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***** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK FURTHER ADVENTURES OF Q. A. SAYWER *****

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[Illustration: "HE LOOKED UP, SUDDENLY, AND SAW A PRETTY GIRL, DRESSED IN PICTURESQUE ITALIAN COSTUME."]

THE FURTHER ADVENTURES OF QUINCY ADAMS SAWYER AND MASON'S CORNER
FOLKS

A Novel By Charles Felton Pidgin Author of "Quincy Adams Sawyer,"
"Blennerhassett," "Stephen Holton," etc.

Illustrated by Henry Roth [Illustration]

1909

To My Daughter Dora

Preface

Eight years ago, "Quincy Adams Sawyer and Mason's Corner Folks" was published, being heralded, truthfully, as the work of an "unknown author." It met with favour from reviewers and the reading public. My pleasantest souvenirs are hundreds of letters, from personally unknown correspondents, wishing to know more about "Quincy" and the other characters in my first story.

I know that few, if any, "sequels" are considered as interesting as the original work, and an author, to a certain extent, tempts fate in writing one. But if we visit friends and have a pleasant time there seems to be no reason why another invitation should not be accepted. So, if a book pleases its readers, and the characters therein become their friends, why should not these readers be invited to renew their acquaintance?

They may not enjoy themselves as much as at their first visit, but that is the unavoidable result of repetition. The human mind craves novelty, and, perhaps, the reader will find it, after all, within these pages.

C. F. P.

WIDEVIEW FARM, BELMONT, MASS. August, 1908.

CONTENTS

PREFACE

- I. THE GOVERNOR'S SPEECH
- II. A DAY WITH THE GOVERNOR
- III. A VACATION AT FERNBOROUGH
- IV. THE HAWKINS HOUSE
- V. 'ZEKE PETTINGILL'S FARM
- VI. "JUST LIKE OLD TIMES"
- VII. STROUT AND MAXWELL'S GROCERY
- VIII. UNCLE IKE AND OTHERS
- IX. A "STORY" SERMON
- X. THE RAISED CHECK
- XL. THE WRECK OF THE _ALTONIA_
- XII. FERNBOROUGH HALL
- XIII. "HORNABY HOOK"
- XIV. AN AMERICAN HEIRESS
- XV. AN ELOPEMENT
- XVI. YOUNG QUINCY
- XVII. HIS FATHER'S FRIENDS
- XVIII. AN OLD STRIFE RENEWED
- XIX. BOYHOOD TO MANHOOD
- XX. MARY DANA
- XXI. AT HARVARD
- XXII. ALICE'S DREAM
- XXIII. "BY THE BEAUTIFUL BLUE DANUBE"
- XXIV. "WE THREE"
- XXV. A PERIOD OF TWENTY-THREE YEARS
- XXVI. "CATESSA"
- XXVII. O. STROUT. FINE GROCIERIES
- XXVIII. THE HOME COMING
- XXIX. THE FINAL CONFLICT
- XXX. TOM, JACK AND NED
- XXXI. THE GREAT ISBURN RUBY
- XXXII. "IT WAS SO SUDDEN"

The Further Adventures of Quincy Adams Sawyer and Mason's Corner
Folks

CHAPTER I

THE GOVERNOR'S SPEECH

When the applause had subsided, Governor Sawyer began to speak.

"My Friends and Fellow Citizens: When I stood before the representatives chosen by the people, and an audience composed of the most eminent men and women in the State, and took the oath to support the constitution of my native State and that of my country, my heart was filled with what I deemed an honest pride. My fellow citizens had chosen me to fill the most exalted position in their power to bestow, and when the Secretary of the Commonwealth uttered the well-known words which your toastmaster has just repeated--God save the Commonwealth of Massachusetts--I felt in every fibre of my body that I would be true to my oath and to the people who had shown their confidence in me.

"But the satisfaction I felt on that occasion was no greater than that which I experience to-night. I came among you entirely unknown. I have heard that some wondered whether I was a city swell, what my business was, what led me to choose your town for a vacation, and how long that vacation was to be, especially as I came in the winter when country life is popularly, but erroneously, supposed to be dull.

"By some I was welcomed,--others--I don't blame them--refused to extend to me the hand of fellowship. But, I liked some of your people so well--and one in particular"--all eyes were turned towards his wife, who bore the scrutiny bravely--"that I determined to stay--and I did."

Hiram Maxwell could not forget past events in which he had figured prominently and cried, "Three cheers for Quincy Adams Sawyer," which were given with a will, and accompanied by many expressions of approval in the shape of clapping of hands, pounding of canes, and stamping of thick-soled boots. The Governor continued his remarks.

"I staid so long that I might have become a voter. I did not, but besides my native city of Boston, I shall always render my allegiance to this town, which turned the current of my life into such happy channels.

"I will not weary you with a long speech."

Cries of "Go on," "We can stand it," came from all parts of the hall, and Mrs. Hawkins said to Olive Green, "He's a beautiful speaker. I could listen to him all night if it wa'n't for gettin' breakfast for my boarders. My bread didn't ris worth a cent, and I've got to git up airly and make biscuits."

His Excellency went on, "I want you to make Fernborough, the Mason's Corner of five years ago, a beautiful town--more beautiful than it is now." Make good, wide roads, don't call them streets, and have wide tires on your wagons to preserve them. Plant trees both for grateful shade and natural beauty. Support your Village Improvement Society by suggestions and contributions. Attend town meeting regularly, be

economical but not stingy in your appropriations, pay good salaries and wages for honest service. Be partisans if you wish, in State and National elections, but in choosing your town servants, get the best men regardless of politics.

"Support and constantly aim to elevate the standard of education in your schools, and remember that the mother and the teacher are the makers of those who are to rule in the future.

"Do these things, and you will make Fernborough a worthy member of that galaxy of communities which represents the civic virtues and possibilities in the highest degree--our New England towns, in which the government is by the people, of the people, and for the people, and may God grant that these bulwarks of our freedom may ever be preserved."

It was decided by the committee to have a reception in the Selectmen's room. It was conveniently arranged for such a purpose, having a door at either end, besides the double one near the middle. At the request of Selectman and Toastmaster Strout, the Governor and his wife and the Countess of Sussex, formerly Lindy Putnam, stood in line to greet the citizens of Fernborough.

First came Benoni Hill, who had increased in rotundity since selling his grocery store and giving up an active life.

"How much is flour a barrel?" asked Quincy as he shook hands with him.

"When I kept the store myself everything I wanted I got at wholesale, but now your partners charge me full price."

"That's right," said Quincy. "You got a good price for the store, and now we're trying to get some of it back," and he laughed heartily as he extended his hand to young Samuel Hill. His wife, the former Miss Tilly James, was with him.

"I am pleased to meet a lion-tamer," said Tilly.

"I never saw a live one," said Quincy, somewhat puzzled by the remark.

"Oh, yes, you have. Our local lion, Obadiah Strout, is as tame as a dove, and we owe it to you."

"If I remember aright, a certain Miss Tilly James aided me when I gave the first lesson."

"Oh! you mean the time you whistled 'Listen to the Mocking Bird.' I wish you had repeated it to-night."

Cobb's Twins, William and James, with their wives, were next in line.

"How's farming?" asked Quincy.

"Bill and I," said James, "spend most of our time on our own places, but we help 'Zeke and Hiram out on their hayin' an' potato diggin'."

"Samantha," said Quincy, addressing Mrs. James Cobb, "do you remember the first time I came to see Miss Putnam?"

"Oh, yes, I'd heard about you goin' round with Huldy Mason. Didn't I laugh when I showed you into Aunt Heppy's room? She did the hearin' for both of 'em, for you remember her husband, Silas, was as deaf as a stone post."

"Mrs. Putnam found out all about me before I got away. I shall never forget what she told me about her husband sitting on the ridge pole of the barn, blowing his horn, and waiting for Gabriel to come for him."

As Robert Wood came up, Quincy stepped from the line to greet him.

"Your hand ain't quite as hard as it was five years ago," said Robert.

"No, I'm out of practice. You could handle me now."

"It cost me two dollars to get my watch fixed," said Robert, irrelevantly.

"I was on time in that affair," said Quincy, conscious, when too late, that he had wasted a pun on an obtuse individual. "Are you still carpentering?"

"Yes. Lots of new houses going up, and Ben Bates and me have all we can handle. Here, Ben, come here. The Governor's askin' 'bout you."

Benjamin Bates was rather diffident, and had been holding back, but at Bob's invitation came forward.

"How d'ye do, Governor?" was his salutation. Diffidence when forced to action often verges on forwardness.

"Glad to meet you again," said Quincy. "Robert says they keep you busy."

"Yes, we don't have so many resting spells now they use donkey engines as we did when Pat or Mike had to climb the ladder."

"The march of improvement forces us all into line," said Quincy as he greeted Miss Seraphina Cotton.

"Teaching school, now, Miss Cotton?"

"No, your Excellency, I am fortunately relieved from what became,

near the end of my long years of service, an intolerable drudgery. Teaching American children to talk English is one thing, but teaching French Canadians, Poles, Germans, Russians, Italians, and Greeks was quite a different proposition."

"And yet it is a most important work," said Quincy--"making good citizens from these various nationalities. America, to-day, is like a large garden, with a great variety of flowers from foreign stalks."

Miss Cotton smiled somewhat satirically. "I'm afraid, your Excellency, if you'd ever been a school teacher, you'd have found many weeds in the garden."

"But how did you gain your freedom?" asked Quincy. "Did they pension you?"

"Oh, no. An uncle died out West and left me enough with which to buy an annuity. I board with the Reverend Mr. Howe. You remember him?"

"Why, certainly, I do. And here's his son, Emmanuel--have I got the name right?"

"Yes, Governor, just right as to sound. I spell it with an 'E' and two M's," said young Mr. Howe, as Miss Cotton moved on to tell of her good fortune to Alice and Linda.

"How's your father, now? Does he preach every Sunday?"

"Reg'lar as clock work. Of course I couldn't tell everybody, but I reckon he's using some old sermons that he wrote forty years ago, but the young ones never heard them, and the old ones have forgotten." Quincy laughed. Ministers' sons are seldom appalled by worldly ways and, quite often, adopt them.

"This is Arthur Scates," said Mr. Strout, as he presented a young man with sunken cheeks, hollow eyes, and an emaciated body. "He ain't enjoyin' the best of health."

"Ah, I remember," said Quincy. "You are the young man who was to sing at the concert when I first came here. I took your place, and that act turned out to be the most important one in my life. I owe much of my present happiness to you. What is your trouble?"

"My lungs are affected. I have lost my voice and cannot sing. I had counted on becoming an opera singer."

"Why do you not go to one of the out-door hospitals for treatment?"

The young man's face flushed, and he remained silent.

"Pardon me," said Quincy. "I understand. Come to Boston next week, to the State House, and I will see that you have the best of treatment."

"Wall, Mr. Sawyer, it does one's eyes good to set 'em on you again. This is Olive Green,--you remember her sister Betsey worked for me when you was one of my boarders." The woman's voice was loud and strident, and filled the room.

"Mrs. Hawkins, I shall never forget you and Miss Betsey Green, and how you both tried to make my stay with you a pleasant one."

"You've put on consid'rabable flesh since I saw yer last. Guess you've been taking your meals reg'lar, which you never did when you lived with me. But your market's made now, and that makes the difference. They say folks in love have poor appetites." She laughed loudly, and stopped only when Olive put a restraining hand on her arm. "I hope Alice is a good cook, but she never had much chance to learn."

Quincy thought it was time to change the subject. "How's Mr. Hawkins?"

"I tell him he's just as lazy as ever. He's kalkerlatin' on getting three good broods of chickens. He's gone on chickens. He wanted to come tonight, but we've lots of boarders, and they're allus wantin' ice water or somethin' else, and so I told him he'd got to stay to home. You'll have plenty of time to see him to-morrer."

Many others greeted the Governor and his right hand felt the effect of so many hearty grips, some of them of the horny-handed variety.

The Cottonton Brass Band was now stationed in the hall, and a short concert closed the evening's entertainment, which was allowed, by all, to be the most high-toned affair ever given in the town.

As Quincy laid his head upon his pillow that night, his mind reverted to his first arrival at Mason's Corner, and the events that had taken place since.

"Alice, five years ago, could your wildest imagination have conjured up such an evening as this?"

"No, Quincy. What has taken place in our lives is truly wonderful. My daily prayer is that these happy days may last."

CHAPTER II

A DAY WITH THE GOVERNOR

Governor Sawyer sat in the Executive Chamber at the State House. It was eleven o'clock on the morning following the festivities at Fernborough. Quincy and Alice had staid over night at the Hawkins' House, and Ezekiel in the morning urged them strongly to wait a day

and see what great improvements he had made on the old farm which had been so neglected during the last years of Mrs. Putnam's life. But Quincy said his presence in Boston was imperative, that certain matters required his attention, and so the earliest train brought him and his wife to the city. Quincy left the carriage under the arch at the State House.

Alice was driven to the well-known house on Mount Vernon Street, in which Aunt Ella had lived so long, but which had lost much of its cheerfulness, and all of its Bohemianism since that lady had gone to England and become Lady Fernborough.

The Executive Chamber was a large room, and simply furnished with a flat top desk of wine-red mahogany, a bookcase, and a few chairs. A door to the left led to the office of the private secretary; the one to the right to a short and narrow corridor across which was the door of the Council Chamber--a room occupied by that last link between democratic and aristocratic government. It must not be inferred that the members of the Council are aristocrats--far from it, but with the lieutenant-governor they form a "house of lords" which may or may not agree with the policies of the chief magistrate. They can aid him greatly, or they can "clip his wings" and materially curb his freedom of action. The Council is a relic of the old provincial and colonial days, its inherited aristocratic body clothed in democratic garments. As its duties could be performed by the Senate without loss of dignity, and with pecuniary saving, its retention as a part of the body politic is due to the "let well enough alone" policy of the American citizen which has supplanted the militant, progressive democracy of his forefathers.

At the end of the short corridor was the office of the Executive Secretary and his stenographer from which, through an opening hung with portières, one passed into the general reception room where the faithful messenger stood guard, authorized to learn the business of each new-comer.

The private secretary had opened the mail and had assorted it as "ordinary," "important," and "most important." For an hour the Governor dictated steadily, and it would take several hours' clicking of the typewriter before the letters and documents were ready for his signature.

The waiting-room was now filled with persons desiring audience with his Excellency. A well-known city lawyer and ward politician was the first to enter.

"Good-morning, Guv'nor."

The Governor arose, came forward, and extended his hand. "Good-morning, Mr. Nutting."

"Are you going to send in the names of the Industrial Expansion Committee to-day?"

"I have intended to do so."

"Well, I want to say a good word for Mr. Collingwood. He is promoting a company to develop water power on the Upper Connecticut above Holyoke. He is a client of mine, and I can vouch for his business ability and his desire to improve and increase our manufacturing facilities."

The Governor was silent for a time. He was busily thinking. No doubt this Mr. Collingwood was concerned financially, indirectly if not directly, in the proposed company he was promoting, and perhaps Mr. Nutting himself would profit far beyond his normal legal fee if Mr. Collingwood was named on the commission. Mr. Nutting noticed the delay of his Excellency in replying.

"It will be all right if you send his name in. There will be no doubt of his confirmation."

Again the Governor thought. The four wheels of the executive coach were in good order, but, apparently, the fifth wheel had been put in condition for use, if it became necessary.

"Here are Mr. Collingwood's endorsements," said Mr. Nutting, as he placed a large packet of papers on the governor's desk.

"Thank you, Mr. Nutting. I will give them consideration."

Mr. Nutting withdrew, and the lieutenant-governor, who had arrived late, was given precedence over the others in the reception room. After the customary salutations, the lieutenant-governor seated himself in the governor's chair, which Quincy had temporarily vacated, and lighted a cigar.

"Are you going to send in Venton's name?"

"He is inexperienced."

"I know it, but he'll learn. If, following precedent, I become your successor, he will be of great help to me in certain lines."

There was a slight frown on the governor's face. "Mr. Williams, the present head of the department, has held it for many years, is a most efficient man, and I have heard no complaints." "I know that," said his Honour, David Evans, "but he's getting old, and rotation in office is one of the principles of our Bill of Rights."

"I am well aware of that," said the governor, "but retention in office for good and efficient service is one of the principles of our civil service law."

Mr. Evans arose and flicked the ashes from his cigar upon the rich carpet which covered the floor.

"Am I to understand then that you will renominate Williams? Let me say now that there is strong opposition to him in the Council and he may fail of confirmation. Will you send Venton's name in then?"

"I think I should send Mr. Williams' name in again."

"But, suppose he is turned down the second time?" asked Mr. Evans.

"I think I should continue sending in his name until good and sufficient reasons were given for his rejection. This is not a voting contest between two nominees. I am convinced Mr. Williams is the best man for the place. Such being my opinion, to withdraw his name, would be a self-stultification, and, to speak plainly,"--and his jaw was firmly set,"--an acknowledgment that the Council is a stronger arm of the government than the Chief Executive."

Mr. Evans was evidently indignant. "Well, Mr. Venton is backed by men who contribute heartily for campaign expenses. If you can get along without their aid this fall have your man Williams," and Mr. Evans strode from the room with a curt "Good-morning."

The private secretary laid some papers on the governor's desk. The first one that he examined conferred certain valuable privileges, in perpetuity, upon a corporation without requiring any compensation for the franchise. The property thus alienated from public use had been paid for by the people's money. In response to a vigorous push on an electric button, the private secretary appeared.

"Send for Senator Downing. I must see him immediately."

His Excellency thought, "How can the people's so-called representatives give away the property of the people so indiscriminately? It would not do to mention it, without proof, but I am convinced that all such public robberies are for private gain. Ah, good-morning, Senator."

Senator Downing was a short, heavily-built man, with dark hair, black eyes, and a jaw and chin indicative of bull-dog pertinacity.

"In your bill, Senate 513, I notice that the railroad Company is not called upon to pay for the great privilege conferred."

"Why should they? It simply gives them a quick connection with tide-water, and reduced transportation charges means lower prices."

"How will prices be regulated?" was the Governor's query.

"As they always have been," replied the Senator brusquely. "Supply and demand--"

"And by combinations called trusts," added the Governor. "Cannot some provision be made by which the Company will pay a yearly rental? It

will reduce the burden of taxation just so much."

"Perhaps if you recommend it, some attention will be given it, but I should not care to prejudice my political standing by endorsing such an amendment."

"I will consider the question carefully," said Quincy, wearily, as he laid down the bill, and Senator Downing departed.

The next bill was what was called "a labour measure." It gave members of trade unions a right demanded by them, called "peaceful picketing;" in other words, during a strike, the right to use argument, persuasion, in fact any rightful inducement to keep a non-union man from working for the "struck" firm or corporation. The bill had been passed by a majority of 48 in the House, and by the narrow margin of one vote in the Senate. A tie had been expected when the President of the Senate, who was a prominent manufacturer was counted upon to kill the bill. If the Governor vetoed it, the Senate would probably sustain the veto, throwing the greater responsibility upon him, each member voting against the bill sheltering himself behind the veto. Thus do partisans play politics with the head of their party. While he was reading the bill the lieutenant-governor was ushered in again.

"Downing has been talking with me about his bill. He says you are going to veto it."

"I did not say so. I asked him his reasons for turning over public property for private use and gain, and he did not seem well-prepared to answer me."

Mr. Evans replied, "The best reason, to my mind is, that the heaviest tax payers, members of our party, are all in favour of the bill."

"Are they numerous enough to elect a governor who will do their bidding?"

"Perhaps not, but their money is powerful enough to do it"--he paused--"if it becomes necessary."

The Governor arose, and Mr. Evans, influenced by the action, did the same. The two men faced each other.

"Mr. Evans," and the Governor seemed to increase in stature, "I fully understand your last remark--if it becomes necessary. You shall have an open field. I prize the great honour that has been conferred upon me by placing me here, but I must confess I dislike the duties, circumscribed as they are by personal and political influences. I can understand, now, why a ruler wishes to be an autocrat. It is the only way in which he can make his personality a part of his body. I shall not be a candidate for re-election this autumn. I wish my personal freedom of action, and I prize it more than fame or power."

"May I mention your decision to the leaders of the party?"

"If you so desire. From this moment I am to be untrammelled except by my official oath."

Mr. Evans took his leave, evidently pleased with a part of what he had heard, and in a short time was closeted with some leading politicians in a private room of a prominent hotel.

The Governor resumed his reading of the labour bill, but was aroused from his contemplation of its provisions by the entrance of Mr. Amos Acton. Mr. Acton was secretary of a manufacturer's association. He was tall and spare. His hair was sandy in hue, and his mouth twitched nervously.

"Your Excellency, I came to see you about that picketing bill. If it becomes a law our manufacturers will be driven from the State. They are now seriously handicapped by the vigorous provisions of existing laws. I trust your Excellency will not add to our present burdens."

"I have read the bill, Mr. Acton. It seems conservative, with full provision for the protection of life and property."

"That's not the question. When Union men strike we must have the Non-Union men to fill their places; but this bill says the Non-Union man shan't work."

"It says the Union man may persuade him, peacefully, not to work."

"We all know what that means. If he does work, he will be called a 'scab' and his family will be ostracized in every possible way."

"It is hard to draw the line," said the governor. "You say, or imply, that every man has a right to work for whoever will employ him. Granted. But do you always give him work when he wants it? Do you pay him what he asks, or do you not fix the rate of wage? You must realize the fact that collective bargaining has superseded dealing with the individual."

"Some of us do not allow that," said Mr. Acton.

"I know it, and that causes the difficulty. Your relations with your employees should be based upon trade agreements, legalized and strongly adhered to by both sides."

"I have just come from a meeting of leading manufacturers," said Mr. Acton, "and they wished me to express to you their urgent request, I may say solicitation, that you will veto this bill."

After Mr. Acton's departure, Quincy rang for his secretary, to whom he delivered the papers containing his official decisions.

Mr. Williams was renominated for the position that he had so long and

so ably filled.

As members of "The Industrial Expansion Commission" nine manufacturers were named, one for each of the leading industries of the State, chosen independent of known or presumed political affiliations; Mr. Collingwood's name was not among them.

A vigorous veto of the bill giving a private corporation control of public property was sent to the Senate.

The "peaceful picketing" bill was signed.

The door opened, and a pretty face looked in.

"Come in, Maude--I've just finished." As the secretary withdrew, keeping his eyes fixed on the governor's youngest sister, she advanced slowly into the room. The door closed automatically and Maude tip-toed to her brother's side, returning his welcoming kiss.

"What's his name?" she asked, pointing towards the self-closing door.

"My secretary? Harry Merry," said Quincy, "but the press boys all call him Sober Harry."

"I think he's just splendid," said the impulsive Maude--"such beautiful eyes! But that isn't what I came for. I went up to your house and just brought Alice down to ours, and she told me all about the fine time you had and your speech. Will it be printed?"

"Mr. Sylvester Chisholm, editor of the Fernborough Gazette was there and a faithful transcript of my feeble remarks will, no doubt, appear in his paper."

"Feeble!" said Maude contemptuously. "Have you been doing feeble things since you came back?"

"No, Maude, I have done some very strenuous things, and I shall be glad to get home to my family."

Maude repeated, seriously,

"To make a happy fireside clime
For weans and wife
Is the true pathos, and sublime,
Of human life.

