyer, every one, and the tired, excited servants are all asleep. In the chamber destined for the bride, Clarence Arteveldt lies, beside him a weary servant sits nodding. Suddenly the madman starts up.

"See!" he cries, with eyes distended, "she is coming, I knew she would finish her revenge! She wants to kill me now. Drive her away, John, don't let her see me! Here! come here; see, I will lay myself

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upon her pillow,—that may move her pity. Now lower the lights down, down, *lower yet*, her eyes gleam so. There now, lower the curtains and lie down close beside me; pull the satin and lace about you. There. *Do it*, I tell you, and make the room darker yet! Now, that is better; give me some more wine, John."

Obediently the tired servant moves about, doing his bidding. The doctor has said that he must be kept soothed and quiet. He, the servant, presents the weak wine, containing an opiate, and then lays himself down upon the bridal bed. With his own hands the mad bridegroom pulls the satin and lace coverings about the shoulders and ears of the servant, then he settles himself down, saying, "There, I shall sleep, now."

He will sleep now; yes, as we all must sleep — *once*.

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CHAPTER XVII.

A STARTLING ANNOUNCEMENT.

The two detectives had spent the night in the gambling-house, as had been appointed by Jocelyn in his cypher note to Neil Bathurst. All night long they had been vigilant, and just before the first hint of dawn was visible, they repaired to the rooms occupied by Bathurst, having first shadowed two of the suspected counterfeiters to their respective lairs. To do this of course they had found it necessary to separate, and when Rob Jocelyn came to the room where they were to snatch a few hours sleep, he found his friend there before him.

Bathurst had thrown off a portion of his clothing, and was already in a state of semi-unconsciousness.

"Come in ahead, did you, old man?" said cheery Jocelyn; "you look fagged out, and I feel so. Let's defer explanations of any sort, until we have slept a little." They had been unable to hold much intercourse during the night just past; and each was in ignorance concerning the doings of the other, since that night, weeks ago, which they had passed together in the char-

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acters of Mr. and Mrs. Robbins. "I must turn out pretty early, however, Neil; and you must do your sleeping accordingly."

With this he flung himself down beside his friend, and soon they were in the land of Nod. Notwithstanding his intention of rising with the lark, the sun was high when Rob Jocelyn awoke that morning. Muttering something rather profane, he sprang up and awakened his friend.

"Come, old man, this won't do! get up and shake yourself awake; I'm going to smoke the first thing, and while I smoke, do you talk. We must cut it short, too, for I can't lose much more of this morning. Here goes then. First, how's your burglary case?"

"Pretty well — for the burglar," replied Neil, rubbing his eyes. "Deuce take the burglar. I believe he went away in seven league boots."

"Not given him up, old man?"

"Never a bit. He's getting some rest, however."

"And Bradwardine?"

"Have made memoranda of everything concerning him. Got time to look at them?"

"Not now. Give it to us condensed."

"All right. After all, a small nut shell will hold the prime facts. As the widow O'Neil I am still in favor

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with Mr. J. B. I have done a great deal of imaginary looking for the woman who stole those papers — she, by the by, is convalescing slowly in the hospital recommended by Dr. Rice, while her would-be assassin languishes in the jug. I have had several conversations with her; she is a woman to be pitied. I shall see that Mr. J. B. does *not* get his hands on her. Well! I have satisfied myself on a few points. First, that this man, Brady, as he calls himself, *is* Bradwardine beyond a doubt. Second, that the loss of those papers is a heavy blow to him. Third, that he is an unscrupulous man, and intent upon mischief of some sort. Fourth, that he is playing this game, whatever it is, to win a fortune; and fifth, that he has visited that New York village before you, and has at this present moment a private inquirer searching for the hiding place of the mother and child."

"Thanks," laughing lazily, "I found out that last for myself."

"Did you?" exclaimed Neil.

"Yes; they have both been in Elm Valley before me, Brady and the 'tracker.' Is that the end of your budget?"