"But you are not going home," she continued,--"you are invited to dinner with your respected pa and ma and your two young--"

"And beautiful sisters," added Quincy with a laugh. "I'll come, but you must play the latest popular songs for me, and Alice will sing 'Sweet, Sweet Home,' and perhaps I can forget the cares of State--until to-morrow, anyway."

Maude flounced out of the door tossing a kiss from the tips of her fingers, to the astonishment of Sober Harry who had just entered, and who wished, from the bottom of his heart, that the flying salutation had been for him.

CHAPTER III

A VACATION AT FERNBOROUGH

The Hon. Nathaniel Adams Sawyer did not dine at home that evening. Quincy's mother said that he had gone to Salem but would return later. After dinner the little company of five repaired to the parlour. Maude sang negro melodies despite the protests of her mother, and her sister Florence's assertion that they were only sung at cheap variety shows.

"How do you know that?" cried Maude. "Did Reginald tell you?"

"Who is Reginald?" asked Quincy.

"Oh," said Maude, tossing her head, "he's Florence's latest. She met him night before last--"

"Maude!" Her sister's voice was full of angry protest. "Don't say another word."

"Such matters," said her mother mildly, "are not suitable subjects for general conversation. There is a privacy about them which should be respected."

"We'll leave Florence out of it, then," said Maude. "I met him at Mrs. Dulton's reception. His name is Capt. Reginald Hornaby, and he's the fourth son of Sir Wilfred Hornaby, of Hornaby Hook, Hornaby, England--don't you know," and she winked spitefully at Florence.

"He told me all that himself," she continued, "so I know it must be so. Won't it be nice to have a place in England where we can make ourselves at home?"

"Aunt Ella will be glad to see you at any time," remarked Quincy.

"Why don't you go back with her? She'd be delighted."

"I would but for one thing," replied Maude. "I'm afraid I might fall in love with an Englishman, and one title in the family is enough."

Alice interposed: "Aunt Ella has an English husband with a title."

"Yes," said Maude, "but he has his title, while Reggie is four

blocks away from the fire."

"You're as big a tease as ever," and Quincy drew his favourite sister towards him. "Don't plague Flossie any more. Think of your possible fate. You may marry a Jap."

"I know a lovely little Jap, now. His name is Hioshato Konuka. Oh, Alice, won't you stay all night? When are you going on your vacation, Quincy?"

"In about ten days, if the legislature is prorogued by that time."

"Where are you going?" asked his mother.

"Alice wishes to go to Fernborough for a week or two, and then we shall go to Nantucket."

"Will the Earl and Sir Stuart pay us a visit?" was the next question.

"I invited them in your name, mother, but Linda and Aunt Ella were anxious to get back to their yacht at Nantucket. They will sail from there to New York and take the steamer home next week."

"Is the Countess of Sussex' sister-in-law, the Lady Elfrida, married yet?" asked Florence.

"I understand she is engaged," Quincy replied.

Maude was incorrigible. "Reggie told me she was practising deep breathing, owing to the length of the Episcopal marriage service."

"Maude," said her mother sharply, "if you were not of age I should send you to bed."

"I'm going. Alice, while Quincy runs up to the house to say that you are not coming home, you come to my room. I've some pretty things to show you."

As Quincy walked up Walnut Street, he saw a bright light in Dr. Culver's window. He rang the bell, and the doctor himself came to the door.

"Is that you, Quincy? Come in."

"Paul, how are you?"

"Fine as silk. Business is good, but I'm doing my best to keep the undertakers out of a job. Have you read the evening papers?"

"I seldom do. I prefer to wait until morning." "The papers are rapping you hard for signing that picketing bill, but the labour men are delighted. You'll run ahead of your ticket sure next fall."

"I'm not going to run. One year is enough."

"Will Evans get the nomination? I won't vote for him. How are your wife's eyes?"

"All right. She has better vision, now, than I have. We owe you a great debt of gratitude for sending us to Dr. Tillotson."

"He's a wonder. He told me the other day that he is going to cure what is called split retina, which has never been done."

Quincy bethought himself of the message he had to deliver and made a hurried departure, first inviting the Doctor to dine with him the next day. On his return to the Beacon Street house, he found his father at home reading an evening paper.

"Quincy, I see that you vetoed that railroad bill."

"Yes, I did. I saw no reason why public property should be given to a private corporation without compensation."

"The public would be compensated indirectly. I am a large stockholder in the railroad, and, to speak plainly, I drew that bill myself. I met Senator Downing and he says the bill will be passed over your veto."

"I cannot help that, father. I did my duty as I saw it. If the bill becomes a law without my signature, I cannot be blamed for future developments."

The Hon. Nathaniel dropped the subject. "Quincy, I have purchased a house in the country and shall go there in a few days. Won't you and your wife pay us a short visit?"

"Certainly, we will. We are going to Fernborough for a few days and then will drop in on you, before we go to Nantucket."

By the look on his father's face Quincy knew that he was disappointed. The Hon. Nathaniel never liked "to play second fiddle." Quincy hastened to rectify his mistake. "We can put it the other way round, just as well. We'll come and see you before we go to Fernborough."

"That will please me better, but, of course, you must not do it if your wife objects."

"She will not object. She is upstairs, now, with Maude. Of course, the girls are going."

"Yes, and I have invited Captain Hornaby, a very fine young man. But, I must retire. I have a case in court to-morrow."

Quincy found both commendation and criticism in the morning papers.

His face wore its usual genial expression as he entered the elevator, and Robert's "good morning" was particularly cheerful.

The Governor's first caller was Mr. Acton.

"You see," he began, "that your approval of the picketing bill is receiving universal condemnation."

"Hardly," was the reply. "Two papers and the Governor sustain it and the labour press and unions are yet to be heard from."

"We shall endeavour to secure a repeal of the bill next year. In the meantime, we shall carry the matter to the courts."

"May the cause of truth and justice prevail in the end" was Quincy's comment, and Mr. Acton took his departure in an uncomfortable state of mind.

The day wore away. At three o'clock a vote was taken in the Senate and the so-called Downing bill was passed over the veto. Not so, in the House, for one newspaper, read by nearly all the working men, had so strongly pointed out the nature of the "grab" proposed by the bill, that the State House was besieged by its opponents, and the veto was sustained by a narrow margin.

About five o'clock, Mr. Evans and Senator Downing were dining in a private room at a hotel. "So, the Governor won't run again," said the Senator.

"He so informed me yesterday. He may change his mind."

"You're not satisfied with things as they are," remarked the Senator.

"No," replied the lieutenant-governor, "I'm disgusted with the Williams matter. When I'm governor, I'll request his resignation."

"And when you're governor, we'll put my bill through. Do you know the Governor's father is one of our heaviest stockholders? We'll have our way yet."

Within a week the legislature was prorogued. The House had a mock session, during which partisanship, and private victories and defeats were forgotten, for the time at least, and the fun was jolly and hearty.

Ben Ropes, the funny man of the House, but a member of the minority, convulsed all by announcing his candidacy for the governorship, with the understanding that no money was to be spent, no speakers engaged, the question to be settled by joint debates between the opposing candidates. Every member of the House arose, and amid wild cheers, pledged him their support.

The Hon. Nathaniel Adams Sawyer's estate at Redford comprised some

eighty acres. Within five minutes' walk of the house was a sheet of water covering fully fifty acres known as Simmons' Pond. On the farther side of the pond were a few cottages and near them a tent indicating the presence of a camping party.

"Next year," said the Hon. Nathaniel to Quincy as they stood on the shore of the pond, "I am going to buy some twenty acres on the other side of the pond. Then I shall own all the land surrounding it, and my estate will be worthy of the name which I have given it--Wideview--for nobody's else property will obstruct my view in any direction. I shall name this," and he pointed to the pond, "Florence Lake after my eldest daughter. What do you think of Captain Hornaby?"

Quincy hesitated--"He's a typical Englishman--healthy, hearty, but with that English conceit that always grates on my nerves."

"Are we Americans free from it?" his father asked. "To my mind, conceit is often but the indication of self-conscious power. Its possessors never acknowledge defeat I have always had that feeling in my law practice."

Quincy changed the subject, "What have you in the boat house?"

"Canoes--three canoes. I have ordered a large row-boat but it is not ready yet. When I own the 'lake' and the land beyond, my residence will stand in the centre of my estate. I shall retire from practice in a few years, and spend my last days here. We all have to go back to the soil and I am going to make my progress gradual."

"Won't you find it rather dull here after so long an active life in the city?"

"Not dull, but quiet," was the dignified response. "I shall pass my time surveying the beauties of Nature to which, to my discredit, I have been so long oblivious; then, I shall commune with the great minds in literature, and read the latest law reports."

Quincy wondered whether Nature, literature, or law would be his father's most appreciated relaxation, but inclined to the latter.

The next morning Maude exclaimed: "Let's have some fun. What shall we do?"

"There are three canoes in the boat house," said Quincy, "why not a row on the pond?"

"Fine!" cried Maude. "Quincy, you are a man of ideas."

Captain Hornaby had asked Florence to go with him and she had willingly consented. This emboldened Harry Merry, who had come down from the State House with the Governor's correspondence, and he, rather bashfully, requested Maude's company in the third canoe.

"Can you swim?" she asked.

"I learned when a boy," said Harry.

"All right. I don't believe the style has changed much since then. I wouldn't go with you unless you could swim. It would be too great a responsibility."

Harry thought to himself that he would be willing to swim ashore with such a "responsibility" in his arms.

Maude turned to the Captain: "Can you swim, Captain Hornaby?"

"Of course, Miss Maude. We Englishmen are all sea dogs, don't you know?"

"But Englishmen are drowned sometimes," said Maude. "How about Admiral Kempenfelt and the Royal George? See Fourth Class Reader for full particulars in verse."

The three couples were soon afloat--Quincy and Alice, Captain Hornaby and Florence, Harry and Maude.

"Let's have a race," cried Maude. "To that big white rock down there," and she pointed to the farther end of the pond. Harry took the lead with short, swift strokes, but the long, steady paddling of Captain Hornaby gained on him steadily, and to Maude's disgust the Captain reached the rock first, Harry being a close second, and Quincy a late third.

Maude was excited. "Let's race back to the boat house. A prize for the first one who reaches it."

"What will be the prize?" asked the Captain.

Maude saw that Harry needed encouragement.

"I haven't anything with me but kisses and only one of them to spare."

Harry shut his teeth with a snap. He was going to win that race.

As they were nearing the boat house Harry was in the lead, the Captain close behind, with Quincy following leisurely. This was a young people's race--married men barred. For some unexplainable reason Captain Hornaby tried to cross Harry's bow. The project was ill-timed and unsuccessful. Harry had just made a spurt and his canoe went forward so fast that the Captain's boat, instead of clearing his, struck it full in the side and Harry and Maude were thrown into the water. Florence, who really loved her sister despite their many quarrels, gave a loud scream and stood up in the boat. Her action was fatal to its equilibrium, and the Captain and she were soon in the water's embrace.

The accident occurred about two hundred feet from the shore where the water was deep. Captain Hornaby grasped Florence and struck out for the boat house float. She had fainted and did not impede him by struggling.

Harry had essayed to bear Maude ashore, but she broke away from him and swam vigorously towards land, Harry in pursuit.

"Don't worry, Alice," said Quincy. "They are not in danger."

"But, Quincy, suppose it had been our boat." "If it had been," said he, "you would be as safe in my arms as Florence is in those of the Captain, providing you did not struggle."

Harry exerted his full strength and skill to overtake Maude, but she, flushed with the excitement, her thin costume clinging close to her form, reached the bank some twenty feet ahead of him.

"I had to do it," she cried, "and I suppose I must deliver the prize by kissing myself."

Then her exuberant nature gave way, and she sank helpless to the ground. Harry did not envy the Captain who was carrying Florence in his arms, for was not Maude in his?

In the evening as they sat upon the veranda watching the dying glories of the sun, Quincy said to Maude, "Why didn't you let Harry bring you ashore?"

"The idea of it," she exclaimed. "And be under obligations to him-- not on your life. Think of poor Florence. If that Captain asks her to marry him she must accept because he saved her life."

Later, when the sun had set, and the moonbeams silvered the surface of the pond, Harry mustered up courage to ask Maude what she meant when she said it was too great a responsibility to go out canoeing with a man who couldn't swim.

"Why, I meant if you couldn't swim it might be a great job for me to get you ashore. I knew I could take care of myself all right."

At the other end of the veranda the Hon. Nathaniel and Captain Hornaby were engaged in conversation. The Captain was not asking the Hon. Nathaniel for the hand of his daughter Florence but, instead, for a loan, giving as his reason that when he threw off his coat his letters of credit to the value of five hundred pounds went to the bottom of the pond.

"I shall have to write home to my brother, the Earl, for other letters, and it will take some time for them to reach me."

[Illustration: "IF YOU WILL GIVE ME YOUR NOTE AT THIRTY DAYS I WILL

LET YOU HAVE THE FIVE HUNDRED."}]

"You are at liberty to remain here until you receive word," said the cautious Hon. Nathaniel.

"I appreciate your great kindness," said the Captain, "but I must visit New York and Chicago at an early day."

"How much will supply your present need?" asked the lawyer.

"I had expected my trip would cost me at least five hundred dollars."

"If you will give me your note at thirty days I will let you have the five hundred. I will bring it down to-morrow night."

On the second day following, the Captain took an apparently very reluctant departure.

A week later Quincy and Alice were in Boston making preparations for their trip to Fernborough.

"I am going to buy the tickets this morning, Alice--we must have seats in a parlour car. How shall we go--to Cottonton or Eastborough Centre?"

"To Eastborough surely," said Alice. "We will drive over the old road. Do you remember the day that you took me to see Aunt Heppy Putnam after her husband died?"

"Alice, every day I passed at Mason's Corner near you was like Heaven to me, and, now, for a week or more I mean to live in Paradise again. What a joy it will be to see the old scenes and faces, hear the familiar voices, and remember the happy days we have had there."

"I'm afraid, Quincy, some of the charm has departed. Things have changed, and, in spite of our resolves, we change with them."

When they alighted at Eastborough Centre, Ellis Smith stood there with his carriage.

"How do you do, Ellis, and how's your brother Abbott? Will you take us to the Hawkins House?" said Quincy. Turning to his wife, he added, "Mrs. Rawkins is a good cook--her rooms are large and clean. We can go a visiting during the day and have quiet times by ourselves when we wish." His wife nodded her acquiescence with the plan proposed.

"Ellis, can you handle those two big trunks alone?"

"Yes, Guv'nor. I'm a leetle bit heavier built than Abbott."

Quincy drew Alice's attention to the Eagle Hotel.

"There's where we hatched the plot that downed Mr. Obadiah Strout,

when he was an enemy of mine. Say, Ellis, drive up by the Poor House, through the Willows, and then back down the Centre Road to Mason Street. That will carry us by some of the old landmarks."

As they passed the Poor House they saw "pussy" Mr. Waters, sitting on the piazza and Sam standing in the barn doorway.

"There's where my Uncle James died," said Quincy. "Did I ever tell you, Alice, that he left some money and it went to found the Sawyer Public Library? He made me promise not to tell that he left any, and it has always troubled me to receive a credit that really was not my due."

"But you could have kept the money, couldn't you?"

"Oh, yes. He gave it to me outright."

"Then I think you are entitled to full credit for the good use you made of it."

"Looking at it that way, perhaps you are right, Alice. Here are the Willows."

"What a lonely place."

"You didn't think so, Alice, when we used to drive through here."

"I was blind then and couldn't see except with your eyes. You didn't say it was lonesome."

"How could I say so, when I was with you?"

Alice squeezed his hand lovingly.

As they turned into Mason Street, Quincy exclaimed: "There's where Uncle Ike's chicken coop stood until he set it on fire."

"Did he set it on fire?" cried Alice.

"Now I've let out another promised secret. Can you see 'Zeke's house ahead?"

"Yes, how inviting the old place looks. I'm glad Hiram Maxwell has it, for we can sit in the old parlour and sing duets as we used to."

"Now we're going up Obed's Hill," said Quincy. "Deacon Mason's house looks as neat as ever."

"Do you remember when Huldah Mason broke her arm, Quincy?"

"Do not remind me of that, Alice. I was never in love with her, but no one could help liking her. There's the grocery store in which I am a silent partner"--he paused a moment--"and here we are at the

Hawkins House."

As Ellis Smith reined up, the front door was opened and Mrs. Hawkins came out to meet her guests. "I got your letter, an' I know'd it was you. How be ye both? Seems like old times. Come right in the parlour. I've got the curtains down so as to keep it cool," and the delighted woman led the way into the house. In the hallway, she screamed, "Jonas! Jonas! Hurry up and pick those chickens. Guv'nor Sawyer and Alice are here."

CHAPTER IV

THE HAWKINS HOUSE

The converting of Mrs. Hawkins' boarding house into a hotel had been due to two causes: First, the thrift and economy of the lady herself, which had enabled her to put by a good sum in the bank. This she expended in building an ell with extra sleeping rooms, painting the structure cream colour with brown trimmings, and replacing old furniture with that of modern make. This latter, she confessed within a year, was a great mistake, for the new chairs became rickety, the castors would not hold in the bed posts, the bureau drawers became unmanageable, and the rooms, as she expressed it, had a "second-hand" appearance. Then it was that the old mahogany furniture, that had been relegated to the attic, was brought down, furbished up, and restored to its original place. When Quincy entered the room which he had formerly occupied, it did not seem possible that five years had elapsed.

The second cause that had led Mrs. Hawkins to change the small and modest sign--"Rooms and Board"--which had been in the front window for years, for a large swinging sign over the front door--"Hawkins House"--having large gold letters on a blue ground--was the rapid growth of the town. Many new mills had been erected in the neighbouring city of Cottonton. The operatives being unable to obtain suitable accommodations in the city, had come to Fernborough to live, where they could have gardens, fresh air, and playgrounds for their children. Fernborough became to Cottonton what Methuen is to Lawrence. Mrs. Hawkins was democratic, but shirt-sleeves and Prince Albert coats did not look well together, so she had turned what had been her sitting room into a private dining room, and it was here that what she called her "star boarders" were served.

By the time Quincy and Alice had opened their trunks, and distributed the contents in the capacious closet and deep, roomy bureau drawers, the cheerful tones of the dinner bell were heard, and they descended to the private room.

They were its only occupants.

"I thought as how you might be hungry after so long a ride an' so I just hurried Jonas up so you could begin afore the crowd came in. I don't introduce folks now I run a hotel. If they gets acquainted it's their lookout not mine," and Mrs. Hawkins and Olive brought in the fare from the adjoining kitchen.

Such a meal for hungry people! Lamb broth, roast chicken, yeast biscuit, potatoes, string beans, cucumbers, lettuce, berry pie, blackberries, currants, frosted cake, with tea, coffee, or cocoa.

"What does she charge?" asked Alice in a whisper when they were alone.

"A dollar a day for room and board--three square meals for board."

After dinner they went into the parlour, where Mrs. Hawkins joined them.

"I jest told Jonas he must help Olive wash the dishes to-day, for I hain't seen ye for so long I'm just dyin' to have a talk with yer, 'cause I s'pose you'll eat and run while yer here, you know so many folks."

"We haven't much to tell about ourselves," said Quincy. "What we want to know is how Fernborough folks are getting along."

"Wall, I s'pos'd you'd like to hear what's goin' on 'round here, an' p'raps I can tell yer some things that other folks mightn't mention, 'cause they'd forgot it, or p'raps wouldn't want to tell. Is that cheer comfortable, Alice? I s'pose I ought to say Misses Guv'nor Sawyer, but it don't come nat'ral, I've known yer so long."

"I shall always be Alice to my good friend Mrs. Hawkins and her daughter Mandy."

"Speakin' o' Mandy, you know she's got two little boys--twins, one named after Deacon Mason, and t'other after your husband's friend Obadiah Strout, ther perfesser--and she's got a little girl, nigh on ter two years old named Marthy after me--but they don't call her Marthy--it's allus Mattie. These new-fangled names fuss me all up. If Mary and Marthy were good enough for the Lord's friends, I don't know what he'd think to hear 'em called Mamie and Mattie.

"Speakin' o' names, there's my Jonas, which is same as Jonah I s'pose. Anyway it fits him to a T, for he's a reg'lar Jonah if there ever was one, which our minister, Mr. Gay, you'll meet him at dinner-time to-morrow, says he's doubtful about.

"If a whale swallowed my Jonas it couldn't keep him down, for he's just satirated with tobacco smoke--he says he has to puff it on the hens and chickens to kill the varmints, and I should think it would.

"Do you smoke, Mr. Sawyer?"

"Cigars, occasionally. I am not an habitual smoker."

"Well, old Mr. Trask told me as how pipe smoke wouldn't colour lace curtains same as cigars do. Now you jes' smoke all you want to up in your room an' I'll see if it washes out."

"Alice dislikes smoke, and I never use tobacco in her presence--so your lace curtains won't suffer."

"Wall, I'm kinder sorry for I wanted to see if Doctor Trask knew what he was talkin' about. When I'm rich I'll have three doctors and two on 'em will have to agree afore I'll take any of their pizen. I jes' remembered that the new minister, Mr. Gay, smokes. I'll put some lace curtains up in his room. You ain't seen him yet. He parts his hair in the middle. The gals are all crazy 'bout him. I like his preachin' putty well, but he don't use near as much brimstone as old Mr. Howe does."

"Is Mr. Howe's son going to be a clergyman?" Alice asked.

Mrs. Hawkins laughed raucously.

"The Lord save us, I guess not! Why Emmanuel has gone and married a play actress--and isn't she some? She rides a hoss just like a man does, and the way she jumps fences and rides hur-rah-ti-cut down the street would jes' make your hair stand on end. She's away now--I wish you could see her. Of course you're goin' over to the store."

"Why, certainly," said Quincy. "I'm a special partner, you know. I shall call on Mrs. Strout. You remember the party at Deacon Mason's, Alice--I danced with Miss Bessie Chisholm--"

Mrs. Hawkins couldn't wait, "Yes, an' she made the perfesser just the kind of wife he needed. She bosses the house... for I heard her tell him one day that if he didn't like her cookin' he might have his meals at the store--an' she goes to dances with her brother Sylvester. Some folks think she's a high-flyer--but I don't blame her seein' as how she has that old blowhard for a husband--which is true, if he is your pardner."

Alice asked if the Strouts had any children.

"Yes, they've got a little boy, an' he's a chip of the old block. His father brought him here one day and he pulled the cloth of'n that table there and broke a chiny vase that I paid fifty cents for, and his father never said a word about buyin' me another."

"I hope that Mr. Strout and Hiram get along together well," said Quincy.

"Hiram's a good feller. Mandy did well when she got him, but she has

you to thank for it, Mr. Sawyer. If you hadn't set him up in that grocery store I'm afraid he'd be chorin' now. You remember Mrs. Crowley? She jes' loves them children, but Mandy's afeerd she's going to lose her. She's got a beau--a feller named Dan Sweeney, and his hair is so red you could light a match by techin' it. He works for your brother 'Zeke. He's a good enuf feller, but he and Strout don't hitch horses. You see he was in the same regiment with the Perfesser an' he knows all about him, same as you found out, and Strout don't talk big afore him. The fact is, the Perfesser hain't many friends. There was Abner Stiles. They two used to be as thick as molasses, but since Strout wouldn't give him the job in the grocery that he'd promised him, Abner's gone back on him."

"Does Uncle Ike board with Mandy now?" Alice knew that he did, but wished Mrs. Hawkins' view of the strange doings of her uncle.

"Yes, he's there--goin' on eighty-two and chipper as a squirrel. He's got religion Mandy says, and so many kinds that she don't know which one he's got the most of."

Quincy looked at his watch. "Mrs. Hawkins, we're going up to Ezekiel's house. We shall stay to supper, but will get back before you lock up--ten o'clock, isn't it?"

"No such hours in a hotel. We're allus open till twelve, and sometimes all night--when it pays. It's a hard life, but you know what's goin' on an' that's considruble for a woman who's tied up in the house as I am."

CHAPTER V

'ZEKE PETTINGILL'S FARM

Quincy had intended to drive to his brother-in-law's house, but Alice preferred to walk as the distance was so short. The Hawkins House was on Mason Street. A short walk brought them to Mason Square. In plain view were the Town Hall and the Chessman Free Public Library.

"I always thought it was foolishness to name these streets after me," said Quincy, as they stood on the corner of Sawyer Street. "There's Adams Street back of the Town Hall and Quincy Street on the other side."

"I don't agree with you," said Alice. "I would rather have a street named after me than a monument erected to my memory."

At Putnam Square they turned to the left into Pettingill Street and soon reached her brother's house. Huldah saw them coming and ran down the path to meet them.

"Why, when did you come, and where are your things? You are surely going to stay with us."

"Our headquarters are at the Hawkins House," said Quincy. "We have been in town but a few hours and you have the first visit."

"I am so disappointed you aren't to be with us," and Huldah's face showed the feeling she had expressed.

"You won't be when I give you our reasons," Quincy replied. "Mrs. Putnam died in this house, and Alice has such a vivid recollection of her last day on earth--"

"I understand," said Huldah, "but you must come and see us every day."

"Where's Ezekiel?" asked Alice.

"Getting in his last load of hay--about sixty tons this year. We only had thirty a year ago."

"Where's my namesake--Quincy Adams Pettingill?"

"He goes every day to see his grandpa and grandma. Abner will be here with him soon."

When they reached the piazza, Quincy took a good view of the farm. What a contrast to the condition it had been in, when occupied by the Putnams! Then everything had been neglected--now garden, field, and orchard showed a high state of cultivation, and the house and outbuildings were in good repair and freshly painted. Inside, the careful attention of a competent housekeeper was apparent. Huldah Pettingill was a finer looking woman than Huldah Mason had been, but Quincy had never forgotten how pretty she looked the day she lay in bed with the plaster cast on her broken arm--the result of the accident for which he had taken the blame belonging to another.

They had just sat down in the little parlour when cries of "Mamma" were heard outside and four year old Quincy Adams Pettingill burst into the room followed closely by Abner Stiles.

"He don't mind me no more'n a woodchuck would," said Abner--then his eyes fell on Quincy, who rose to greet him.

"Why, if it ain't"--but words failed him as Quincy gave his hand a hearty grasp.

"This is the first time I ever shook hands with a guv'nor," said Abner. "I didn't know you was going to shake hands all round the night of the show an' I went home." He looked at his right hand, rubbed it softly with his left, and then remarked: "I sha'n't wash that hand for a couple o' days if I can help it."

His hearers laughed, for his words were accentuated by the old-time grin that had pleased Obadiah Strout on some occasions, but on others had raised his ire to an explosive point.

"Are father and mother at home?" asked Huldah.

"Yes, both on 'em. Susie Barker's been helpin' her to-day, and the Dekin's wife thinks o' keepin' her reg'lar."

"I'll have them come to supper," said Huldah. "Abner, hitch up the black mare into the low phaeton and bring them up here. Don't tell them who's here, but tell them that I say they must come."

"Well, I declare!" All looked up and saw Ezekiel standing in the doorway. He wore overalls and thick boots, his sleeves were rolled up, showing his brawny arms with muscles like whip-cords. His face was brown, but his beard was neatly trimmed, and his eyes bright. He was a picture of robust, healthy manhood, and showed what he was,--a hard-working, independent New England farmer. Alice sprang into his arms and received a resounding smack. One hand grasped Quincy's while the other encircled his dainty wife's waist, and he drew her towards him.

"You have a fine farm," said Quincy.

"About as good as they make them," Zeke replied. "I've a good market for all I can raise. Strout and Maxwell buy a great deal of garden truck, and I sell considerable to Mrs. Hawkins direct. What I have left we eat or give away."

Alice had taken young Quincy on her lap. He became communicative. "I've got a grandpa and grandma and Uncle Abner."

"Abner isn't your uncle," said Alice. "I'm your Aunt Alice, and that is your Uncle Quincy."

Ezekiel laughed. "You can't convince him but that Abner's his uncle. Abner comes after him every afternoon and takes him down to the Deacon's house and that gives Huldy a good chance to do my mending."

The sound of carriage wheels indicated new arrivals, and Huldah went to the door to meet her father and mother.

"Have you got callers?" asked Mrs. Mason. "I don't think I'll go in. I didn't dress up, but came just as I was."

"And I never saw you looking better," said Quincy, stepping into the entry to meet them.

"I'm glad to see you again, Mr. Sawyer," and the Deacon's grasp was a firm one. "I didn't get up to the Town Hall that night, for I didn't feel first-rate and Sophia didn't want to go alone, but Abner told me

what you did and said, and I reckon added a little on his own account."

Abner appeared in the doorway. "I've put up the mare, Mr. Pettingill. Want me for anything more, Dekin?"

"You can go home and help Susie," said Mrs. Mason.

When Abner had gone, the Deacon chuckled and said, "Nothing could please Abner better than to take supper with Susie and pass the evening in her company. He's more'n forty and she's only twenty, but such hitch-ups ain't uncommon nowadays."

"That is what they call a December and May marriage," remarked Alice.

"Not quite as bad as that," said the Deacon. "I should say about October and March."

It was a jolly company that sat down to a well-filled table that evening. Quincy's first coming to town, and his exciting experiences during his four months' residence at Mason's Corner, formed the principal topics of conversation, and Alice appreciated more fully than ever her husband's persistency, which had shown itself as strongly in doing good to others as it had in manifesting love for herself.

When they reached the Hawkins House Mrs. Hawkins was on the watch for them.

"There's a young man here to see you, Mr. Sawyer. He came on the train to Cottonton and my man Andrew brought him over. I told him you wouldn't be home till late and I sent him off to bed. Was that all right?"

"I can tell better," said Quincy, "when I find out who he is and what he wants."

"He said his name was Gerry or Ferry or something like that. He's kind of bashful, I 'magine."

"It's Merry," Quincy exclaimed. "Something has turned up at the State House, but it will keep till morning."

As they were ascending the stairs, Mrs. Hawkins called out, "Oh, Mr. Sawyer, there was a letter came for you. It's up in your room."

It was from Maude. "Let us see what that volatile sister of mine has to say. Something very important or she wouldn't write." As he opened the note sheet, he turned to his wife. "Shall I read it aloud?"

"I should love to hear it."

Quincy read:

* * * * *

"MY ABSENT RELATIVE: You will be delighted to hear that I have found Captain Hornaby's missing coat and wallet. I was out in the new boat when I saw something on the bottom of the pond. You know the water is as clear as glass. It wasn't very deep and I fished the coat up with an oar. I gave it to father and he examined the wallet with apparently great interest. Perhaps he thought there was some money in it, but there wasn't. There were some visiting cards bearing the name Col. Arthur Spencer, but nary a red. Father is trying to find out who the Colonel is. I think father loaned the Captain some money--don't you? Now that we have a real live boat, no more slippery canoes for me. I hope you and Alice are having a fine time--of course you will on your old stamping ground.

"I don't find any fault, because I'm so young and of so little importance, but it seems funny that nobody ever invited me to visit Fernborough. Please don't consider this a bid for an invite, for I won't come. Your neglected sister, "MAUDE."

* * * * *

"Is it possible?" cried Alice, "that Maude has never been here?"

"It is a lamentable fact."

"She won't come now."

"I'll fetch her,--hand-cuffed, if necessary."

Quincy was up early to learn Merry's errand. A request had come from the Governor of Colorado for the extradition of a Pole named Ivan Wolaski, who was accused of being concerned in a dynamite explosion in a Colorado mine.

"Have you looked into the case, Harry?"

"Somewhat. I think it is part of a political feud."

Quincy made preparation for an immediate departure.

"Mrs. Hawkins, I must go to Boston at once with Mr. Merry. Will you have Andrew get a team ready for me? I will leave it at the Eagle Hotel. I know the way home."

"You ought to," said she. "You've druv it times enough."

"What will you do with yourself all day, Alice? I must go to the State House on business, but I'll be back by six o'clock."

"If I were home I'd have my horse saddled and have a ride out to the Arboretum or Chestnut Hill."

"They've no saddle horses here, unfortunately. I'll tell you what to do. After dinner go down to Mandy Maxwell's and see her and the children, and have a talk with Uncle Ike. I'll be there in time for supper, tell Mandy."

When Quincy went down stairs he found that Mrs. Hawkins had gone out to the stable to give Andrew directions about the team.

Quincy said in a low tone: "Mrs. Hawkins, have you some spare stalls in your stable that I can use while here?"

"You can have the old barn all to yourself. It's a leetle further from the house, but it's in first-rate order."

As they drove towards Eastborough Centre, Quincy pointed out the objects of interest to Mr. Merry, who thought Fernborough a beautiful town.

"Come down next Saturday afternoon, Harry, and stay over Sunday. Bring down any important letters. Perhaps my sister Maude will come back with me."

Mr. Merry accepted the invitation with polite outward thanks, but with an inward sense of intense gratification. Love is blind. If he had reflected, he would have come to the conclusion that the daughter of the Hon. Nathaniel Adams Sawyer, the millionaire, was not for him, an unfledged lawyer with a mother to support.

When they reached Eastborough Centre, Quincy found he was too late for the train. He had nearly an hour at his disposal. His first visit was to the Eagle Hotel, where he put up the horse. Mr. Parsons, the proprietor, was greatly pleased to meet him.

"You haven't forgotten how we railroaded Strout out of office, have you?"

"That was long ago," said Quincy. "Strout and I are good friends now. He's one of my partners in the Fernborough store."

"So I've been told."

Quincy took Mr. Parsons aside and had an animated conversation with him.

"I can get you just what you want, Guv'nor. Kind and gentle but some go in them when needed."

"Send them to the Hawkins House and don't forget the saddles."

They crossed the square to the telegraph office, where Quincy sent this message.

"Miss MAUDE SAWYER, "Wideview, Redford, Mass. "Meet me at State House by two o'clock. Leave your trunk at station. Something important.
"QUINCY."

As they were leaving the office Quincy met Tobias Smith, father of Abbott and Ellis Smith, and Wallace Stackpole.

"Glad to see you, Guv'nor," said 'Bias. "You remember Mr. Stackpole that we gave Strout's job of tax-collector to--he's held it ever since. We're mighty glad Strout lives in Fernborough. We don't have circuses at town meetings now he's gone."

Quincy's next visit was to the office of the _Fernborough Gazette_, which was published in Eastborough, as the editor and proprietor, Mr. Sylvester Chisholm, Mr. Strout's brother-in-law, could not get printers in Fernborough, and, being an Eastborough-born boy, his paper had a large circulation in that town and in Westvale, its principal village.

Quincy obtained some copies of the paper containing his speech at the Town Hall. On looking it over he was astonished to find it reported _verbatim_.

"How did you manage it, Mr. Chisholm? My address was extemporaneous."

Sylvester smiled. "Well, the fact is, Mr. Sawyer, while I was working on the _Eastborough Express_, when you were here five years ago, I studied short-hand, and it came in handy that night."

The train was express to Boston and Quincy was in his chair in the Executive Chamber by half-past eleven. After a careful examination of the case of Ivan Wolaski, he decided to refuse the request for extradition, and the Governor of Colorado was so notified in a communication which from moral, legal, political, and humanitarian points of view was unanswerable. It was nearly two o'clock when the last official letter was signed.

The door was opened by the messenger. Quincy expected Maude to enter, but it was Mr. Acton, the energetic opponent of the "peaceful picketing" law.

"I heard, Mr. Governor, that you were here, and I thought it only fair to inform you that we shall apply for injunctions just the same as if that bill you signed had not become a law, and, in that way, test its constitutionality."

"You have a legal right to do that," said the governor, "but I question your moral right."

"How so?" asked Mr. Acton.

"Supposing I had applied for an injunction to prevent you and a score of others from trying to influence me to veto the bill?"

"That would have been foolish. No judge would have granted it."

"And why not?" said the governor sternly. "Were not all of you engaged in 'peaceful picketing'? Why should not the working man have the same right to persuade his fellows that you exerted to influence me?"

Mr. Acton had not exhausted his argument: "But the probable destruction of property and possible loss of life?"

"Matters fully covered by law," the Governor replied. "They are under the jurisdiction of the police, the sheriff, and, if need be, the militia."

Mr. Acton, despite the argument advanced, "was of the same opinion still."

Quincy rang for the messenger, who appeared.

"I am going now. Does any one wish to see me?"

"There's a young lady outside. She's been waiting some time."

Quincy looked at his watch. It was quarter past two.

"Admit her, at once."

Maude began the conversation. "I received your astonishing telegram, Quincy, and was here _on time_," and she emphasized the final words.

"What does it mean? Is Alice sick?"

Quincy took the cue. "Not exactly sick, but she wants to see you very much, and I felt so sure you would come to please her, that I ignored your refusal to accept an invitation from me. Come, we'll have lunch at Young's, and then a carriage to the station,--is your trunk there?"

Maude nodded. She felt that Quincy had played a trick on her and she was in a rebellious mood.

She ate her lunch in silence. Not a word was spoken during the drive to the station. When the train was under way Quincy remarked, casually, "I invited Mr. Merry to come down next Saturday and stay over Sunday."

From that moment until they reached Eastborough Centre, Quincy could not have desired a more talkative or vivacious companion. As they stepped upon the platform, Mr. Parsons came up.

"They're there, safe and sound. I went up with them myself, so's to be sure."

CHAPTER VI

"JUST LIKE OLD TIMES"

Alice had a delightful day at Mandy Maxwell's. The twins, Abraham Mason and Obadiah Strout, sturdy little fellows of the same age as Ezekiel's boy, were full of fun and frolic. Swiss, Uncle Ike's dog, had grown old in the past five years, but the antics of the youngsters overcame at times both age and its accompanying dignity, or love of repose, and he was often as frisky as in his younger days.

Mrs. Crowley told Alice, in confidence, that she "was most dead" with the noise of them, and that, some day, she would be "kilt intirely" by falling over them.

Alice held the little girl for hours, and, remembering Mrs. Hawkins' complaint, called her "Martha" instead of "Mattie."

After the death of Capt. Obed Putnam, his companion, Uncle Ike came down from his attic and had the room that Quincy occupied when he boarded with Ezekiel Pettingill. He was now eighty-one years of age, and too feeble to go up and down stairs, so his meals were taken to his room.

He was greatly pleased to see Alice and to learn that there had been no return of the trouble with her eyes.

"If we had known as much then as we do now, you wouldn't have needed any doctor, Alice."

"Why, how's that?" she asked.

"Because the mind governs the body; as we think we are--we are."

"Well, Uncle Ike, why don't you think you are able to go down stairs and walk back again?"

"I was referring to disease, not the infirmities of old age."

"What's the difference, Uncle?"

"I can't explain it, but there's a mighty sight of difference. I've been trying to get Mandy to let me live on sour milk, because a great doctor in Europe says we'll live longer if we do."

"How long would you care to live?"

"As long as I could. I've been reading up on all the religions and

all the substitutes, and it's going to take me some time to decide which is best--for me, I mean. I don't presume to dictate to others."

"Which do you favour so far?"

"I was brought up on theology--great, big doses of it. I was taught that God was everything and man was nothing. Now I'm willing to give the Almighty credit for all his wonderful works, but I can't help thinking that _man_ deserves some credit for his thousands of years of labour. There's a man out in Chicago who has got up a religion that he calls Manology. There's some good points in it, but he goes too far to suit me. I've read about ghosts and spirits, but I've got to see one before I take stock in them."

"I understand how you feel, Uncle. You have lost the two anchors which make this life bearable. They are Faith and Hope. For them you have substituted Reason--not the reason of others, or of the ages, but your own personal opinion. Until you are satisfied, every one else is wrong."

"Perhaps you're right, Alice. I can see now that my life has been misspent. I should have remained at home and made my wife and children happy. Instead, I became, virtually, a hermit, and for more than twenty years I have thought only of myself and done nothing for humanity, that has done everything for me."

Alice was deeply touched by her Uncle's self-accusation. He had been good to her, and not unkind to others. But he was drifting in a sea of doubt, and really wishing to live his life over again. She felt sorry, but what could she say to give his mind peace? She would begin on the material plane.

"Uncle, how much money have you?"

"That's what troubles me, Alice. When I left home"--his voice lingered on the word--"I gave my wife and children two-thirds of what I had. The rest I put into an annuity, which dies with me. That will do nothing for those I love and who love me."

To Alice, the case seemed almost hopeless. Here was a man who, owning his past life had been self-reliant, independent, impatient as regarded advice and control--was now weaker than a child, for, in youth, Faith is triumphant.

"You must have a talk with Quincy, Uncle. Perhaps he can help you." She went down stairs with a sinking heart. She loved her uncle, but love, powerful as it is, cannot always cast out unbelief.

"Where can your husband be, Alice?" asked Mandy. "Half-past six, and supper's ready. I remember how I used to call out 'supper's ready' when you and he were in the parlour singing. I hope you'll sing some to-night."

Mrs. Crowley rushed into the dining room. "He's coming, but he's got a woman with him."

"Who can she be?" thought Alice as they followed Mrs. Crowley to the front door.

"Hello, Alice," cried Maude. "I've brought him back with me."

Quincy told Ambrose, Mandy's boy-of-all-work, to drive the team to the Hawkins' House and tell Mrs. Hawkins that he wished a room that night for his sister. Ambrose's hand clutched the half-dollar tightly as he repeated the message to Quincy's satisfaction. Mrs. Crowley gazed admiringly at the Governor until he disappeared from view. Alone, in the kitchen, she gave vent to her feelings.

"The foine gintleman that he is. 'How do you do, Mrs. Crowley.' sez he, and he shakes me hand as jintly as if I was a born lady. And the pretty sister that he has, an' the beautiful wife. An' he's the President of the State, an' sez he, 'Mrs. Crowley, how do you do, an' it's delighted I am to see you again.'"

Mrs. Crowley wiped her eyes with her apron and resumed her household duties, occasionally repeating, "'How do you do, Mrs. Crowley.' When Dan comes to-night I'll tell him what the Governor said."

Hiram soon joined the party, it being his night off. As of old, he stammered, or stuttered, when excited, and the sight of Quincy and Alice was enough to entirely disorganize his speaking apparatus.

"Ain't this jolly?" said he. "Just like old times. I heerd you was at Miss Hawkinses, but I didn't think as how you'd git round here so quick. But we're mighty glad to see 'em, ain't we, Mandy? I hope you're all as hungry as I am." He went to the kitchen door and called, "Mrs. Crowley, we're waiting for the supper."

"How I wish Uncle Ike could be with us," said Alice.

"Why can't you call him?" asked Quincy.

"He's too weak in his legs to come down," said Mandy.

"I'll fetch him," and Quincy bounded up stairs, while Mandy got a place ready for him.

Quincy soon returned with Uncle Ike in his arms and placed him in a big arm-chair at the head of the table.

Alice looked up and smiled at her husband.

"Now it is much more like old times," she said, softly.

Maude, who had been an interested listener and spectator, finally exclaimed, "I'm not surprised that you stayed down here four months,

Quincy, but we used to wonder, until we saw Alice, what the great attraction was."

Maude's explosive remark caused a general laugh in which Uncle Ike joined. Alice, feeling that all eyes were fixed upon her, blushed prettily, "As my husband's residence here brought good to others as well as to myself, I am glad that a poor, blind girl, such as I was, proved an attraction strong enough to keep him here."

She stopped, somewhat abashed at making so long a speech, which Maude might think indicated that she was offended at her sister-in-law's reference to herself.

"Bravo, Alice," cried Uncle Ike, "so say we all of us."

After supper all adjourned to the parlour. Quincy offered to carry Uncle Ike.

"No, young man. I'm all right on an even floor. It's these up and down stairs that tire my loose joints"--and he made his way, without assistance, to an easy chair in a farther corner. Quincy looked about the room. Five years had made little change. The old square piano was in its accustomed place, as well as the music stand. He looked over the pieces--the same ones that he and Alice had sung together years ago.

"Let's have some music," said Hiram. "We haven't heard any singers, except Dan, since you folks went away. Guess that pianner's out of tune by this time."

It certainly was, but their hearts were in tune, and it mattered little if some of the keys refused to move, or the sounds emitted were more discordant than melodious.

"Is this Dan a good singer?" asked Quincy.

"Fine!" exclaimed Hiram. "He's great on Irish songs."

"They are always humourous or pathetic," remarked Alice. "Some of them remind me of a person trying to laugh with a heart full of sorrow, and their love songs are so sweet."

"Can't we have him in?" asked Maude.

"I'll go and see if he's come," said Mandy. "He often drops in and helps Mrs. Crowley clear up after supper."

Maude laughed. "A sure sign he's in love. I hope I'll get such a helpful husband."

"Your life will be on different lines," remarked Uncle Ike. "You will not be obliged to do your own housework."

"I don't know about that. I've loafed all my life and I'd really like to know what work is."

Mandy came back with smiling face. "Yes, he's there, and they're putting the dishes in the closet. He's coming in, and, of course, Mrs. Crowley will come too."

"While we are waiting, play something, Maude," said Quincy.

"I only took three quarters," she said roguishly, as she seated herself and dashed off "Waves of Ocean" in strident style.

"I always liked that," said Hiram.

"So do I, with my bathing-dress on," and Maude acknowledged the applause that greeted her efforts with a low bow.

The door was opened, and Mrs. Crowley entered followed by Mr. Daniel Sweeney. Mrs. Crowley with her neat calico dress and white apron, did not look her forty-five years, and Mr. Sweeney, although five years her senior, was a young appearing man.

"I haven't the music with me," said Mr. Sweeney to Maude, who offered to play the accompaniment.

"Give me the key--I guess I can vamp it."

Mr. Sweeney struck a note.

"What's the title?" asked Maude.

"Widow Mahan's Pig."

"Oh, I know that," said Maude. "It's one of my favourites. I often sing it to my sister Florence. She just adores it."

"Why, Maude," cried Alice, "how can you tell such stories?" But Quincy was laughing quietly. But few people understood Maude as he did.

Mr. Sweeney had a fine baritone voice; he sang with great expression, and, what is particularly desirable in a comic song, the words could be heard and understood.

I.

Young Widow Mahan had an iligant pig,
In the garden it loved for to wallow and dig;
On potatoes it lived, and on fresh buttermilk,
And its back was as smooth as fine satin or silk.
Now Peter McCarthy, a graceless young scamp,
Who niver would work, such a lazy young tramp,
He laid eye on the pig, as he passed by one day,

And the thafe of the world, he stole it away!

Chorus

An iligant pig in every way,
Young Widow Mahan used often to say:
"Faith, when it's full grown, I'll go to the fair,
A mighty foine price I'll get for it there."

As Mr. Sweeney started to repeat the four lines of the chorus, a soprano voice rose above his own, and, as the last note died away, Maude came in for her share of the applause. Mrs. Crowley was delighted, and showed her appreciation by laughing until she cried.