"Pretty much."

"Well, you have not done badly; but as he may at

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any time get news from his private inquirer, one or the other of us must keep an eye upon Brady."

"Of course."

"Well, here goes for 'Mistress Bourne;' the Elm Valleyites declare her a foreigner — we knew that before, however; she was very beautiful and very sad; lived like a nun, at least as secluded, and seemed to have plenty of money — but you know a villager's idea of plenty of money is not at all an extravagant one. Nobody knew where they came from; nobody knew where they went. Opinions in regard to their nationality were as varied as they were absurd. The child was then small, four or five years of age, say, and must, therefore, be now a young lady of twenty or thereabouts."

"Did you make use of the picture?"

"No; I thought it best to satisfy myself by inquiries. Making allowance for the time that must have elapsed since the taking of the woman's picture and the settlement of Mistress Bourne in Elm Valley, the description of that lady tallies exactly with the picture. I think the original and the wanderer are the same."

"It looks like it."

Jocelyn gave a terrific yawn, and then consulted his watch.

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"It's time for me to move," he said. "Where will I see you to-night, Neil?"

"Here. I am quite at leisure to-night."

"All right. Will you look after Brady this afternoon?"

"Yes. I have not much else on hand. By the by, Rob, you spoiled a wedding for me last night."

"Did I? Sorry! How was it?"

"You remember Arteveldt?"

"The handsome blood that you introduced, my first day in Chicago?"

"The same. He was married last night."

"Good Lord. I pity his wife."

"By the by, he married one of those 'pretty girls' he mentioned that day. I was going out with him, you remember, and threw over the engagement."

"I remember."

"Well, Arteveldt met his fate that night, and because of you, old man I was not present at that meeting. He *married* her last night, and because of you, again, I have not yet seen the fair bride."

"Upon my word, Neil, I'm sorry."

"Well, you need not be. I was not over anxious about the matter. Arteveldt seems to have conceived a great liking for me, the Lord only knows why. He would

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have had me under his mother's roof all the time, if he could. I had to be fussed over by his lady mamma, because of the little service I happened to render him once. If you had not turned up I should have been at the wedding, if only to please Arteveldt. I had a sort of lop-sided liking for the fellow, although he was not just of my stripe."

"I should think not."

As Jocelyn said this, he arose to prepare himself for departure.

"And, by the way, Neil, don't look for me very early to-night; I may take another spin after those 'shovers.' If anything keeps me later than, say midnight, will manage to let you know, however."

"All right, Rob; if you really won't stay any longer, I think *I* will take another nap."

As soon as the door closed behind Jocelyn, the young detective threw himself down with a yawn. "Now for another snooze," he murmured contentedly.

Scarcely were the words off his lips before there came to his ears the sound of hurried steps outside, and in a moment, a hasty knock upon his door.

"Who's there?" called he, rising quickly.

"Mrs. Arteveldt's coachman," replied an agitated voice; "open, sir, for God's sake!"

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Hurriedly Bathurst unlocked and opened the door, and the messenger, pale and breathless, fairly reeled into the room.

"Come quick, sir," he gasped, without waiting to recover his breath. "She won't leave off screaming until you do! Come quick!"

"*Who* won't, Peter?" asked Bathurst, who instantly comprehended that something unusual had occurred. "Who wants me?"

"*She*, sir!" panted the man. "Missus Arteveldt."

Bathurst seized the man by the arm with a firm grip, and pushing him toward a chair, said, with some sternness:

"Sit down, and take breath — there," — as the man obeyed him. "Now then, talk rationally! What has happened?"

"I will, sir; but you must come straight — Missus moans for you every breath — it's awful, sir. They came for us an hour ago. And when she got there and saw it — oh, but she did go mad. 'Send for Neil Bathurst,' she cries, '*he* will find who did it!' To think of it at such a time! And the first thing she thinks of is revenge!"

"Revenge! Man, what *do* you mean?"

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