II

He drove the poor piggy to Ballyporeen,
And the price of it soon he did spend in poteen,
He got into a fight and was cracked on the head,
Then to jail he was carried and taken for dead.
The constable then for the Father did send,
For he thought that McCarthy was quite near his end;
He confessed to the priest, did this penitent youth,
About the pig stealing he told the whole truth.

Maude improvised a short symphony before the third and last stanza.

III

Then to young McCarthy, the Father did say:
"Now what will you do at the great Judgment Day?
For you will be there, at the bar you will stan'
The pig as a witness, and Widow Mahan."
"Faith, what will I do?" young McCarthy did say.
"An' the pig will be there at the great Judgment Day?
Begorre! I'll say to the Widow, 'Asthore,
Take back your old pig, for I want it no more'

"An iligant pig in ivery way,
Schwate Widow Mahan, plaze take it away.
Faith, now it's full grown, just go to the fair,
A mighty foine price you'll git for it there."

"Yes," said Uncle Ike, "that's what the rich man will say. After cheating the poor, buncoing the credulous, and 'cornering' his fellows, he will say he is willing to give it back, for he has no further use for it. There's a good moral in that song, Mr. Sweeney, and some of our sordid millionaires ought to hear it."

Quincy looked at his watch. "The hour is late--for the country, but, fortunately, our hotel keeps open all night."

Quincy carried Uncle Ike up stairs to his room and told him he would

come some day and have a good old-fashioned talk with him.

They walked home slowly, Maude admiring the moonlight night and the cool, scented air. When they reached their own room, after seeing Maude to hers, Alice repeated to her husband her conversation with Uncle Ike.

"You must do something to cheer him up, Quincy. Promise me, won't you?"

"Yes, I promise. I hope I won't forget to perform it as I have in one instance."

"Why--what?"

"Do you remember that young man at the Town Hall--Arthur Scates? He's in consumption. I told him to come to the State House and I would see that he had proper treatment. He hasn't been--or perhaps he has since I've been away, but I will see him to-morrow."

Alice looked up at him approvingly. "Quincy, I agree with you that the real value of money is found in the good that can be done with it."

CHAPTER VII

STROUT AND MAXWELL'S GROCERY

The next morning, after breakfast, Quincy asked his wife and Maude to accompany him to Mrs. Hawkins' barn.

"I wish I had my saddle horse here," said Alice.

"So do I," added Maude. "I did think of bringing him."

Alice laughed, "Do you know, Maude, sometimes you say the most ridiculous things? How could you bring a horse with you?"

"Easy enough--on a cattle car. Besides, I could have ridden down here if Quincy hadn't been in such a hurry."

"Alone?"

"No, with Bobby. What better protector can a woman have than a good horse? I shall never remain in danger long if my heels or my horse's will get me away from it."

"Maude, you're a strange girl," said Alice. Then she put her arm about her and added--"but one of the best girls in the world."

By this time they had reached the barn. Two stalls were occupied. Quincy pointed to two side-saddles hanging on the wall.

"As I knew you were both good horse-women, I had these sent up with your riding habits from Eastborough Centre yesterday. I am going to be busy at the store this morning, and I thought you might enjoy a ride."

Maude threw her arms about his neck and kissed him.

"You are the bestest brother in the world."

"And the most thoughtful husband," said Alice as he drew her close to him.

"Well, I'll saddle them and see you mounted."

A quarter of an hour later Quincy led the horses to the street.

"Don't go down Obed's Hill--it is very steep. Ride along Pettingill Street to the Centre Road, which will bring you to Mason Street, and when you've walked your horses up hill you'll be near the grocery store, where you'll find me."

They waved a good-bye as they rode off, and Quincy made his way to the grocery store. Mr. Strout came from behind the counter to meet him. Hiram was busy putting order baskets in the gaudily painted wagon.

"I heard as how you were in town, and Hiram said you were at his house last night, but I ain't one of the kind that gits mad if I'm waited on last at table. In music you know we usually begin down low and finish off up high, and visitin' is considerable like music, especially when there's three children and one of 'em a baby."

His closing words were intended to refer to Hiram's family, but Quincy made no reply.

Mr. Strout was never at a loss for words: "How do you like being Governor?"

"So well that one term is enough. I'm going to Europe later."

"I mean to go some day. I've heard so many foreigners blow about what they've got over there, I'm kinder anxious to see for myself. If they've got a better grocery store than this, I'll introduce improvements as soon as I get back."

Hiram having finished his work and dispatched the team, the three partners went into the private office, which was monopolized by Mr. Strout. It contained one desk and two chairs. Hiram brought in an empty nail keg and closed the door.

"We've done twenty per cent. more business this month than same time last year." Mr. Strout opened a desk drawer. "Will you smoke, Guv'nor?"

Quincy accepted the cigar, and Strout, without offering one to Hiram, was returning the box to the drawer when Hiram, by a quick movement, gained possession of it, and taking out half-a-dozen put them in his pocket.

"That'll even matters up a little, I guess," he said. Mr. Strout scowled, but catching Quincy's eye, said nothing.

"Would you like to look over the books? I'll have them brought in."

"Don't trouble yourself to do that," said Quincy. "I'll examine them at the bookkeeper's desk."

"Oh, very well," said Strout. "You'll find them O. K. But now's you're here there's one thing I want to say. Hiram don't agree with me, but he ain't progressive. There's no crescendo to him. He wants to play in one key all the time. He's--"

Quincy interrupted, "What did you wish to say about the business? We'll drop personalities for the present, at least."

"Well, our business is growing, but we can do ten times as much with more capital. What I want to do is to start branch stores in Cottonton, Montrose, and Eastborough Centre. We send our teams to all these places, but if we had stores there we'd soon cut the other fellers out, for buying in such large quantities, we could undersell them every time."

"I'm rather in favour of the branches, but don't go to cutting prices. The other fellow has the same right to a living that we have."

"Why not let him have what he's got then and not interfere with him?" said Mr. Strout, chewing his cigar vigorously.

"For the reason," said Quincy, "that we don't keep store to please our competitors, but to serve the public. I believe in low prices in sugar, tea, and coffee, to draw trade. But general cuts in prices are ruinous in the end, for our competitors will cut too, and we shall all lose money."

"I ain't agin the new stores," said Hiram, "but I'm teetotally agin chopping prices down on everything and tryin' to beat the other feller."

"How much money will it require?" asked Quincy. "Have you estimated on rent, fixtures, stock, horses and wagons, stabling, wages and salaries, and sundry expenses?"

"Yes, I've got it all down in black and white, it's in the safe. My estimate, and it is as close as the bark to a tree, is six thousand dollars spot cash."

"I'll look over your figures," said Quincy, "and if they seem all right, I'll advance the money on the usual terms, eight per cent., but I must have a four thousand dollar mortgage to cover your two-thirds, for I don't suppose you can put up two thousand apiece."

"Not this year," said Strout, as he proceeded to relight his cigar.

The door was thrown open violently and Alice rushed in.

"Oh, Quincy, Maude's horse has run away with her and I'm afraid she's thrown and perhaps killed. I tried to catch up with her but I could not, and I saw nothing else to do but to come and let you know."

"Which way has she gone?" cried Quincy. "How did it happen?"

"We stopped at 'Zekiel's and had a talk with Huldah, who came down to the gate. Then we went on until we came to the Centre Road. When Maude saw the long straight stretch ahead she cried, 'Let's have a race!' Before I could remonstrate, she gave her horse a sharp cut with the whip. He took the bit in his teeth and bolted. I rode on as fast as I dared to, but when I reached Mason Street she was not in sight."

"If she had come this way we should have seen or heard her," said Quincy. "She must have gone towards Eastborough Centre. Come, Alice, I will get the carryall. If she is hurt she will not be able to ride her horse."

Leading her horse, Quincy and Alice went to the Hawkins House.

"He takes it pretty cool," said Strout to Hiram. "If she was my sister I'd ring the church bell, make up a party, and go in search of her dead body, for that's what they'll come back with."

"I don't take no stock in that," remarked Hiram. "She's used to horses, and she's a mighty bright, independent girl. She'll come home all right."

"No doubt she's independent enough," retorted Strout. "That runs in the family. But the horse, it seems, was independent too. Perhaps the Guv'nor will have a boxing match with him for his independence to a Sawyer."

As Hiram went back into the store he said to himself: "That Strout's only a half-converted sinner anyway. He'll never forget the thrashing that Mr. Sawyer gave his man, Bob Wood."

Quincy had Alice go to her room, for she was agitated and extremely

nervous, and he asked Mrs. Hawkins to look out for her until his return.

With Andrew's help, the carryall was soon ready and Quincy drove to the store. What was his surprise to find Maude there, still on her horse, and apparently uninjured. With her, also on horseback was an attractive girl, a stranger to Quincy.

"I'm all right, Quincy," Maude cried as he alighted, "but there would have been a funeral but for this young lady."

Quincy, with hat in hand, bowed to the stranger. "I am deeply grateful for your valuable service, madam. To whom are we indebted for my sister's rescue from death?"

The young lady smiled, showing a set of even, white teeth. "Not so great a service after all. Your sister is a good horsewoman. If she hadn't been, she would have been thrown long before I reached her."

"But your name, Madam," persisted Quincy. "Her father will wish to know, and to thank you."

"My name when in Fernborough is Mrs. Emmanuel Howe. When I'm on the stage, it is Dixie Schaffer. I was born in the South. My father was Col. Hugh Schaffer of Pasquotank County, North Carolina."

"My father and all of us will feel under great obligations to you."

"I hope he will not. I have no objections to receiving his thanks in writing, if he is disposed to send them, which I think unnecessary as you are his representative. But kindly caution him not to suggest or send any reward, for it will be returned." She bowed to Quincy, turned her horse's head and rode away.

As Strout entered the store he said to himself, "Bully for her. She don't bow down to money. She's got brains."

A few days later, however, Miss Dixie Schaffer was the recipient from the Hon. Nathaniel Adams Sawyer of a beautiful gold pendant in the shape of a horseshoe, set with pearls. If one could have glanced at a stub in the lawyer's check book, he would have found the name of a prominent jeweller, and the figures \$300. It is needless to add that the gift was not returned to the donor. When Alice saw that Maude had escaped without injury, she soon recovered her equanimity.

"How did it happen, Maude?" asked Quincy. "Alice says you gave the horse a sharp blow."

"I must have hit her harder than I intended--but I was thinking of the race more than of her. Didn't she run, hurrah-ti-cut, as Mrs. Hawkins says? I was bound I'd keep on her back unless she fell down or ran into something, and I did. I wasn't foolish enough to jump and land on my head."

"When we got to the main road, I didn't know which way to turn--I mean I couldn't think. She settled the matter by turning to the right, which was very fortunate, but I didn't know I was on the road to Dixie."

"Maude, you're incorrigible," laughed Alice.

"No, I'm a sensation. I was full of them as I dashed on. But she was a well-bred horse and kept in the middle of the road. Then, to my joy, I saw Dixie ahead. As I went by her I yelled--yes, yelled--'she's running away.'

"Dixie yelled--yes, yelled--'Hold on, I'll catch you.' She did, but we ran more than a mile before she got even with me, grasped my horse's bridle, and pulled her round so quickly that I came near landing in the bushes. And here I am."

"You must not ride her again," said Alice.

"That's just what I am going to do. I'm not going to deprive that horse of my company, when it was all my fault. No more whip, she needs only the voice--and little of that."

"Alice," said Quincy, "Mr. Strout has invited us to dinner. He will be offended unless his invitation is accepted."

"I don't feel equal to meeting that man in his own house. I cannot bear him even at long range. Take Maude."

"I'll go, Quincy. I love these odd characters."

"He's married and has a little boy," said Alice.

"Then my love for the father will be invisible--I'll shower my affection upon his offspring."

Quincy, after introducing his sister to Mr. Strout and his wife, expressed his regret that his wife was so unnerved by the runaway that she was unable to accompany him. Mr. Strout, in turn, expressed his regrets, as did Mrs. Strout, then he added: "Miss Sawyer, we'll have to pay you a commission. The store has been full of folks asking about you, and after I told them all about the runaway and how you were rescued, they had to talk it over, and I sold more than forty cigars and ten plugs of tobacco."

"How did you know how I was rescued?" asked Maude.

"Well, I heard part and imagined the rest. I had to tell 'em something or lose the trade."

Mrs. Strout was a very good cook and the dinner was a success.

Strout leaned far back in his chair and Maude assumed a similar position. Quincy looked at her reprovingly, but she did not change her attitude. To her brother's astonishment, she addressed Mr. Strout.

"I suppose you have travelled a great deal, Mr. Strout."

"Well, yes, I have. Since I got back from the war I've taught music, and as my pupils were too lazy to come to me, I went to them. But speaking of travelling, I was in a runaway once. It had been snowing for about four days without a break and the roads were blocked up. I had to go to Eastborough Centre and I hired a horse I'd never driven before."

"Didn't you have to put snow-shoes on him?" asked Maude.

"Oh, no, because I waited until the roads were broken out."

"That's one on me," acknowledged Maude.

"Well, I nearly tipped over a dozen times, but I got to the Centre where the roads had been cleared. But my sleigh went into a gully and came down on the horse's heels. My, wasn't she off in a jiffy! I held her in the road, the men, and women, and children, and dogs and hens getting out of the way as fast as they could. She was a going lickety-split, and although I wasn't frightened, I decided she'd got to stop.

"I saw a house with an ell, and in the corner the snow was packed up ten feet high. I had an idea. I put all my strength on to one rein, turned her head, and she went into that snow bank out of sight, all but her tail. I got out of the sleigh, sat down on the snow, and laughed till I thought I'd die."

"And the horse?" queried Maude.

"It took half an hour to dig her out. They say horses are intelligent, but I don't think they know any more than hens."

"I thought hens were bright," said Maude. "They say they hide their eggs so we can't poach and boil them."

"Well, you can judge. When we moved into this house all the doors had glass knobs. I took them off, put them in a box and set them out in the barn. I saw a hen setting, but didn't notice her particularly until one day she got off the nest while I was in the barn, and true as I live, that fool hen had been trying to hatch out those knobs."

"They said you have a little boy, Mr. Strout," Maude looked at him inquiringly. "I hope he isn't sick."

"No, he's all right. But we never let him come to the table when we have company, because he talks too much."

"What's his name?"

"That's the funny part of it. My wife has lots of relations, and some wanted him named this, and some wanted him named that. So I went to the library and looked at all the names in the dictionary."

Maude's curiosity was excited. "What did you finally decide upon?"

"Well, we haven't named him yet. We call him No. 3, I being No. 1, and my wife No. 2."

After their guests had departed, Mrs. Strout asked, "Why didn't you tell Miss Sawyer that our boy's name was same as yours?"

"Why didn't I?" snapped her husband. "Because she was so blamed anxious for me to tell her. Them Sawyers are 'ristocrats. They look down on us common people."

Mrs. Strout remonstrated. "I thought he was real nice, and she's a lovely girl. Besides, he set you up in business and made you postmaster."

"And what did he do it for? Just to show the power of money. What did he want of a grocery store except to beat me out of it?"

"But you owned up in your speech at the Town Hall that you'd treated him mean, and that you were his friend."

"That was official. Do you suppose he means all he says? No! No more than I do. When I get enough money, there won't be but one partner in that grocery store, and his name will be O. Strout."

CHAPTER VIII

UNCLE IKE AND OTHERS

At the breakfast table next morning, Maude sat with her head bent over her plate. All were awaiting Olive's advent with the fruit.

"At your devotions, Maude?" asked Alice.

"Yes, I am thanking the Lord that my life was saved by a woman. _She_ can't ask me to marry her."

A trio of "good mornings" greeted the Rev. Mr. Gay as he entered and took his accustomed place at the head of the table. He bowed his head and asked a blessing.

"Why do you ask a blessing, Mr. Gay?"

Mr. Gay looked up, but there was no levity in Maude's eyes.

"It is our duty to thank the Almighty for his goodness in providing for our physical ends."

"But," said Maude, "with the exception of the fruit all our food is prepared by man. We couldn't eat it just as it grows."

"God has given us the necessary intelligence to properly utilize his blessings."

"But some people starve to death," said Maude, forsaking the main argument.

"Unfortunately, yes, owing to man's lack of brotherly feeling, or rather, a hap-hazard method of distributing his blessings. It is not God's will that any of his creatures should lack food or raiment."

"Do you really believe, Mr. Gay, that God takes a personal interest in us? That he sent Mrs. Howe yesterday to save my life?"

"I certainly do, Miss Sawyer."

"I can't understand it," said Maude. "I looked upon it simply as a lucky coincidence. But supposing the horse had turned to the left, and stopped of his own accord when he reached that steep hill. What would that prove?"

Quincy and Alice who had listened to the discussion, looked at the clergyman, who hesitated before answering. At last, a smile lighted up his face and he replied: "It would prove that, in that particular case, you did not need the intervention of Heavenly power."

"I'm not convinced yet," said Maude. "I am coming to hear you preach to-morrow. Do make it plain to me, please."

"With God's help, I will try to," the clergyman answered.

Quincy passed the morning at the grocery, making arrangements for the establishment of the branch stores, Mr. Strout's plans being approved with some material modifications. Strout told his wife that Mr. Sawyer had fixed it so he couldn't get control of the business, but that he would put a flea in his ear some fine day.

"I can't see through it," said Bessie Strout. "Why have your feelings towards Mr. Sawyer changed so? I think he is a perfect gentleman."

"So he is. So am I. But we grew on different bushes." Feeling that he did not wish to confess that jealousy of others' attainments was the real foundation of his hostility, Mr. Strout took his departure. Two hours later Mrs. Strout was delighted at receiving a call from Miss

Maude Sawyer and the Governor's wife.

Quincy wished to have a talk with 'Zekiel about Uncle Ike, so he walked over to the old Putnam house. He had asked his wife to accompany him, but she declined.

"That house gives me the shivers," she had said. "I never can forget the ordeal I went through the day that Aunt Heppy died. I gave the house to 'Zekiel because I never could have lived in it. Maude and I are going to call on Mrs. Strout."

Quincy found 'Zekiel in the barn, and broached the matter on his mind at once.

"I'm glad you spoke of it," said 'Zekiel. "I was over to Mandy's yesterday and Uncle Ike wants to come and live with us. Not that he's dissatisfied where he is, for he likes Mandy and the children, and they do everything to make him comfortable--but it's the stairs. He wants to eat with the others; he says he feels like a prisoner cooped up in one room. We have a spare room on the ground floor that old Silas Putnam used to sleep in. I'm only afraid of one thing--'twill be too much care for Huldah. If I could get some one to help her with the work, she'd be glad and willing to look after Uncle Ike." "We must find some way out of it," said Quincy, as they parted.

His next visit was to the home of Arthur Scates. He found the young man in bed and in a very weak condition.

"He's had two o' them bleedin' spells," said his grandmother, "an' las' night I thought sure he was a goner. But I giv him some speerits of ammony and he perked up a little. Yer see, Mr. Sawyer, we're poor, an' it's no use tryin' to cover it up, an' I can't give Arthur the kind of vittles he ought to have. He wants nourishin' things an'"--
The old lady's feelings overcame her and she began to cry. "I'm ashamed of myself, but I can't help it. He's my only son's boy, and he's an orphan, an' wuss. I'm sixty years old, but I can do a day's work with any of the young ones, but I can't leave him alone. I should have a conniption fit if I did."

Quincy thought it advisable to allow the old lady to have her say out before replying.

"Mrs. Scates, I think there are brighter days coming for you."

"The Lord knows I have prayed hard enough for 'em."

Quincy spoke to Arthur. "I expected to see you in Boston, but I suppose you were in too poor health to come."

"Tell him the whole truth, Arthur," said his grandmother--"his health was too poor an' we hadn't any money."

"Arthur," said Quincy, "I am going to find a home for you in a sanatorium where you will have the treatment you need and the proper

food to build you up. One of these days, if you can repay me, well and good. If not, I can afford to give it. Your voice may make your fortune some day. And, now, Mrs. Scates, I've got some work for you. Mrs. 'Zekiel Pettingill--"

"She that was Huldy Mason," broke in Mrs. Scates, "she was just the nicest girl in town."

"Yes," assented Quincy, "she's going to have an addition to her family--"

"You don't say," again interrupted Mrs. Scates. "Well, I've nussed a good many--"

"You misunderstand me," said Quincy quickly. "Her Uncle Ike is coming to live with her, and she needs assistance in her work. You must go and see her at once."

While she was gone, Quincy explained to Arthur the nature of his coming treatment; how he would have to virtually live out of doors daytimes and sleep with windows and doors open at night. "I will see that you have good warm clothes. I will pay for your board and treatment for a year, and give you money for such things as you may need."

"I'll try hard to get well so I can repay you," said Arthur.

"She says she'll take me," cried Mrs. Scates, as she entered the room--"just as soon as I can come, and here's a big basket of apples and peaches, she sent you, and--" the poor woman was quite out of breath. "I met that minister, Mr. Gay, and he said he was coming up to see you, Arthur."

"Did you ever go to Mr. Gay's church?" Quincy asked Mrs. Scates.

"Jus' onct, and that was enough. He'll have to leave here sooner or later."

"What for?"

"Why, he don't believe in no divil--an' ye can't make folks good unless they knows there's a divil."

Quincy recalled the story of the Scotch woman, a stern Presbyterian, who thought if ten thousand were saved at the final judgment that it would be "muckle many," and who, when asked if she expected to be one of the elect, replied "Sartainly." He felt that a theological discussion with Grandma Scates would end in his discomfiture and he wisely refrained.

Quincy reached Mandy Maxwell's just in time for dinner, and, at his request, it was served in Uncle Ike's room.

"This is more cheerful," said he to Quincy. "I once thought that being alone was the height of enjoyment--and I did enjoy myself very selfishly for a good many years. Has Alice told you of our conversation?"

Quincy nodded.

"I've been thinking about it since and I decided my first move would be to live, if I could, with my own flesh and blood. But while they've got a down-stairs room, it will be too much work for Huldah."

"That's provided for," said Quincy. "Mrs. Scates is going to help Huldah."

"What's to become of her grandson--he's consumptive they tell me."

"He's going to a sanatorium to get cured."

"And you are going to pay the bills?"

Quincy nodded again.

"I get a lesson very often. You are using your money to help others, while I've hoarded mine."

Quincy looked at the speaker inquiringly. Alice had given him to understand that her uncle had used his income for himself.

"I know what you're thinking, Mr. Sawyer. I did tell Alice I had an annuity, but I haven't spent one-tenth of what's coming to me. I arranged to have it put in a savings bank, and I've drawn just as little as I could and get along. I bought a fifty thousand dollar annuity at sixty. I got nine per cent, on my money, besides the savings bank interest. As near as I can figure it out I'm worth about two hundred thousand dollars. I've beat the insurance company bad, and I ain't dead yet. I have all this money, but what good has it done anybody?"

"It can do good in the future, Uncle."

"I want to leave something to Mandy's boys--not too much--for I'm afraid they'd squander it, and become do-nothings. What shall I do with it?"

"Do you wish me to suggest a public use for your fortune?"

"That's what I've been telling you about it for. You've a good knack of disposing of your own and other folks' money, and I thought you could help me out."

Quincy did not speak for some time. Finally he said, "Uncle Ike, the Town Hall in Fernborough is but one mile from the centre of the city of Cottonton. That city is peopled, principally, with low-paid cotton

mill operatives. Their employers, as a rule, are more intent on dividends than the moral or physical condition of their help. Accidents are common in the mills, many are broken down in health by overwork, and those who become mothers are forced by necessity to resume work in the mills before their strength is restored."

Uncle Ike shut his teeth with a snap. "That's worse than hoarding money as I've done. Mine may, as you say, do good in the future, but theirs is degrading human beings at the present. I wish I could do something for them, especially the mothers. It's a shame they have to suffer."

"You can do something, Uncle Ike. My suggestion is, that you leave the bulk of your fortune to build a hospital in Fernborough, but provide in your will that the mill operatives of Cottonton, or all its poorer inhabitants, if you so wish it, shall be entitled to free treatment therein."

"I'll do it," cried Uncle Ike. "As soon as I get settled at 'Zeke's, I'll send for Squire Rundlett to come and make out my will. You've taken a big load off my mind, Mr. Sawyer."

As Quincy was mounting Obed's Hill slowly, for it was very steep, he thought to himself--"Getting Uncle Ike to do something practical towards helping others was much better than talking theoretical religion to him."

When he reached the Hawkins House, Andrew was getting ready to drive to Cottonton to meet the three o'clock express from Boston.

"There's a friend of ours coming down on that train, Andrew--a young man named Merry." He took out his note book, wrote a few lines, and passed the slip with some money to Andrew.

"You get that--have it covered up so no one can see what it is, and leave it in the barn when you get back."

Quincy told his wife about Arthur Scates and Uncle Ike.

"I'm going to take Uncle Ike to Mr. Gay's church to-morrow," he added, "but I didn't say anything about it to-day. I'm not going to give him time to invent excuses."

Maude did not conceal her pleasure at meeting Harry again. She was a companionable girl, and Mr. Merry was too sensible to think, because a young lady was sociable, that it was any indication that she was falling in love with him.

"Are you going riding this evening, Alice?" Quincy walked to the window. "The sunset is just glorious. There's a purple cloud in the west, the edges of which is bordered with gold. There are rifts in it, through which the sun shows--and now, come quickly, Alice, the sun, a ball of fire, has just sunk below the cloud which seems

resting upon it."

When they turned away from the window, Alice said:

"I don't think I will ride any more. Maude must take the horse I had-- he is so gentle. What a pity Mr. Merry cannot go with her for a ride."

"He can. I sent Andrew for a saddle for him to use."

"Quincy, you are the most thoughtful man in the world."

In less than half an hour Maude, with Harry riding the mare, were on their way towards the Centre Road. When they returned, an hour later, there had been no runaway, unless Harry's heart had undergone one. Maude's countenance did not, however, indicate that she had participated in any rescue.

CHAPTER IX

A "STORY" SERMON

The influx of mill operatives and mechanics from Cottonton in search of a breathing place after a hard day's work, had led to the building up of the territory north of Pettingill Street and east of Montrose Avenue. This fact had led to the erection of the Rev. Mr. Gay's church in the extreme northern part of the town, but near to both Montrose town and Cottonton city.

"We are all coming to your church this morning, Mr. Gay," said Quincy at breakfast.

"I shall be glad to see you, but you must not expect a city service. The majority, in fact all, of my parishioners are common people, and I use plain language to them."

"I think simplicity in devotional exercises much more effective than an ornate service," said Alice.

"Do you have a choir?" asked Maude.

"We can't afford one, but we have good congregational singing."

"I'm glad of that," said Maude. "I hate these paid choirs with their names and portraits in the Sunday papers."

"I shall take the carryall and go for Uncle Ike. It is a beautiful morning and you will all enjoy the walk," Quincy added.

Uncle Ike, at first, gave a decided negative. "I haven't been inside

a church for many a year and it's too late to begin now."

"That's no argument at all," said Quincy. "But my principal reason for wishing you to go is so you can see the people that your hospital is going to benefit one of these days."

"But these preachers use such highfalutin' language, and so many 'firstlies' and 'secondlies' I lose my hold on the text."

"Mr. Gay is a common, everyday sort of man, does not pose when out of his pulpit, and never talks over the heads of his audience."

"How do you know all that?"

"I sit with him at table, and I've studied him. Then he told us not to expect a city sermon for he used simple language, and they have congregational singing."

"Well, I'll go--this once," said Uncle Ike, and Quincy assisted him in making his preparations. On their way to the church they passed two couples--Alice and Mrs. Hawkins, and Maude and Mr. Merry. Mr. Jonas Hawkins could not leave home for he was afraid the cats would carry off his last brood of chickens. Some fifty had been hatched out, but only a dozen had survived the hot weather, heavy rains, and the many diseases prevalent among chickens.

When Mr. Gay arose to give out the first hymn, Maude said to Mr. Merry, "Why, he looks like a different man. His red hair is a beautiful brown."

"It's the light from the coloured glass windows," commented Mr. Merry.

"Then it must be the curtains in Mrs. Hawkins' dining room that colour his hair at home," retorted Maude.

How grandly rose the volume of tone from scores of throats! Even Uncle Ike's quavering voice joined in.

"All hail the power of Jesus' name,
Let nations prostrate fall;
Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown Him Lord of all."

The organ creaked and wheezed somewhat, but so many fresh, young voices softened its discordant tones.

A short prayer, and Mr. Gay began his sermon, if such it can be called.

"MY BRETHREN: My text, to-day is, 'The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.' All nations have a God, even if all the people do not believe in him. The majority in each nation does believe in a

God. Are those who do not believe all fools? Unhappily, no. There are many highly educated men and women who deny the existence of God. They claim man is a part of Nature, and Nature is all. They forget the poet who wrote

"Man is but part of a stupendous whole,
Whose body Nature is, and God the soul.'

"Remember, God is the Soul. Each of you has a soul, a spark of the Divinity.

"I can best support my argument by a story--a true one.

"I once knew a young man whom we will call Richard. He had a well-to-do father and was sent to college. When he graduated, his father, a pious man, wished him to study for the ministry. He objected, saying his health was poor. He wished to go into the mountains, he lived in the West, and his father consented.

"He drifted into a mining camp and whatever regard he may have had for religion, soon disappeared. He was not a fool, but, in his heart, he said there was no God.

"With another young man, whom we will call Thomas, he formed a partnership, and they went prospecting for gold,--gold that the God whom they would not acknowledge had placed in the earth.

"They were attacked by Indians and Thomas was killed. Richard was obliged to flee for his life. His food was soon exhausted, he had no water, he had no God to whom he could pray for help.

"He came to a hole in the ground, near a foothill. He got upon his knees and looked down--yes, there was water--not much, but enough for his needs--but it was beyond his reach. He leaned over the edge to gaze upon the life-giving fluid that God has given us, and his hat fell into the well. In his hat was his gold-dust--his fortune--so useless to him then. He forgot his thirst for water in his thirst for gold.

"There was a stout branch of a tree near by. He placed it across the top of the hole. He would drop down into the well, and recover his hat, get a drink of water and draw himself up again. The well did not seem more than six feet deep, and with his arms extended he could easily reach the branch and draw himself up to safety. He dropped into the well, found his hat with its precious gold, drank some of the muddy water which, really, was then more precious to him than the metal, and looked up. He extended his arms but they fell short some six feet of reaching the branch. He had under-estimated the depth of the well--it was fifteen instead of six feet.

"He would clamber up the sides, he would cut steps with his knife and make a ladder. The earth was soft, and crumbled beneath his weight. That mode of escape was impossible. He was a prisoner in a hole with

only muddy water to sustain life for a short time, and no prospect of escape.

"Night came on. He looked up at the stars. They seemed no farther away than the top of the well.

"When a child he had been taught to say 'Our Father who art in Heaven,' Did he have a Father in Heaven? Was Heaven where those stars were? Was that Father in Heaven the Being that folks called God?

"He fell into a deep sleep. When he awoke the stars were still shining, but no nearer than before.

"In his loneliness, in his despair, he cried, 'Oh, God, help me!' He covered his face with his hands and wept. He had forsaken the belief of a lifetime. He had acknowledged that there was a God!

"There was a rustling sound above him, and a heavy body fell to the bottom of the well. Some wild animal! He was unarmed with the exception of his hunting-knife. That was slight protection against a savage beast, but he would defend himself to the last.

"He listened. The animal, whatever it was, was breathing, but it did not move. Perhaps it was stunned by the fall, but would soon revive. He would kill it. A few firm blows and the beast was dead. It did not breathe. Its body was losing its warmth. He was safe from that danger.

"He slept again. When he awoke the sun was high. Beside him was the dead body of a mountain lion.

"He drank some more of the muddy water. He was so hungry. Was there no means of escape? Must he die there with that dead lion for a companion?

"He had an inspiration. With his knife he cut the lion's hide into strips. He tied these together until he had a rope. He threw it over the branch and drew himself up. The Earth looked so bright and cheerful. He threw himself upon his knees and thanked God for his deliverance. He was an educated 'fool' no longer. He had found God in that pool of muddy water, and God had sent a lion to deliver him.

"How do I know that the story I have told you is true? Richard returned to his father's home. He went back to college and entered the divinity school. He became a clergyman, and he has preached to you, to-day, from the text, 'The Fool hath said in his heart that there is no God!'"

THE RAISED CHECK

The Rev. Mr. Gay's parishioners looked at him in astonishment. He had disbelieved in God but had been converted in what seemed a miraculous manner. And yet, perhaps, after all, it was only a coincidence. Alice felt sure that Uncle Ike would be of that opinion.

The pastor, as soon as he had made his sensational declaration, said "Let us pray." His appeal was for those who doubted--that God would open their eyes--but not as his had been--to acknowledge his power and mercy.

Then followed "Old Hundred."

"Praise God from whom all blessings flow,
Praise Him all creatures here below."

A benediction, and the service was over.

There were seats for four in the carryall. Maude preferred to walk and Mr. Merry was of the same mind. Mrs. Hawkins sat with Quincy on the front seat, and Alice with Uncle Ike.

"What did you think of the sermon, Uncle Ike?" Alice asked.

"A thrilling personal experience. The fear of death has a peculiar effect on some people--it kills their will power. Did Mr. Gay know that I was to attend his church?"

Alice flushed. "Quincy mentioned it at the breakfast table."

"Was he informed of my opinions on religious matters?"

"They were not mentioned before him."

"Another coincidence"--and Uncle Ike relapsed into silence.

As they were nearing the Maxwell house, Alice asked, "Uncle Ike, are you willing to have Mr. Gay call upon you?"

"I have no objection, if he will let me choose the subjects for conversation," was the reply.

In the evening Maude and Mr. Merry walked to the Willows and back.

"Have you become a matchmaker?" Alice asked her husband.

"What prompts the question?"

"Maude and Mr. Merry have been thrown together very much. You approve of you would prevent their intimacy."

Quincy laughed. "Maude undoubtedly has a heart, but she doesn't know where it is. Mr. Merry is too sensible a fellow to imagine Maude will fall in love with him, or that he could support her if she did."

"Poor logic, Quincy. Such marriages take place often, but unless they are followed with parental blessings,--and financial backing,--seldom prove successful.

"Well, the intimacy will end to-morrow morning. He will return to the city, and, probably, never see her again."

"I've no objection to Mr. Merry. I consider him a very fine young man. I was thinking of Maude's happiness."

Mr. Merry did return to Boston early the next morning, and, to all appearances, Miss Sawyer looked upon his action as a very natural one, and one in which she was not particularly interested. If she had any secret thoughts concerning him they were driven from her mind by the receipt of a telegram just as they sat down to dinner.

"REDFORD, MASS., July 2, 187--.

"MAUDE SAWYER, Care of Q. A. Sawyer,
Fernborough, via Cottonton.

"Do please come home at once. Something terrible
has happened. FLORENCE."

"What can it be? What do you think is the matter? The message is so inexplicit."

Her brother replied, "Florence evidently is living, unless some one used her name in the telegram. If father or mother were sick or dead she certainly would have said so."

"Perhaps not," said Maude. "She might wish to break the news gently, in person."

"I am willing to wager," said Quincy, "that the trouble affects her more than any one else. But you must go, Maude, and Alice and I will go with you, by the first train to-morrow morning."

Quincy had Andrew get the carryall ready and he and Alice went round to say good-bye. He told Arthur Scates he would come or send for him soon, and that his grandmother could go and help Mrs. Pettingill.

Andrew was told to return the saddle to Cottonton, and Quincy decided that they would go to Boston by way of Eastborough Centre, so Mr. Parsons could be informed that they were through with the saddle horses. They found Uncle Ike fully committed to the idea of founding the hospital. He had seen Squire Rundlett, who was drawing up his will. The goodbye seemed more like a farewell in Uncle Ike's case, for he had aged much in the last year and was really very feeble. Alice told him that Mr. Gay had promised to call upon him in a few days.

When they reached Boston, Quincy said:

"Maude, you must take the train at once for Redford and see what the trouble is. I will leave Alice at home and run down to see you this afternoon."

Maude found Florence in her room, her nose red and her eyes filled with tears.

"Now, Florence, what is it all about?"

"Oh, it is horrible," and there was a fresh flood of tears.

"Are you sick? Mother says she is well and so is father."

"It's all about Reggie."

"Capt. Hornaby? Is he dead?"

"Worse. I wish he was. No, I don't mean that. But the disgrace."

Maude was getting impatient. "What has he done? Married somebody else? But he never proposed to you, did he?"

Florence wiped away her tears. "No, not exactly. But we understood each other."

"Well, I can't understand you. Why don't you tell me what he's done?"

"Well, you know that father loaned him some money when he lost his pocketbook in the pond."

Maude sniffed. "I imagined he did--nobody told me so."

"Father gave him a check for five hundred dollars."

"And the Captain's run away and won't pay. Those foreign fellows often do that. What an appropriate name Hornaby Hook is."

"He has paid. He sent father the money and said he was going back to England at once."

"So, ho! I understand now. My sister has been deserted, jilted, snubbed, and her Sawyer pride is hurt. If you'd written me that I'd be in Fernborough now, and so would Quincy and Alice. Florence, it was mean of you to send such a bloodcurdling telegram for so simple a thing."

"But that isn't all," cried Florence. "When the check for five hundred dollars that father gave him came back it had been raised to five thousand, and father has lost all that money. Oh, it is all over, and I shall never see him again."

Another paroxysm of sobs, and a flood of tears. Maude's sisterly sympathy was, at last, aroused.

"Don't take on so, Flossie. Perhaps he didn't do it after all."

"But father is so indignant. Think of his being paid back with his own money."

Maude could not help laughing. "That was rather nervy, I'll admit. But that very fact makes me think he's innocent."

She didn't really think so, but Florence was likely to go into hysterics and something must be done.

"You know his address. You had better write to him and see what he has to say for himself."

"I can't. Father says if I have any further communication with him, directly, or indirectly, he'll disown me."

"Well, wait awhile. Father'll calm down in time. Cheer up, Flossie, dry your eyes, and do put some powder on your nose. It's as red as a beet."

* * * * *

A little later in the season, Quincy and Alice started for their summer home at Nantucket, where they spent a pleasant two months, Quincy going up to Boston when needed at the State House. As autumn approached, and the time for the state election drew near, great influence was brought to bear on Quincy to make him rescind his decision, and run for governor a second time, but his mind was fully made up, and in spite of the urgings of the leaders of his own party, as well as those of the public at large, he remained firm in his resolve.

Mr. Evans worked hard for the nomination, but his predilections were well known among the labouring classes, and he failed to receive the necessary votes. Benjamin Ropes, a man respected by all, was elected governor, and in January Quincy retired from public life, and settled down to what he thought would be a period of rest and quiet with his wife in the Mount Vernon Street home.

About the middle of the month, however, a letter came from Aunt Ella.

* * * * *

"FERNBOROUGH HALL, "HEATHFIELD, SUSSEX.

"MY DEAR QUINCY AND ALICE: I was going to write nephew and niece, but you both seem nearer and dearer to me than those formal titles express. I see that Quincy is now out of politics, and I know that he

needs a change. Your rooms are all ready for you here, and I want you both to come, just as soon as you can. It will be the best for you, too, Alice, as you will escape the very bad winter that Boston always has. I was delighted to hear the news, and I do hope and pray it will be a boy,--then we shall have a Quincy Adams Sawyer, Junior.

"I wish Maude could come with you. I could introduce her to society here, and, I have found--don't think me conceited--that there is nothing that improves an English gentleman so much as having an American wife. If some of your nice young American gentlemen would marry some English girls and transplant them to American soil, I think the English-speaking race would benefit thereby.

"Sir Stuart is well, and so is

"Your loving aunt,

"ELLA."

* * * * *

"The same Aunt Ella as of old," said Quincy, "always full of new ideas and quaint suggestions. It would be a good thing for you to go, I think, Alice, and I should really relish the change myself. What do you say, a steamer sails next week from here; shall we go?"

"Why, Quincy, it is rather sudden, but I should be glad to see Aunt Ella and Linda again, and I really see no reason why we should not go."

"Well, we will call that settled, then. And Maude, do you think she would join us?"

"Not unless you take Mr. Merry with you," replied Alice with a good natured laugh.

Quincy called at the Beacon Street house that afternoon, and had a talk with Maude about going to Europe with them. He read her Aunt Ella's letter, and added,

"You see, she wishes you to come with us."

"Well, I won't go. She wants to marry me off to some Englishman with a title and no funds. If I ever get married, my husband will be an American. No, take Florence, and let her hunt up Captain Hornaby, her recreant lover,--if he was one. She says they 'understood' each other, but it's evident none of us comprehended--I came near saying apprehended--him."

"I will speak to father about it," said Quincy. "Please tell him that I'll call at his office to-morrow morning. Give my love to Florence. I won't trouble her about it until I've seen father."

Alice thought Florence's substitution for Maude, as regarded the trip to England, was advisable, and certainly showed Maude's good-

heartedness.

When Quincy saw his father he made no mention of the Hornaby incident in connection with Florence joining them on their trip abroad, but in spite of this the Hon. Nathaniel Adams Sawyer was, at first, strongly opposed to the idea of his daughter going away from home. Quincy knew his father too well to argue the matter, and turned the conversation to other subjects.

"I have brought my will, father, and wish you would put it in your safe. I have left everything to Alice to do with as she pleases. I have named you and Dr. Paul Culver as my executors. Have you any objection to serving?"

"You will be more likely to act as my executor than I as yours, but I accept the trust, feeling sure that I shall have no duties to perform."

"There's another matter, father, I wish to speak about. My former private secretary, Mr. Merry, is studying law. When my term expired he, of course, lost his position, for my successor, naturally, wished one of his own friends in the place. If I were a lawyer, I would take him into my office, but--"

"You can't use him in your grocery store," interrupted the Hon. Nathaniel. Quincy took the sarcasm good-naturedly, and laughed. That his father had, to some extent, overcome his displeasure at his son becoming a tradesman, was shown by his next words.

"Our law business is increasing daily, and perhaps I can make an opening for him in the near future. I will bear him in mind."

The Hon. Nathaniel reserved his decision in relation to Florence's trip until he had discussed the matter with his wife, but the next day Maude saw Alice and told her that her father had consented, on one condition, and that was that Quincy would bring her back with him when he returned to America. The Hon. Nathaniel was still suspicious of Aunt Ella, and evidently thought that she wished to get control of his daughter as she had of his son.

Quincy gave his father the required promise. Florence must have time to prepare for such a long journey, so Quincy was obliged to give up the plan of sailing from Boston on a certain date as he had intended. Besides, he wanted, personally, to see how Arthur Scates was getting along at the Sanatorium which was at Lyndon in the Adirondacks, and so he booked passage on the steamer *_Altonia_*, to sail from New York in three weeks.

THE WRECK OF THE _ALTONIA_

"Florence will be ready to start to-morrow," said Alice. This was welcome intelligence to Quincy, who wished several days to spare in New York before sailing.

As soon as his wife and sister were located at a hotel in New York, he made the trip to Lyndon in the Adirondacks to see Arthur Scates. He found him greatly improved, and he told Quincy that he had not felt so well in years. The doctors, too, were more than pleased with his condition, and said that it was only a question of a few months when he would be entirely well again.

When he returned to New York he found that Alice had been to visit Mrs. Ernst in West 41st Street. Madame Archimbault lived with them and still carried on the millinery establishment on Broadway, in which Quincy had accidentally discovered the long-sought Linda Putnam masquerading under the name of Celeste. How that discovery had operated to change the lives of many people came forcibly to Quincy as he sought Leopold Ernst in his down-town office.

Leopold was almost hidden behind piles of manuscripts and newspapers when Quincy entered his room.

"Up to your neck, Leopold?"

As soon as Leopold saw who had addressed him, he jumped up, pushed a pile of manuscripts from his desk to the floor, and grasped Quincy's extended hand in both of his.

"Let me help you pick up your papers," said Quincy.

"No, they're in their proper places. They're rejected. I have accepted two out of fifty or more. The American author sends tons to the literary mill, but it grinds out but a few pounds. But the novices are improving. They will yet lead the world, for we have a new country full of God's wonderful works, and a composite population whose loves and hates reproduce in new scenes all the passions of the Old World. They are the same pictures of human goodness and frailty in new frames--and my business is to judge the workmanship of the frames."

They talked about old times, particularly the success of Alice's first romance.

"Marriage is often fatal to literary activity. Is your wife to write another book?"

"I think not. We expect an addition--not edition--to our family library soon after our return from England."

"That settles it. Literature takes a back seat when Maternity becomes

its competitor. It is well. Otherwise, how could we keep up our supply of authors?"

The evening before the sailing of the *_Altonia_*, a happy party assembled in a private dining room at Quincy's hotel. Toasts were drunk. Alice and Rosa sang and Florence accompanied and played classic selections upon the piano.

"Bon voyage," cried Leopold, as they separated. "Make notes of something really new, make a book of up-to-date travels, and our house will publish it for you, for I'll recommend it no matter how bad it is. We have to do that often for friends of the firm,--why not for our own?"

A foggy night on the ocean. The barometer ranged low. An upward glance disclosed a black mist--no sign of moon or stars. A bad night on land, when trains of cars crash into others laden with humanity--some dying mercifully without knowing the cause; others cruelly, by slow cremation, with willing hands nearby powerless to help.

A bad night off shore, when freight-laden craft, deceived by beacon lights, are beached upon the treacherous sand or dashed against jagged rocks. The life-savers, with rocket, and gun and line, and breeches-buoys, try in vain, and, as a last resort, grasp the oars of the life-boat and bring to safety one or two of a crew of ten. Sad hearts in homes when the news comes; but it is only one of the scenes in the drama of life.

A bad night at sea--with a great ocean liner, its iron heart pulsating, plunging through the black waves into dense mountains of fog.

Despite the darkness and chill of the winter night, Quincy, Alice, and Florence were on the deck of the *_Altonia_*. Alice shuddered and Quincy drew her wrap more closely about her.

"Shall we go down into the cabin?"

"Not yet. There is nothing enjoyable about this Cimmerian gloom, and yet it has its attractions. Florence, what is it that Tom Hood wrote about London fog?"

"I only remember one line, and I'm not sure I can quote that correctly. I think it reads: 'No sun, no moon,' I should add 'no stars, no proper time of day.'"

During the two days since leaving New York, Florence had been a creature of moods: sad, when she brooded over her trouble due, she felt sure, to another's act; light-hearted when she thought of the prospect of again meeting Reginald and having him prove his innocence.

She had been spared newspaper publicity. Not for ten times the sum he

had lost would the Hon. Nathaniel have had his daughter's name in the public prints. He was a lawyer, but it was his business to get other people out of trouble, and not to get his own family into it--which shows that great lawyers are not exempt from that very common human frailty, selfishness.

Sounds of applause were borne to their ears. "Let us go in," said Florence, "some one has been singing."

In the main saloon, all was merriment. Each passenger had faith in Capt. Robert Haskins, who had crossed the Atlantic hundreds of times. The *Altonia* belonged to a lucky line, the luck that follows careful foresight as regards every detail, the luck that brings safety and success from constant vigilance.

In the first cabin were more than two hundred souls--young and old, maids and matrons, young and middle-aged men, and a few beyond the allotted three score years and ten.

Mlle. Carenta, a member of a troupe of grand opera singers, whom many had heard during the company's engagement in New York, arose from the piano amid cries of "bravo," for her superb vocalism. She had sung Gounod's *Ave Maria*.

"How sweetly she sang," said Alice, as she touched her husband's arm to more fully draw his attention from the beautiful vocalist. "Don't you think so, Quincy?"

"Divine," was the reply. "One can almost fancy the doors of Heaven are open."

The cabin was warm--in reality, hot,--but Alice shuddered as she had when chilled by the mist and cold. She caught quickly at her husband's arm.

"I wish we were safe at Fernborough Hall with Aunt Ella."

"And so do I, my dear, but the walking is poor, and we must put up with our present method of locomotion for a few days longer. Think of the good times we have had and those in store for us."

Alice reassured by the words and the accompanying pressure of Quincy's hand exclaimed: "How delightful it was in the country, and how I enjoyed our visits. I shall always love Mason's Corner as it was called when--"

"I met my fate," her husband added. "My line fell in a pleasant place--"

"Don't call me a fish," said his wife, as she smiled half reprovingly.

"Well, we're on the water; if we were in it, we all might wish to be

fish--or rather whales."

The next moment all was confusion. Faces that were white became red--those that were red turned white--even through the colour that art had given to niggardly nature. Fully half the occupants of the saloon were thrown violently to the floor in a promiscuous heap. Others saved themselves from falling by grasping frantically at the nearest object. Many of the lights went out. Some of the women swooned, while men who had deemed themselves brave shook like palsied creatures.

A man half ran, half fell, down the stairway that led into the saloon and stood before the affrighted passengers. No tongue could form a question, but each eager face asked,

"What is it? What has happened?"

His voice came, thin and husky, "We've been struck by another ship in the fog!"

At sea, at night, and that a night of winter chill--and the fog! Such the thought. The fact--ten thousand tons of steel and wood, the product of man's industry, fashioned by his brain, and blood, and bone, crushed and useless, and half a thousand human beings--looking forward to years of happiness--doomed to a terrific struggle with the elements. Strong, courageous, creative man--now a weak, fear-stricken, helpless creature!

"_To the boats!_" came the cry from above, and it was echoed by hundreds of voices. In those three words were a gleam of hope: they opened a path, but through what and to what would it lead? The other ship, a tramp steamer, which had collided with the Altonia was already sinking, and in a few minutes went down, bow foremost, only a few of the crew having escaped in their own boats.

Quincy had been an athlete in his college days. In time of danger, whether the man be ignorant or educated, one feeling--the instinct of self-preservation--is paramount. Alice and Florence had stood mute, helpless. Quincy put an arm about each and sprang to the narrow doorway. It was blocked by two stout men who fought frantically to gain precedence.

Quincy placed his wife in front of him, and, with the hand thus temporarily freed, he grasped one of the men by the collar and threw him back into the saloon where he was trampled upon by the frenzied passengers.

Regardless of the consequence of his act, Quincy mounted the stairs quickly and gained the deck. The boats were being filled rapidly. He placed his wife and sister in one of them.

Alice cried, "Come, Quincy, there is room here."

"No, Alice, not yet. The women must go first."

"I will not go without you."

"Yes, you will, Alice--and you know why."

The mighty craft was filling rapidly. Captain Haskins feared that like the tramp steamer it would founder before the passengers could get into the boats--their frail hope for safety. For himself, he asked no place. He had the spirit of the soldier who expires beside his dying horse, looking fondly at the animal that has borne him so many times in safety, and now gives up his life with his master's.

"For God's sake, come, Quincy!" cried Alice. "For our sake!" and Florence added her entreaties.

Quincy turned and saw a woman with a child by her side. She had made her way from the steerage. She was being deported, for she suffered from trachoma. She had been refused permission to land and join her husband who had stood outside the "pen" and gazed at her and the child. Quincy placed the woman in the boat beside his wife and put the child in its mother's arms.

"Lower away!" came a shrill cry.

"Oh, Quincy, must we part thus?"

Captain Haskins grasped Quincy by the arm.

"Get into the boat, Mr. Sawyer."

Quincy saw that the boat, filled with women, was already over-loaded.

He turned to the Captain and said: "There is more room here with you."

Nature's ways are mysterious but effective. A brisk breeze broke the fog, and the rays of the noonday sun fell upon a placid sea. The boat containing Alice and Florence was picked up by the Macedonian of a rival line and the rescued made comfortable. For hours the steamer cruised about rescuing hundreds of the Altonia's passengers, but some of the boats were never heard from.

Alice and many others had hoped that the wrecked vessel was still afloat, but the Altonia had disappeared,--was far below in hundreds of fathoms of water.

CHAPTER XII

FERNBOROUGH HALL

Fernborough Hall,--not a hall in the town of Fernborough in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, but a rambling, old-fashioned brick building in the County of Sussex in "Merrie England;" a stately home set in the middle of hundreds of acres of upland, lowland, and woodland. Wings had been added as required, and a tower from which, on a clear day, the English Channel could be seen with the naked eye, while a field-glass brought into view the myriad craft, bound east and west, north and south, on the peaceful missions of trade.

There was no terrace upon which gaudy peacocks strutted back and forth, but in front of the Hall was a small artificial lake in which some transplanted fish led the lives of prisoners. Lady Fernborough begged the Baronet to end their miserable existence, but, to him, innovation was folly and destruction bordered on criminality.

"When I am gone, Ella," he would say, "you may introduce your American ideas, for everything will be yours. When the Fernborough name dies, let the fish die too."

The long search for his lost daughter had made him misanthropic. His knowledge of her sad death had been accompanied, it is true, by the pleasing intelligence that his daughter's child lived, but that grand-daughter, though of his blood and British born, had not been educated according to British ideas. To be sure, she was now a Countess, but she had been transplanted to her native soil, and had not grown there.

It might be asked, if he was so insular in his ideas, why had he taken an American wife, and she a widow? He had been charmed by her vivacity. She lifted him out of the gloom in which he had lived so long. If she had been tame and prosaic, she would have worn the weeds of widowhood again in a short time. She made him comfortable; she surrounded him with the brightest people she could find; he was not allowed to mope indoors, and Sir Stuart Fernborough and his sprightly American wife attended all the important social functions of the County, and many in London, and at the houses of their friends. And now a great joy was to come to Lady Fernborough. She expected visitors from the United States, and what she considered needful preparations kept her in a flutter of excitement.

"How soon do you expect them?" asked Sir Stuart at breakfast.

"To-morrow, or next day. They sailed on the tenth; to-morrow is the seventeenth, but they may rest for a day in Liverpool--"

"Or stay a day or two in London," suggested Sir Stuart.

"I hope not, for my guests will be impatient to see a real live American ex-governor. Quincy's political advancement has been very rapid."

"America is a rapid country, my dear," was Sir Stuart's comment.

When Lady Fernborough reached her boudoir, she seated herself at her writing desk and wrote rapidly for nearly an hour.

"I don't wish too many guests," she soliloquized as she sealed the last invitation. "Now, I must write to Linda."

"My dear Linda,

"I have a great surprise for you. You must forgive me for keeping a secret. I do it so seldom, I wished the experience. I am like the penniless suitor who proposed to an heiress, who, he knew, would reject him, just to see how it would make him feel to lose a fortune. I think I saw that in Punch, but it fits my case exactly. They will be here, _sure_, day after to-morrow. I mean Quincy and Alice, and, I hope, Maude. Come and bring all the children. I suppose Algernon is in London helping to make laws for unruly Britishers, but we will make merry and defy the constables. Despite my marital patronymic, and my armorial bearings, I am still, your loving aunt
Ella."

Alice was not to tell the sad news to Lady Fernborough. The telegraph outstrips the ocean liner, and a newspaper, with tidings of the great calamity, was in Aunt Ella's hands long before the arrival of the broken-hearted wife and disconsolate sister. The invitations were countermanded, and days of sorrow followed instead of the anticipated time of joyfulness.

Alice and Florence told the story of the tragedy over and over again to sympathizing listeners.

"That was just like Quincy to give his place to that poor woman and her child," said Aunt Ella. "Like Bayard he was without fear and he died without reproach."

Alice would not abandon hope. She racked her brain for possibilities and probabilities. Perhaps there had been another boat in which her husband and the Captain escaped. They might have been discovered and rescued by some vessel bound to America, or, perhaps, some faraway foreign country. He would let them know as soon as he reached land.

Aunt Ella, though naturally optimistic, did not, in her own heart, share Alice's hopeful anticipations. Perhaps Florence's somewhat extravagant account of the collision and the events which followed it led her to form the opinion that her nephew's escape from death was impossible.

Hope takes good root, but it is a flower that, too often, has no blossom. A month passed--two--three--four--five--six--and then despair filled the young wife's heart. She could bear up no longer, and Dr. Parshefield made frequent visits.

Aunt Ella pressed the fatherless infant to her breast.

"What shall you name him, Alice?"

"There can be but one name for him. God sent us two little girls, but took them back again. We both wished for a son, and Heaven has sent one, but has taken the father from us."

"And you will name him--"

"Quincy Adams Sawyer, Junior," was the answer. "It is his birthright."

"But," said Aunt Ella, "they never add Junior to a boy's name unless his father is living."

Alice sat up in bed, and her eyes flashed as she said,

"My heart has renewed its hope with this young life. I believe my husband still lives, and, until I have conclusive proofs of his death, our son's name will be Quincy Adams Sawyer, Junior."

CHAPTER XIII

"HORNABY HOOK"

Time, it is said, will dull the deepest sorrow. There are some who put out of sight everything to remind them of the lost one, while others treasure every memento, and never tire of recalling the virtues of the departed.

In Alice's case the presence of her little boy was a constant reminder of her husband. In Aunt Ella she found a willing listener, and talking of her past happy married life aided greatly in restoring her nerve power and improving her general health.

She said one day, "Aunt Ella, don't you think it better to face your troubles bravely than to fly away from them?"

"I certainly do. You are following the right course, Alice; the same as I did when Robert died. Your parting with Quincy was sad, inexpressibly so, but imagine my feelings to awake and find my husband dead in the bed beside me. Did I try to forget him? You remember his rooms in the Mount Vernon Street house. They became my Mecca--the place to which I went when I had a 'blue fit,' or was depressed in any way. God has sent you a child to keep your husband's memory fresh. I repeat, Alice, you are doing the right thing."

"I do it," said Alice, "for two reasons. One is that it makes me happy. The other is, that believing that my husband still lives, I

wish to bring up his son so that he will be proud of him."

Florence, after awhile, made a confidante of Aunt Ella and told her about Captain Hornaby. She confessed her interest in him and said that notwithstanding his crime she loved him, but that her father would never forgive him.

"What part of England did he come from?" asked Aunt Ella.

"He said from Hornaby--that the place was named after his family. Their home was called Hornaby Hook, because, as he said, it was built upon a promontory in the form of a hook."

"What is his father's name?"

"Sir Wilfred, and Reginald is the fourth son."

"No chance of his ever getting the title," remarked Aunt Ella.

"I wonder where Hornaby Hook is," said Florence.

"That's easily found out. Linda has Burke's Peerage and I'll write to her to-day."

Lady Fernborough more than kept her promise, for in her letter she told the Countess Florence's unhappy love story besides asking for information about the Hornaby family.

Linda's reply was a revelation.

"MY DEAR AUNT ELLA,

"I was very sorry to hear that Quincy's sister has been so unfortunate in her love affair, and astonished to find that Captain Hornaby is the cause of it. You will be surprised to learn that Algernon is well acquainted with Sir Wilfred who is an old-fashioned English gentleman and the soul of honour. He has met the Captain and thought him a fine young fellow. Hornaby Hook is on the Sussex coast about ten miles from us. Come and see us and bring Florence with you. Perhaps there is an explanation of the affair which the Captain can give. He should not be condemned without a hearing. Give my love to Alice and tell her I'm coming to see that baby very soon. With love, ever yours, LINDA."

Aunt Ella was now in her element. There was a mystery to be explained and she held the key. She told Florence where Hornaby Hook was, and that the Hornaby family was a fine one, and that Sir Wilfred was held in the highest respect by everybody, but did not mention Linda's suggestion of a visit, and a possible explanation. She knew Florence would not accompany her if there was any possibility of her meeting the Captain. It would appear as though she was running after him, and no American girl, especially a Sawyer, would do that.

Sir Stuart was greatly interested in young Quincy, and Mrs. Villiers, the housekeeper, thought him the handsomest and best baby she had ever seen. Thus the way was paved for the first step in Aunt Ella's plot.

"Alice, do you think you would be very lonesome if I went away for a week?"

"Why no, Aunt Ella. Why should I be? I have the baby, and Sir Stuart and Mrs. Villiers are both goodness itself to me."

"Florence is not looking very well. Don't you think a week at the seashore would do her good?"

"I wish she could go, poor girl. When I think of her, I say to myself that I have no right to be unhappy. If Quincy is dead, he died nobly, to save others. But the shame connected with Captain Hornaby is what Florence feels so deeply."

That same day Aunt Ella wrote to Linda that she was coming with Florence, and that Algernon and she must arrange in some way to bring about that "explanation."

Algernon, Earl of Sussex, and the Countess Linda lived at Ellersleigh in the County of Sussex, not many miles from historic Hastings. To Aunt Ella and Florence they extended a warm and heartfelt welcome, and Florence, used as she was to the luxuries of life, could not but marvel at the beauty and even splendour that surrounded the Countess--once an American country girl named Linda Putnam.

"I have sent out cards for a dinner party next Thursday," said Linda to Aunt Ella. "There will be an opportunity for that 'explanation,' but you must assume the responsibility if there should be a tragic ending."

"We must hope for the best," replied Aunt Ella. "I will gather up the fragments after the explosion."

From the expression on Florence's face, when Sir Wilfred Hornaby and Captain Reginald Hornaby were announced as guests, the explosion seemed imminent.

In her mind, she had looked forward to such a meeting with a sensation of delight. Now that it had come her pride was up in arms. She had been tricked into coming. The Countess and Aunt Ella had arranged this meeting. Perhaps he had been told that she would be present. Well, if they did meet, he would have to do the talking. She had no explanation to make. If he had one, he must introduce the subject.

At the dinner Florence sat next to Sir Wilfred, but the Captain was far removed on the other side of the long table. Sir Wilfred was politely attentive. Did he know of his son's crime? Evidently not--

but, if he did, he had condoned the offence. But how could he if he was the man of honour that the Countess had pictured him in her letter to Aunt Ella? No, the son had deceived _his_ father as he had _her_ father. Did she really love him? Had she forgiven him? If he had proposed when Florence was in that state of uncertainty, his rejection would have been swift and positive.

When the dinner was over, the Captain, apparently unconscious of guilt, approached Florence. He offered his arm.

"Will you come with me, Miss Sawyer? I have a very important question to ask you."

Should she go? He was going to ask her a question. She had many to ask him. This unpleasant uncertainty must end--now, was the accepted time.

She took his arm, and he made his way to the conservatory--that haven of confidences, where so many lovers have been made happy, or unhappy.

"Why have you not answered my letters?" he said.

"I never received them." Her voice was cold, and she removed her hand from his arm.

"I sent them in your father's care."

"That is probably the reason why I did not get them."

"Why should he refuse to give them to you? I borrowed money from him but I repaid him before I left America."

He thought she was not acquainted with his perfidy. She would undeceive him.

"Did you tell him the truth when you borrowed it?"

His face flushed. How could she know? But she did. He would be honest with her.

"No, I did not."

"I knew it. My sister Maude recovered your coat, but there was no money or bills of exchange in your pocket book--only a few visiting cards bearing the name of Col. Arthur Spencer."

The young man bowed his head. He was guilty. She would leave him without another word. She turned to go. He caught her hand, which she, indignantly, withdrew from his grasp.

"I will explain, Miss Sawyer." Was he going to tell the truth, or invent another story?

"Arthur Spencer was the Colonel of the first regiment with which I was connected. I do not belong to it now. He is a poor man, and an inveterate gambler. I had not seen him for two years, when we met in New York just before I went to Boston. You are tired, Miss Sawyer."

He pointed to a seat beneath some palms, and led her, unresistingly, to it.

"He asked me to dinner with him, and I went. Then he suggested a game of cards while we smoked and I foolishly consented. The stakes, at first, were small, and he won rapidly. He increased his bets and I was forced, against my will, to meet them. When we stopped playing, he had not only won all my money, but had my 'I O U' for three hundred dollars. I had to borrow money from him to pay my hotel bill and fare to Boston."

Florence nodded. She could not speak.

"I had letters of introduction to Boston families--among them, your own. When that accident happened--" she looked up at him inquiringly--

[Illustration: "You have acknowledged that you are a gambler]

"No, don't think that of me--it was not intentional on my part--I was without money--the Colonel must be paid--my allowance was not due for ten days--I invented the story that I told your father."

"It was a lie!" Florence choked as she uttered the accusing words.

"Yes, it was a lie, and one for which I have sincerely repented, I told my father, and he forgave me, but said, as the coat was gone, to let the matter drop, that nothing would be gained by confessing to your father as he had been paid, and had met with no loss."

Florence sprang to her feet. "No loss!" she cried. "How can you say that? You have acknowledged that you are a gambler and a liar--why not finish the story and confess your crime?"

"Crime, Florence! What do you mean?"

Her lips curled

"You do not know what I mean?"

"No, as God hears me, I do not. You accuse me--of what?"

She felt that the crux was reached. "Did you not know when the check for five hundred dollars came back to my father's bank that it had been raised to five thousand dollars?"

The Captain reeled, and came near falling. He clutched at the palm tree which sustained him until he regained his footing.

"My God! And you have thought me the thief!"

"What else could I think?"

"I can't understand.... I met Col. Spencer in Boston--those birds of prey always follow their victims, and gave him the check, receiving two hundred dollars in return. He must have--and yet I cannot believe he would do such a thing. He is in London now. To-morrow I will go and find him."

"But if he denies it--how can you prove him guilty?"

"Unless he frees my name from such a charge--I will challenge him--and kill him!"

Florence could no longer act as accuser. Her heart plead for the young Englishman who had confessed his error, but who so strenuously denied his participation in a crime. "Miss Sawyer, will you mercifully suspend judgment until my return from London?"

She did not reply in words, but gave him her hand.

When they rejoined the company both Linda and Aunt Ella noticed Florence's heightened colour and the brightness of her eyes.

"He must have explained," said Linda, "when an occasion offered."

"I hope so," was Aunt Ella's reply, and she felicitated herself upon the success of their joint plot.

CHAPTER XIV

AN AMERICAN HEIRESS

For some time after rejoining the company, Florence was so busy with her thoughts that she paid little attention to what was going on about her. She was aroused from her abstraction by a sharp voice:

"Don't you think Captain Hornaby is a very handsome young man?"

Florence looked and found that her questioner was Lady Elfrida Hastings, the only sister of the Earl. When that lady had visited them at Nahant, she had considered her the embodiment of all the female virtues. She recalled her statuesque repose, and her aristocratic manner which had so pleased her father. She also remembered the morning when she was discovered by Maude practising the Lady Elfrida's poses, and her sister's inquiry as to whether she had a chill and wanted the quinine pills.

Feeling the necessity of saying something, she replied: "I haven't noticed him particularly."

The Lady Elfrida, perfect gentlewoman that she was, said severely, for her, "Your failure to do so, certainly was not due to lack of opportunity."

So, her long absence in his company had been noticed. She was at a loss for a reply, when to her great relief the Earl approached and asked if she would play a certain piece which he had admired very much when in America.

"What was its name?"

"I can't remember," said the Earl. "It ran something like this," and he hummed a few measures.

"Oh," cried Florence, "Old Folks at Home." The scene through which she had gone with the Captain had awakened deep emotions, and her voice was in the temperamental condition to give a sadly-weird effect to the lines of the chorus. When she sang

"Oh, my heart is sad and weary"

the Lady Elfrida turned to Mrs. Ellice, the Rector's wife, and remarked, "There was a rumour that Captain Hornaby was greatly interested in Miss Sawyer, but from something she told me to-night I do not think it will be a match."

"Why, what did she say?" asked Mrs. Ellice with natural feminine curiosity as regards love affairs.

"I hardly feel warranted in repeating it," said the Lady Elfrida, "as it was given to me in confidence."

Later in the evening the Lady Elfrida sought Captain Hornaby. "My dear Captain, don't you think Miss Sawyer sings divinely?"

The Captain, with his mind on Col. Spencer and the tenfold check, replied, rather brusquely, "I'm not a great lover of negro melodies."

The Lady Elfrida felt sure that Captain Hornaby was still an "eligible," but she reflected that he was a fourth son and dependent upon the bounty of his father and elder brother, and that her dowry must come from her brother who, in her opinion, had a very extravagant wife--but none of those American girls had any idea of economy.

The next morning, Captain Hornaby went to London in search of Colonel Spencer. He visited his clubs, and, because it was necessary, many of the gambling places, but his quest was fruitless. As a last resort he went to the War Office and learned that the Colonel had sailed the day before to join his regiment in India.

The Captain reported the failure of his mission to Florence.

"I have been talking the matter over with Aunt Ella. She advises me to send a cable message to father asking what bank the check was deposited in and by whom."

"He may have cashed it at your father's bank," said the Captain.

"Then Aunt Ella says my father can see the bank officers and make sure that the Colonel got the money."

"I will go back to London to-morrow and send the message in your name."

"The story deepens," said the Captain, when he returned with the reply from the Hon. Nathaniel Adams Sawyer. It read,

"State National. Deposited five hundred. Revere House. Interviewed my bank."

"What does it mean?" asked Florence. "So many words are omitted. I can't make sense of it."

"It means," said the Captain, "that Col. Spencer is innocent. He was staying at the Revere House when I paid him his three hundred dollars. He must have cashed your father's check at the hotel, they paying him five hundred dollars only, and they, I mean the hotel proprietors, deposited it in their bank, the State National."

"But what do the last three words mean?"

"They mean that some one in your father's bank raised the check and he has seen the bank officers about it."

"I'm so glad," cried Florence. "You must come and explain it all to Aunt Ella."

She was greatly pleased to learn that Captain Hornaby was innocent of any complicity in the embezzlement, and said to Florence: "You will get a letter from your father telling you who the real criminal is," and turning to the Captain, continued, "We go back to Fernborough Hall to-morrow, Captain Hornaby, but when that letter comes we will send for you."

"I can bear the suspense now that Colonel Spencer and myself are free from any charge of criminality, but I greatly regret, Miss Sawyer, that your father has met with such a heavy loss."

"Don't worry, yet, Captain," said Aunt Ella. "Florence's father won't be out any money if there's any legal way of making the bank bear the loss."

When Aunt Ella and Florence returned to Fernborough Hall they told Alice the wonderful story.

"I am so glad for your sake, Florence, and the Captain's too. I think Aunt Ella's suggestion about sending the cablegram to your father was an excellent one."

The story was told, also, to Sir Stuart. He was gratified to learn that two officers of Her Majesty's army had been freed from the charge of embezzlement, but deplored the fact that gambling was so prevalent among them.

"I am an Englishman born and bred," said he, "but I think the law of primogeniture is, as a general rule, a bad one. Driving, as it does, the younger sons into the army, the navy, the church, and the law may be beneficial, for the branches of our national defence and the professions must be recruited from a stratum of intelligent men; the lack of money may be a spur to ambition in many instances, but it often leads to devious practices, and--" he saw that he had three interested listeners--"the whole system is contrary to your countrymen's idea that all men are created free and equal. While I cannot accept that doctrine _in toto_, I do believe that the bestowal of titles and fortune upon the eldest son is attended with grave evils, not only among our nobility, but in our royal successions. The Almighty does not follow such a law in endowing his children, and it is contrary to Nature's _dictum_ 'the survival of the fittest.'"

Sir Stuart had expressed such opinions during his term in Parliament. The path of the political pioneer is strewn with temporary defeats, but all reforms, based upon truth, are ultimately successful, or life would be a stagnant pool instead of a river of progress.

A letter from Maude contained a solution of the mystery.

"DEAR AUNT ELLA AND SISTER FLO:--What a rumpus there has been about that raised check. Father was as dumb as an oyster about the affair until he had it all settled, then he told ma and me.

"How you two feminines must have suffered--one from hopeless love--and the other from helpless sympathy. But it is all over now, and the probity of two, presumably, gallant officers is vindicated, while the paying teller of father's bank is behind the bars with a certain prospect of years of manual labour for bed and board. Why will men be so foolish? Easily answered. The love of gold, not made in an honest way, but by speculating with other folks' money. Mr. Barr, the aforesaid teller, is a nice young fellow with a wife and two children, but his life is wrecked. Of course she will get a divorce and try to find a better man. We are all well, including Mr. Merry. He intended to take the place in father's office that Quincy spoke about, but Harry--there, I've written it, so will let it go--had a better position offered him by Mr. Curtis Carter, one of Quincy's old friends, and he's doing splendidly Mr. Carter told me.

"I am heartbroken about Quincy. I trust Alice's hopes may be realized and most of the time I share them.

"How's that nephew of mine? Send him over and we'll bring him up a Yankee boy. He's no Englishman.

"We are all well, and everybody sends love to everybody. MAUDE.

"P. S. Father didn't lose anything on the check. The bank paid the money back to him."

* * * * *

Aunt Ella kept her promise to the Captain and the part of Maude's letter which concerned the check was read to him. He improved his opportunity by asking Florence to be his wife.

"My father was greatly pleased with you and will welcome you as a daughter."

"Whether my father will welcome you as a son is the question," said Florence. "My father is a very wealthy man. I know the conventionalities and requirements of English life, and although my love for you is not dependent upon your having or not having a fortune, I cannot become a burden to you, or dependent upon your family, as I might become if my father refused his consent."

"You American girls are intensely practical."

"Are not Englishmen equally so when they pay court to American heiresses? I don't mean you, of course."

"My father and brothers will allow me twenty-five hundred pounds a year, about twelve thousand dollars of your money."

"Could we live, as we have both lived, on that income, Reginald?"

"To be honest, Florence, I don't think we could have a town house, a place in the country, and entertain much."

"Certainly not, Reginald. If my father gives his consent, I will be your wife whenever you say. If he refuses, we must wait."

The next mail brought a short letter for Florence from her sister.

"DEAR FLO:--I didn't want to put what I'm going to write now in my other letter. I suppose Reggie will propose now. Don't you accept him until Father is told. You love money and style, and the first enables you to indulge in the second.

"I don't blame Reggie for borrowing if he was hard up, but knew he could pay. But most men are deceitful creatures, anyway. Don't let Aunt Ella write to father. He was always sore about her influence

over Quincy, and he mustn't think Aunt Ella made this match. If the Countess would write him, puffing up Reggie's ancestors, and his blue blood and ancestral home, and a hint (I hope it is so) that the Hornaby's are a very wealthy family and related (distantly of course) to royalty, Pater may say 'yes,' and give you his blessing. I do, if that will help any. Your loving sister,

"MAUDE."

* * * * *

Florence had to make confidantes of Aunt Ella and Alice. She repeated her conversation with Reginald and allowed them to read Maude's letter.

"Maude has a level head," was Aunt Ella's comment. "I'll go and have a talk with Linda. If she will write your father in the Captain's behalf, I think things will come out all right."

Linda was not only willing to assure the Hon. Nathaniel Adams Sawyer that Capt. Hornaby belonged to an old and honourable family, but also that he did not seek his daughter's hand because her father was a wealthy man, for the Hornaby estate was a large one, and the rentals sufficient to allow the Captain an adequate income, although there were other brothers to share the patrimony.

The Hon. Nathaniel deliberated before answering. Florence had always been a dutiful daughter and the fact that she would not become engaged without his consent was an acknowledgment of his parental influence which was vastly pleasing to his vanity. He had been tricked into accepting Alice as his son's wife, and he knew that Maude, when she made up her mind to marry would be guided little, if any, by his advice. Filial love and respect deserved their reward.

He wrote the Countess giving his consent to the marriage, and, what was most important, declared his intention of allowing Mrs. Captain Hornaby an income of fifteen thousand dollars annually, and a liberal provision at his death. He was very sorry, but pressing legal duties would prevent his attendance at the wedding if it took place in England.

The Countess insisted upon the wedding taking place at Ellersleigh. She had obtained the, otherwise, obdurate father's consent, and demanded compensation for her services.

So many weddings have been described that novelty in that line is impossible. Sufficient to say that the Countess fulfilled expectations and more, and the event was the year's sensation in Sussex, the echoes of which reached imperial London, and far off democratic America.

The Lady Elfrida Hastings was present at the wedding. She congratulated the Captain and his bride, but took occasion to say to

the latter,--

"My dear, don't sing those sentimental American songs any more. That night you looked so _triste_ I was afraid the present delightful affair would never become a reality."

Florence did not confess that, on the evening in question, she had misgivings herself.

CHAPTER XV

AN ELOPEMENT

The Hon. Nathaniel Adams Sawyer sat in his library reading a ponderous legal document. It was full of knotty points requiring deep thinking, and the Hon. Nathaniel was breathing deeply and thinking deeply when the door was opened quietly and a young girl looked in. She stood for a moment regarding the reader.

"Father, are you very busy?"

The man finished reading the page before noticing the speaker.

"I am always busy, Maude, except when asleep, and I sometimes think my subliminal consciousness is active then."

Maude's inclination was to say "Oh, my!" but she repressed the ejaculation.

"I can give you a few minutes, Maude, if the subject is an important one. Come in."

Maude entered, seated herself, folded her hands in her lap and regarded her father as a disobedient pupil would a teacher.

"Father--"

The Hon. Nathaniel was listening attentively.

"Father--"

"Repetition is effective if not indulged in to excess. I often use it in my arguments before juries."

Maude flushed. She was particularly sensitive to sarcasm, but could stand any amount of good-natured raillery.

"Father, I'm going to be married."

The Hon. Nathaniel readjusted his glasses and regarded the speaker.

"It must be a clandestine attachment. I am not aware of meeting any gentleman who declared any desire to make you his wife. At whose house have you met your intended? I have no reason to suspect your Aunt Ella owing to her absence in Europe."

"I've never been to anybody's house. I've walked with him on the Common and in the Public Garden."

"Ah, two parks frequented by the elite of the city."

Maude resented his last remark. "Just as good people as I am go there."

"Do you mean that you are no better than those who go there?"

His voice was stern. Maude saw that she had made a mistake. "Some of them," she said in a low voice.

"Who is the favoured gentleman? Have I the honour of his acquaintance?"

"Why, yes, you've met him. It's Harry, I mean Mr. Merry."

"The young man who was Quincy's private secretary. Quincy wished me to take him into my office, but he never appeared in person."

"He's with Mr. Curtis Carter on Tremont Street. Mr. Carter was one of Quincy's most intimate friends."

"And Mr. Merry preferred going to one of Quincy's friends, than to me, and criminal cases rather than civil procedure. Mr. Carter revels in murder trials. But why has this young man failed to consult me on a matter so greatly affecting your future? Why have you assumed the initiative? This is not leap year."

Maude was ready to cry, but she choked down her rising temper.

"I think he's afraid to."

"What has he done that he should fear me?"

Maude made another mistake. "He never borrowed any money of you."

The Hon. Nathaniel disliked any reference to that raised check. "If he marries you, perhaps he will find it difficult to support you without borrowing money--but I shall not loan him any."

"He says he can support me as well as I wish, and I am going to marry him."

This was flat-footed defiance, and the Hon. Nathaniel grew red in the

face at being thus bearded in his den.

"Maude, I am astonished. I command you not to meet this young man again unless in my presence or that of your mother. When I meet him, I shall have something to say to him."

He resumed the reading of the document, and Maude, knowing that it was useless to say more, left the room.

The next day at noon, Maude told her mother she was going to make some purchases on Winter Street. As no objection was made, Maude felt sure that her father had not mentioned their conversation to her mother. She met Harry and they walked down the "Long Path" on the Common, made famous by the genial "Autocrat," not only of one breakfast table, but of thousands of others.

"He will never consent," said Maude.

"I thought so."

"He was real mean to me--as sarcastic as he could be."

"Rich fathers are usually indignant when their daughters wish to marry poor men. He can have no other objection to me."

"Have you any money saved up, Harry?"

"Yes, I've got two thousand dollars in the bank to furnish our flat with."

"We shall have to go to a justice of the peace, for father will not let me be married at home. Oh, if Aunt Ella were here."

"Where is she?"

"In England. She's the wife of a baronet, and he is rich and so is Aunt Ella."

"Maude, let's elope and go to England for our honeymoon."

* * * * *

Aunt Ella and Alice had been to Ketchley to make some purchases for young Quincy's wardrobe. As they entered the house a maid said that a young lady and gentleman were waiting to see them.

"Both of us?" queried Aunt Ella.

The maid replied: "They said they wished to see Lady Fernborough and Mrs. Quincy Adams Sawyer."

"I will see if baby is all right and join you in a few minutes," said Alice.

Aunt Ella passed her hat and wrap to the maid, and entered the drawing room.

"Maude Sawyer, what cloud did you drop from? Where did you come from? Excuse me," said Aunt Ella as she espied Maude's companion, who had kept in the background.

"This is my husband, Mr. Harry Merry. We're just from London. We've been doing the town. What a big noisy place."

Alice came in and the introduction was repeated.

"Well, Maude," said Aunt Ella, "we're delighted to see you and your husband, but your arrival was so unexpected that you must pardon my evidences of surprise."

"They're very excusable," said Maude. "I can hardly realize, myself, that we are here. You and Alice are wondering what brought us, and you are entitled to an explanation. We just eloped because father would not give his consent."

The presence of Mr. Merry made the situation an awkward one, but Aunt Ella was a woman with opinions and was not afraid to express them. So she said:

"I suppose your father will disinherit you. I hope that will not mar your future happiness."

"I don't think it will. Harry has a good position, we've got some money in the bank, and we're going to have a nice little flat in Cambridge or Roxbury. I want to see my little nephew, Quincy's boy, and then we are going right back to London."

"Come with me," said Alice, "and see the baby, but Aunt Ella and I will never consent to your leaving us so soon. You must pay us a long visit."

"I would," replied Maude, "but for one thing father said to me. We will stay over night, for I have so much to tell both of you."

"Come to the library," said Aunt Ella. "I will introduce your husband to Sir Stuart, and then we will go to the nursery where we can talk as long as we wish."

When they reached the nursery, Maude's first wish was gratified--she held, and hugged and kissed, and praised her brother's boy. Alice's face beamed with delight.

"Now, Maude," exclaimed Aunt Ella, "why this runaway marriage? Tell us all about it."

Maude laughed. "It's so funny. I told father I was going to marry Mr.

Merry, and he about the same as said I shouldn't. He told me not to meet him again unless in his presence or mother's."

"That was reasonable. Why did you object?" asked Aunt Ella.

"It wouldn't have done any good. He's opposed to Harry because he isn't rich. Was Nathaniel Adams Sawyer rich when he married your sister, Aunt Ella?"

"I should say not. They began housekeeping in three rooms, but my brother-in-law is a born money-maker."

"We're going to have five rooms, and I think Harry has it in him to make money--at any rate I'm going to give him a chance and help him all I can."

"How did you manage to get away?" asked Alice. She remembered that Quincy married her without his father's consent. But for the fact that she became famous by writing a popular book, he would never have welcomed her into the family. In fact, he had been "cornered" and had to surrender. So, she was full of sympathy for Maude, for her own fate might have been similar.

"That's the funny part," said Maude. "I could get away easily enough, but I wanted my clothes and many things that I prized. I knew it was wrong, but I deceived my father. I am sorry for that, but I couldn't give Harry up."

"What did you do?" asked Aunt Ella.

"Why, I told father if he wanted to get me away from Harry that he must let me come to England and see Florence. I didn't say I was coming to see you--"

"That wouldn't have appealed to him," interrupted Aunt Ella.

Maude continued: "Then everything was plain sailing. He gave me money for an outfit, bought my ticket and return, found me a chaperone, a brother lawyer and his wife were coming over, and gave me five hundred dollars to spend. I consider that is my dowry, for I don't expect any more. Florence gets fifteen thousand a year and I get five hundred all in a lump. But I am not envious of Florence. She needs the money, and I don't."

"Then your father does not know that you are married?" said Alice.

"Certainly not. Harry was on the same boat, but we never spoke to each other all the way over. We suspected that father had spoken to Mr. Harding or his wife about Harry, and so we were very circumspect and gave no cause for suspicion."

"Well," said Aunt Ella, "I will go with you to see Florence, but Mr. Merry--"

"Please call him Harry, Aunt Ella. Isn't he your nephew--in-law?"

"Then," Aunt Ella continued, "Harry must stay here. Alice and I will think out some way of breaking the news to your father. I'm glad you told me the whole story, for I think I see a way to overcome his objections."

The visit to Mrs. Captain Hornaby was paid, and Maude Sawyer was obliged to kiss and be kissed by her brother-in-law.

"You didn't win the canoe race," said Maude, "but you were determined to have that kiss and so you married Florence;" but her sister was not present when she made the remark.

"Where is your friend, Colonel Spencer?"

"In India. I have never seen him since I gave him that check."

"That paying teller got twenty years in prison for his penmanship," said Maude. "Father thought you were the bad man until Aunt Ella sent the message that led father to investigate and find out who deposited the check. I was awful glad that you got out of it so nicely."

"So was I," said Reginald. "I hope some day I can help somebody else out of a bad box just to show my gratitude."

Maude thought of her "bad box," but Reginald could not help her or Harry.

"Are you going to India?" she asked. "How is it that you are not with the army?"

"I have sold my captaincy. Florence did not wish me to leave her, and my eldest brother decided the matter. He hates farming and accounts. I love both, so I am in charge of the estate. My brother Paul has been given a living as they call it in the church, and Geoffrey has entered the navy. My brother Wilfred will inherit the title, so we are all provided for."

Aunt Ella and Alice had many long confabs about the young couple, and how to reinstate Maude in her father's good graces when the truth became known to him.

"I have an idea," said Alice one morning to Aunt Ella. "Yesterday I had a letter from Dr. Paul Culver, one of the executors of Quincy's will. He says his practice is so great that he cannot do justice to my interests, and asks me to suggest some one to be appointed in his stead."

"What's your idea? Though perhaps I can guess," said Aunt Ella.

"I am going to suggest Mr. Merry. I had many talks with him while you

were away with Maude, and I am deeply impressed in his favour. Are you surprised?"

"Not so much as you will be when I tell you that Florence and her husband are going back with Maude. Harry will have to go too, so something must be done. Now, you know that I gave Quincy an allowance of five thousand dollars a year when he was married. I am going to give it to Harry."

"And why not let them live in the Mount Vernon Street house--until--" Her voice broke.

"I know what you were going to say, Alice. It is a good idea--all furnished and ready for occupancy. I shall never see it again--and you may not for years--for I can't spare you."

"When do they sail?" Alice asked.

"In about a week. I'm going to write a letter to Sarah to-night to pave the way."

It was midnight when Aunt Ella completed a letter that seemed to fit the case.

"MY DEAR SISTER SARAH:--I write to let you know that Florence and her husband will sail for America in about a week. This may not be news to you, for probably Florence has written you, but it will be news when I tell you that Maude and her husband, Mr. Merry, will sail on the same steamer. They have visited Florence and are now here with me.

"I presume Nathaniel will be very angry, and he may say that I am responsible, as he did in Quincy's case. I did help Quincy and Alice and I am going to help Maude and Harry. I am going to allow them five thousand a year and Alice gives them the free use of the Mount Vernon Street house. She has written Nathaniel about Mr. Merry taking Dr. Culver's place as one of Quincy's executors.

"Now, if Nathaniel gets very angry and threatens to disinherit Maude, just ask him, for me, why it is that all his children have been married away from home. Has it always been their fault, or is his home discipline in part, or wholly, the cause? It didn't make so much difference in Quincy's case, but here in England no girl is married outside of her father's house, unless it be in church.

"Your children are now all married, and, I think, well married. Let Nathaniel make the best of it, and, instead of keeping up a family warfare, change his tactics and become an indulgent, loving father.

"Your sister,

"ELLA.

"P. S. Let Nathaniel read this letter. It will do him good."

Aunt Ella read her letter over before sealing it. There was a quiet smile on her face as she pressed the seal upon the melted wax. Then she soliloquized:

"Yes, it will do him good to read that letter. He has no one else to boss now but Sarah, but she doesn't resist, and ready acquiescence takes away the pleasure of domineering. The boss wishes to break stout twigs, not simply press down pliant willows." There came a sharp rap upon the door--it was thrown open, and Alice entered.

"Oh, Aunt Ella, Quincy is very sick. He is choked up so he can hardly breathe. I'm afraid it is the croup."

"We must send for Dr. Parshefield at once. But who can go? Henry injured his foot to-day and cannot walk. Lennon, the butler, cannot ride a horse, and Simon, the stable boy, would be frightened to death so late at night."

"Oh, what shall we do?" cried Alice.

"Do?" exclaimed Aunt Ella. "I'll go myself. It's only two miles to Ketchley and I can ride back with the Doctor. I'll get Harry to help me harness the horse. Open the windows to give your boy plenty of air, and fan him."

She took up the oil lamp that stood upon her writing table. "This is whale oil--a nauseous smelling compound. Rub his neck and chest well with it."

Alice sought the nursery and followed Aunt Ella's directions. She was sitting by the crib watching her child's laboured breathing when her aunt returned.

"Harry is going on horseback. He knows the road to Ketchley and where the Doctor lives. Give him some more of the oil."

It was administered and the child began to choke--he seemed to be strangling--then the phlegm that had impeded his breathing was thrown off, and his face resumed its natural colour. When the Doctor arrived an hour later, he was sleeping quietly. Aunt Ella told what they had done by way of emergency treatment.

"Evidently a very effective treatment," said Dr. Parshefield. "I could not have done better myself."

"It was so good of you, Harry," said Alice. "I shall never forget your kindness."

Then she threw her arms about Aunt Ella's neck.

"Oh, Auntie, if he had been taken from me, I could not have borne

it."

CHAPTER XVI

YOUNG QUINCY

It had been arranged while Aunt Ella and Maude were at Ellersleigh that Florence and her husband should come to Fernborough Hall and make a visit before their departure for the United States. Owing to Harry's presence at the Hall it became necessary, when they arrived, to divulge the well-kept secret of Maude's unconventional marriage.

Aunt Ella managed the introduction with her usual straightforwardness, treating it as a matter of course. Florence and her husband were naturally surprised, but both of them liked Harry Merry. Had Florence been married at home, with the usual family friends and accessories, she would have looked with less tolerance on Maude's elopement. To be sure she had not eloped, but when she looked into her own heart she had to confess to herself that she would have married Reginald even if her parents had refused their consent. So, as the intent makes the offence, she forgave Maude for her escapade, and during their stay at the Hall they manifested more sisterly regard for each other than they had ever before shown.

Reginald and Harry "hitched horses" at once. Men who marry sisters are united by a stronger tie than the usual brother-in-law bond, and the Englishman and the American felicitated themselves upon their capture of the Sawyer sisters. They played billiards on a table where the balls had not clicked for a generation. They smoked in a room which had been free from the odour of tobacco for a score of years. They rode horseback upon steeds whose principal duty, as Harry expressed it, had been to "heat their 'eads horff." They even fished in the miniature lake and gave their catch to dogs who knew so little about real sport that they thought the fish were game. They took long walks together and knew by name every man, woman, and child on the estate. The conservative Englishman, if alone, would not have gone so far, but the democratic American took the lead, and politeness, if not inclination, forced his companion to follow.

They often passed an evening with Sir Stuart in his library. The Captain related incidents in his military life, while Harry, who had been a great reader, drew on both memory and imagination for tales of the Great West, with an occasional ghost story, supported by irrefutable witnesses. The day before their departure, Aunt Ella took Florence to her boudoir and told her what she had written to _her_ sister, Nathaniel's wife, about her children's marriages.

"I hope Sarah will let your father read my letter. I said just what I thought, and I shall stand by Maude and her husband come what may."

"And so will I," cried Florence. "You helped Reginald by solving the mystery of that check, and I will do all I can to help Maude and Harry. I think he is a fine fellow, and Reggie says they have become like two brothers."

"I am glad to hear," said Aunt Ella, "that they are bound by love as well as by law."

In about a month there came a long letter from Maude.

"DEAR AUNT ELLA AND SISTER ALICE:--I have so much to tell you that I hardly know where to begin. We had a fine trip--no storms--and none of us missed a meal, which was bad for the company. But they made up their loss on others who ate a supper on leaving England and a breakfast on reaching America.

"Mother was delighted to see us and father was so nice to us all that I came near fainting. He is a changed man. I wonder what drug he has been taking."

* * * * *

"Didn't you tell Maude about your letter to her mother?" asked Alice.

"No, I told Florence, but thought Maude would appreciate the change now, _if_ it took place, if she was ignorant of what influence had been brought to bear on her father."

Aunt Ella continued the reading.

* * * * *

"Harry and I have been to Fernborough. Alice's brother sent us word that Uncle Isaac Pettingill was dead and we went to the funeral. He had no complaint. He was tired out, so Mrs. Maxwell told us, and went to sleep. He left each of Mrs. Maxwell's boys five thousand dollars, and the same amount to Quincy Adams Pettingill. The remainder of his fortune, I don't know how much, is bequeathed to build a free hospital in Fernborough.

"There's another good man dead--Deacon Mason,--and his wife has gone to live with her daughter, Mrs. Pettingill. That funny little man, Mr. Stiles, has gone there too.

"I saw Mrs. Hawkins, and she said: 'I mos' cried my eyes out when I heerd 'bout that collision at sea, an' what it did. I can't see no sense in them captains bein' so careless and reckless. Tell Miss Alice I wish she'd come home and bring that boy. I want ter see ef he looks like his father.'

"I came near forgetting what to me is the most important part of my letter. Harry has been appointed as Quincy's executor in place of Dr.

Culver, and, this is the wonderful thing, father has induced Harry to leave Mr. Carter's office and go into his office. He told Harry that they were all getting old and they needed young blood in the firm--but Harry's not in the firm yet. No more this time from your loving,

"MAUDE MERRY."

"My letter to Sarah did do some good," said Aunt Ella triumphantly.

"Poor Uncle Ike, I wish I could have been with him. I wonder if I shall ever see Fernborough again?"

Aunt Ella did not answer the question as she would have liked to, and Alice went to her room to recall those former happy days which would never come again.

Nearly nine years had passed since young Quincy's birth, and Alice was still at Fernborough Hall. She could not leave it now, for Aunt Ella was again a widow. Her mind was troubled about her boy. He had recurrent attacks of throat trouble, and was not strong as she wished him to be.

"It's the damp, foggy weather," said Aunt Ella. "We're too near the water, and this country, beautiful as it is, is not like our bright America."

Dr. Parshefield suggested a trip to the South of France, but Alice declared that was impossible.

"Something must be done--now what shall it be?" was Aunt Ella's declaration and inquiry. Then Alice remembered what Maude had said in one of her letters--that young Quincy should be brought up as an American. She spoke to Aunt Ella about the matter, repeating what Maude had written.

"Where could we send him?"

"The where is not so important" Aunt Ella remarked, "as the to whom. Florence and Maude are both out of the question for they have young children of their own who might, or might not, take to an outsider. Quincy's mother would be delighted to have him for he is her son's son, but Boston, with its east winds would be no better than here. Besides, his grandfather would say that he'd raised one family of disobedient children and he wanted a quiet life."

The question remained unsettled that day, but the next morning Aunt Ella burst into Alice's room with a loud cry--

"Eureka! I have it! Why didn't we think of it before?"

"You say you have it," said Alice, "but what is it? That pattern that you were looking for?"

"No, a happy home for this youngster," as she patted his curly head lovingly.

"Now, can't you guess?"

Alice shook her head.

"Well, I must say, you are not a very thoughtful _sister_," and the last word was strongly emphasized.

"What, do you mean--'Zekiel?" cried Alice.

"The very man, and Fernborough is the place. You must write to your brother at once."

As Alice was writing the thought came to her, "Perhaps if my boy goes to Fernborough, some day I may go to see him, and the old town, and the people there, once more."

In due time a reply came from 'Zekiel. It was short, but to the point. "Huldy will be delighted to have him. Our boy Quincy is nearly fourteen years old now and he'll take good care of his little cousin. I'll try and be a father to him until you come for him."

The important question, "How was the boy to reach America?" was answered by one of those happy coincidences which happen often in books and occasionally in real life, such as is being depicted. The Rev. Mr. Gay, who had been a constant visitor to Uncle Ike during his last days, paid a visit to Fernborough Hall on his return from a trip to the Holy Land.

"Heaven must have sent you," said Alice, and she told him of her desire to have her boy go to Fernborough.

Mr. Gay consented to take charge of young Quincy. In a few days the parting came. The mother's heart was sorely tried. But mother-love is unselfish, and Alice's only consolation came from the conviction that her temporary loss was for her son's permanent good.

Her nights were sleepless, filled with thoughts of accidents, and storms and collisions at sea, until a welcome letter dispelled her imaginings, for it brought the intelligence that young Quincy was safe with his father's friends.

CHAPTER XVII

HIS FATHER'S FRIENDS

It is the good fortune of some fatherless or motherless children to be adopted into good families where the natural love and care that have been denied them are supplied, as it were, by proxy. With young Quincy it was so, only much more so. It fell to his lot to be adopted by an entire town. Its residents had been, with few exceptions, his father's friends. The sad story of his father's loss at sea was known to all, and the town's heart warmed towards him; the town's arms were open to embrace him, and care for him.

To his Aunt Huldah Pettingill he seemed as though sent from another world. He was her husband's nephew, and hers--but there was a closer tie acknowledged within her own heart, and kept there as a precious secret. He was Quincy Adams Sawyer's son--the son of the man who had taught her what love was. It had been a bitter lesson, for when her heart was awakened, it was but to find that the one who had played upon its sensitive strings did not love her, and that her duty was to another who did love her. She had been a true and loving wife with no unsatisfied heart-longings, but--

"You may break, you may shatter the vase, if you will,
But the scent of the roses will hang round it still."

So Huldah Mason still kept within a secret corner of her heart a fond remembrance of happy days gone by. And now Quincy's son was one of her family; she could be a mother to him and no one would have a right to question her manifestations of affection. It is often that the human heart thus finds solace for past sad experiences or suffering.

It was only natural that Huldah, after her father's death, should take her mother to her own home. The old Deacon had acquired enough of this world's goods to avoid the necessity of hard labour during the last years of his life. Good books had been his constant companions, and an old-fashioned cane-bottomed rocking chair his favourite seat upon the piazza or by the kitchen fire. Abner Stiles had done the necessary farm work and the household chores. When the Deacon passed away, the town lost one of its broadest-minded, most honest, most helpful citizens.

Mrs. Mason, still hale and hearty, assisted her daughter in her household duties, but allowed Abner to put up the clothes line and take it in.

"And this is his son, and his poor father--" The Deacon's good wife could say no more, but clasped little Quincy close to her motherly breast.

"You told me how it happened, Huldy, and I told father, but it don't seem real even now. His father was such a fine man."

She stopped, for her daughter had turned her head away, and her mother knew that it was to brush away some tears that could not be kept back.

To 'Zekiel Pettingill, the boy was Alice's child. His only sister had been the apple of his eye, and his great, honest heart welcomed the boy as if he were his own.

His own son, Quincy Adams Pettingill, was in his fourteenth year and upon him devolved the outdoor education of his young cousin. In this pleasant task he was aided by his sister Sophie who was a year younger than the newcomer.

There was a scene of wild excitement when young Quincy paid his first visit to the old Pettingill place where his mother was born. It was still the home of Hiram Maxwell and his wife, formerly Mandy Skinner. The two boys, Abraham Mason Maxwell and Obadiah Strout Maxwell had been told often the story of Mr. Sawyer's visit to Eastborough, and how he boarded in that house, and little Mandy was glad to see "Kirwinzee."

The old dog, Swiss, had, with difficulty, been dragged from the grave of his former master, Uncle Ike, but no force, or persuasion, could induce him to leave the old house. Probably the name "Quincy" had a familiar sound and he wagged his tail slowly as an evidence of recognition and welcome.

The most explosive greeting came from Mrs. Crowley.

"An' it's the foine young man he is, the picter of his feyther." She would have taken him in her arms and hugged him but for the presence of others, but, afterwards, when alone with him she patted his curly head and told him that he would have to be a fine man to be as good as his father. Everywhere he went his father was talked about and praised, and his mother had taught him to love his father's memory. Thus early the ambition to be like his father was instilled in the boy's mind. Confident as Alice was that her husband was still living, Aunt Ella had protested effectually against her implanting any such hope in the child's mind, and he had been brought up with the belief that his father had died before he was born. There was one place where his father's praises were faint, and that was at the grocery store.

[ILLUSTRATION: "'I S'POSE ONE OF THESE DAYS YOU'LL BE WEIGHIN' SUGAR AND DRAWIN' 'LASSES.'"]

"Ah, my young man," said Mr. Obadiah Strout, on his first visit, "your father's money started this business, but I've worked mighty hard to build it up to what it is now. I s'pose one of these days you'll be weighin' sugar and drawin' 'lasses."

"I guess not," exclaimed Hiram. "Rich men's sons don't us'ally take to their father's business."

"You're right for once, Hiram," Mr. Strout acknowledged. "They uzally run through the money, bust the biz'ness and bring up in jail."

"Well, this young fellow won't," cried Hiram, hotly. "He's goin' to be a great man like his father, won't you, Bub?"

"Bub" took a handful of raisins from an open box, and eyed his questioner wonderingly.

"There's many a slip 'twixt the cow and the churn," said Mr. Strout as he took a ten cent cigar from the case and lighted it. Perhaps the sight of the son recalled a scene in the same shop many years before on Quincy's first visit to Mason's Corner when a box of cigars had been the subject of an animated discussion between the boy's father and himself, followed by a passage-at-arms--or, more correctly speaking--fists. We humans are only veneered with politeness or good nature; underneath, man's revengeful nature lies dormant--but not dead.

Mrs. Hawkins was delighted to see him. "Olive, don't you think he's the likeness of his father?"

Olive agreed, because she had found that agreement with her employer's opinions made life pleasant, and also led to many desirable additions to her wardrobe.

Mrs. Hawkins surveyed him again. "I'll never forget what a poor appetite his father had when he boarded here. He never came to his meals reg'lar. But he was in love, head over heels an' an extry dip,-- an' I don't blame him, for 'Zeke Pettingill's sister was good enough for any man, even if he did git to be guv'nor. Have a cookey?" and Quincy's pockets were filled with cakes that contained raisins and citron.

"Them's seedless raisins, Quincy. I had a boarder once, a reg'lar hayseed who came down here from Montrose to work hayin' time, an' he asked me how I got the stuns out of the raisins. Jes' to fool him, I said I bit 'em out, an' do you know, that old fool never teched another bit o' cake while he stopped here."

Mr. Jonas Hawkins took him out to see the hens and chickens, and told him that he "kalkilated that mos' on 'em eggs that was bein' sot on would hatch out." Quincy's great delight was going with Hiram in the grocery wagon. One day they went over the same road from the Pettingill farm to Eastborough Centre that his father had travelled so many times.

The old sign board "Three Miles to Mason's Corner" was still there, but how changed the other conditions. No consumptive uncle in the Poor House, no philosophical Uncle Ike living in a chicken coop, no inquisitive Mrs. Putnam, no mysterious Lindy, no battle royal with the music teacher, no town meeting to engineer, no grocery store to buy, no Deacon's daughter to go driving with, no singing school, no surprise party, no blind girl to comfort and aid--and finally marry.

There were none of the incidents that had made his father's life at Mason's Corner so exciting and interesting. Now, there was only a little boy riding in a red wagon with yellow wheels, inhaling the pure air and sweetness of the wild flowers, listening to the songs of birds, and wishing that Uncle Hiram would make the horse go faster.

It is safe to leave him with his father's friends, for surely his lines had fallen in a pleasant place.

CHAPTER XVIII

AN OLD STRIFE RENEWED

It was February and the air was stinging cold. It was one of those nights such as Lowell wrote about in "The Courtin'."

"God makes sech nights, all white an' still
Fur'z you can look or listen,
Moonshine an' snow on field an' hill,
All silence an' all glisten."

In the store of the Strout and Maxwell Company quite a number of the town's people were gathered about the big air-tight stove which was kept stuffed full of wood by willing hands and from which came great waves of almost scorching heat.

Such congregations of villagers are often said to be composed of loafers and loungers, but it was not so at Fernborough. The men who represented the brains and marrow of the town met there. It was the home of the town debating society and supplied a free forum for the discussion of public questions. If the advanced ideas in statesmanship and social economy incubated there could have become the property of the nation, our country would have grown wiser and better.

But for the intense cold the company gathered there on the evening in question would have been much larger. Benoni Hill, the former proprietor of the store and the richest man in town, did not think his wealth was any reason why he should hold aloof or consider himself above his neighbours, whose patronage had been the foundation of his fortune. He was given an old arm-chair while the others sat upon soap-boxes and nail-kegs. Cobb's Twins, William and James, were there, Emmanuel Howe, the minister's son, and Bob Wood who still sang bass in the village church choir.

The store door was opened letting in a gust of cold air which made all draw nearer to the red-hot stove. The newcomer was Samuel Hill, Benoni's son.

A chorus of voices cried: "Hello, Sam!" and a place was made for him so he could thaw out his almost frozen fingers.

"It's mighty cold, ain't it?" said his father.

"Well, I should smile," replied Sam. This expression he had heard the last time he was in the city, and he derived great pleasure from its repetition.

"How's Tilly?" asked Bob Wood.

"Able to be up and have her bed made."

All laughed at the rejoinder. Smiles and laughter are easily evoked in a village grocery.

Mr. Obadiah Strout and Mr. Hiram Maxwell, general partners, were in the private office, a small room adjoining the post-office. Mr. Strout was smoking a cigar and reading a letter between the puffs. Hiram, with his chair tilted back against the wall, was smoking his after-supper pipe, for it was after seven o'clock in the evening.

"Mr. Maxwell," said Obadiah, laying down the letter he had been reading, "this is from the trustees of the estate of the Honourable Quincy Adams Sawyer, formerly our special partner, and the ex-Governor of this Commonwealth. I mention the fact of him being our former special partner first, before I said anything about his political elevation, for I don't believe, Mr. Maxwell, that he would ever have been Governor if he hadn't jined in with us."

Mr. Strout always called Hiram "Mr. Maxwell," when they talked over business affairs.

Hiram blew a cloud from his pipe. "Wall, I guess they're putty well satisfied with what we've been doin', ain't they?"

Mr. Strout leaned back in his chair with a self-satisfied look on his face.

"Wall, they must be a pretty near set if they expect more'n twelve per cent, on the capital. No, they're all right, 'though one of 'em, that Mr. Merry, is mighty inquisitive 'bout small things. Marryin' inter the Sawyer family 'counts for it, I s'pose."

Hiram was used to hearing covert slurs and open flings at the Sawyer family, but had found replies only provocative of attacks upon himself, so he listened in silence. Mr. Strout took up the letter. "I wrote 'em 'bout startin' that new branch over to Westvale, and although they answered in a kinder top-lofty style--I reckon that young Merry writ the letter--I 'magine they're in for it, horse, foot, and dragoons. They'll put up the money. An' the question now is who'll go over and take charge of it."

Hiram put his pipe on the table. "There's two folks that don't want to go, an' that's Mandy an' me. I don't s'pose the children would find any fault, but they're not old enough to vote on the question."

Hiram knew that his partner was anxious to get him out of the Fernborough store, and so he filed his objections at once.

"Oh," said Strout, "of course I didn't have no sech idee as askin' you to go, even if you did know who was the best man for the job. The snail thinks he's travelled a long ways when he goes a foot, an' some men are jus' like him."

Hiram ignored the personal application.

"Well, bein's you didn't want me to go, I s'pose you've somebody in mind. Suit yourself, as us'al."

"Well, I've thought it all over, an' I think Billy Ricker's our man. He'll be over from Montrose to-morrow an' I'll talk it over with him. We've got that Montrose trade so solid he can be spared from there now. Guess there ain't any trade tonight or Bob would have called us in afore this."

"Ef we sold cord wood we might be doin' somethin'," and, laughing in his old way at his own joke, Hiram started to follow his partner into the store.

"Say, Hiram," called out Strout in a loud voice, "bring in them two chairs--everything's occupied out here 'cept the counter."

As the proprietors took their seats, the store door was opened again, this time admitting Mr. Abner Stiles. His teeth were chattering, and he stamped his feet upon the floor, and beat his hands against his shoulders in old-fashioned country style.

"Moses Williams!" he cried. "I kinder think the North Pole must have slid down an' come to stop in this 'ere town. I say, Strout, if that organ of yourn was pumped to-night you'd have to play 'From Greenland's Icy Mountains,' or some sech tune."

"Where have you been?" asked Mr. Strout.

"Hain't been nowhere. Jes' came from the Pettingill house. Young Master Sawyer wants some brown sugar to make some candy. Give me five pounds."

"So it's Master Sawyer, is it?" said Strout as he weighed the saccharine substance. "I thought it was Mister before a man was a Master."

"I ain't a talkin' about men--he's only a boy, and a mighty smart boy too."

"I'm tired hearing about him," said Strout. "Can't you give us something new?"

"Yes, I kin," said Abner. "Boys, I've got something funny to tell you. I went to Cottonton this afternoon and I'd jest got back when they sent me for the sugar."

"What ye doin' over there?" asked Benoni.

Abner scratched his head then winked at Benoni.

"I went to buy somethin' for an individual who shall be nameless out of respect--"

"Go on with your story," shouted Strout. "You'd better hurry home with that sugar or the 'Master' may make it hot for you."

This remark caused a laugh at Abner's expense.

"Jes' go ahead, Abner," said Benoni, "we're all a-waitin'."

"Well, I met a feller on the train and he buzzed me all the way here. He wanted to know where I lived, an' when I told him I lived in Fernborough, that used to be a part of Eastborough, he jest piled me full of questions. I told him all I knew--"

"An' added a little something" broke in Strout.

"No, I jest stuck close to the truth. He wanted to know about Mr. Quincy Adams Sawyer. I told him he was dead, but he said he wanted to know about him when he lived here. Then I told him there was a man in town who could tell him more'n I could about that, an' I jest giv' him your name, Obadiah."

This sally turned the laugh on Strout who was about to make a sharp rejoinder, when the store door opened and a strong current of cold air caused all to turn.

"Shut the door!" cried Bob Wood in his gruff voice.

"I beg your pardon," said the man, as he complied.

He was very tall,--more than six feet in height. He was dressed in a suit of shiny black; his coat was buttoned tightly and the collar was turned up. The most noticeable part of his costume was a broad-brimmed straw hat. He wore no overcoat and his hands were ungloved.

"Gentlemen, I must beg pardon for this intrusion, but I used to live in these parts many years ago, and I am here to inquire whether any of my family are awaiting the return of a long-lost relative."

Abner nudged Mr. Strout and said in a whisper: "That's the feller."

"What might your name be?" asked Mr. Benoni Hill in his genial manner.

"I have occupied many stations in life, and whether high or low have always assumed a cognomen to match my position."

"A cog what?" asked Bill Cobb in a voice so low that he thought only his brother Jim could hear; but his question reached the stranger's ear.

"By cognomen I mean a desirable alias or a characteristic appellation."

This explanation gave rise to a chorus of "Oh's."

"Kerzactly," remarked Benoni, and then all laughed.

"When I left this town thirty years ago, my name was Richard Ricker. On returning to those paths which my childish feet so often trod--I have just come from the West Indies where the climate is hotter than that stove--it seems appropriate that I should assume my family name. It is done. I am now Richard Ricker."

Abner nudged Strout again, who resented it, but Mr. Stiles remarked in a whisper: "He's crazy--mad as a March hare."

Mr. Ricker did not hear his opinion of his sanity.

"My father's name was Benjamin, Martha was my mother, and I had a brother William--that is, I had them all when I ran away to sea at the age of seventeen years, ten months, and fifteen days. I always remember my exact age for I wished to know just how long I had been gone when I got back."

The villagers looked at the stranger with marked variations in expression, but no one spoke until Abner remarked:

"I guess you've struck the right place. There's a young feller named Billy Ricker that works for Mr. Strout here," and he pointed to that gentleman. "Billy's father was named Bill, but he's dead; so's Ben and Marthy. I know'd 'em all."

"I am glad to learn that I have a nephew in the land of the living. Where is he?"

"He lives in Montrose, the next town north of us," said Mr. Strout. "We have a branch store there an' Billy has charge of it."

"If he had some capital, I suppose he could become a partner," remarked Mr. Ricker.

"Not much," said Strout. "We have all the money we need, and know where to get more. What we want is men, an' we have a good one in

Billy."

Mr. Ricker removed his unseasonable headgear and moved nearer to the stove.

"I have heard of the late Mr. Sawyer and was sorry to hear of his early demise." He looked at Abner, then at Mr. Strout.

"Your friend here has told me about his wonderful exploits--how he thrashed the town bully, and beat the singing-master at his own game."

Bob Wood and Strout glared at Abner.

"But his experiences, which I have been told have appeared in print," the stranger continued, "are trifling compared with the perils and adventures which have fallen to my lot. I could make your blood run cold."

"Ef we open the front door, I guess the weather will do that," said Hiram, and it was the general opinion, though not verbally expressed, that Hiram had got one on the stranger.

Mr. Emmanuel Howe, the clergyman's son, was noted for his extreme politeness. He had attended one term at a divinity school before he met Miss Dixie Schaffer. He arose from the nail-keg upon which he had been sitting, and motioned for the stranger to take his place.

As he accepted the mute invitation, Mr. Ricker turned to the company and said: "Gentlemen, shall I intrude upon your time if I relate just one of my adventures?"

"Oh, go ahead," said Strout. "It's our rule to let a man talk until we get enough, and then--"

He raised his right foot, suddenly.

"I understand," said Mr. Ricker. "When I was about twenty-two years old our vessel was wrecked and I, the only one saved, was cast ashore on a cannibal island--or, to be more correct ethnologically, an island inhabited by cannibals. I was a handsome young fellow, and it is not at all surprising that the Queen, who was young, unmarried, and, fortunately, very pretty, fell in love with me and wished to become my wife.

"But the Prime Minister, or Great Panjandrum, as he was called, wished his son to marry the Queen and become King, so he, and his minions planned to get rid of me.

"Lola-Akwa, that was the Queen's name, discovered the plot, and resolved to save me.

"You all read your Bibles, and you will remember that in the olden

days there were places that were called 'Cities of Refuge.' On that island there was a Tree of Refuge. It was at least one hundred feet high and for two hundred feet from it, in every direction, not a tree or shrub could be found. This open space gave the pursuers a fine chance for an arrow shot before the refugee reached the tree.

"Lola-Akwa told me to climb to the top of that tree and stay there until she sent word for me to come down.

"But the Great Panjandrum discovered my hiding place. The Queen declared that I was protected by all that was sacred in their religion, but the Great Panjandrum proved by the cannibal Bible that only cannibals were entitled to its protection. He said they would roast a man, and if I would eat him and pick his bones I might go free. I declined, for I am rather particular about my diet.

"Then the Great Panjandrum seized an axe and struck at the foot of the tree. Others followed his wicked example and it soon began to totter. They next tied a rope about the trunk of the tree. The plotters were sixteen in number--I counted them. They stood in line, tugging at the rope.

"Lola-Akwa stood far back awaiting the terrible moment of my death. I could see that her eyes were filled with tears. The tree fell, and I went flying through the air--to certain death!

"When I came to, I found myself clasped in Lola-Akwa's arms. 'Where am I?' I asked. 'Look' she said. I did, and learned the wonderful truth.

"The Great Tree had fallen upon the Great Panjandrum and his fifteen conspirators and killed them all."

For a moment there was silence, then a chorus of voices exclaimed:
"Did you marry the Queen?"

The stranger pressed his hand upon his forehead.

"No. If I remember correctly some one held an ace and took my Queen."

He rose from the nail-keg.

"I'm hungry. I would like some supper and a bed for the night. Tomorrow I will embrace my only living relative. Is there a boarding house in town?"

"Somethin' better'n that," said Abner. "We've got a Hotel--the Hawkins House. Mrs. Hawkins keeps it. I'm going along that way and I'll interduce you. She's a pretty good talker herself," and Abner winked with both eyes as they went out.

"Well," said Benoni, as the door closed after them. "The Bible says Ananias was a pretty good story teller, but that gentleman seems to

have added some modern improvements."

"He's a cussed liar," said Bob Wood.

"And if Mrs. Hawkins is smart she'll make him pay in advance."

The door was thrown open full width and two men rushed in.

"Have you seen him?" cried one.

"Seen who?" asked Strout.

"He's tall--black clothes--had on a straw hat--"

"Who in thunder is he?" cried Strout.

"He's a lunatic--just escaped from the asylum. We tracked him to this town--"

"He's gone to the hotel," said Bob Wood. "You can nab him easy there. I'll show you the way."

The men started on the run, led by Bob Wood, and followed by all who had been enjoying the hospitality afforded by the soap-boxes, nail-kegs, and the red-hot stove.

"What beats me," said Hiram, "is how he knew all about the Ricker family."

"Simple enough," said Strout with a sneer, "That ass Abner told him the whole business. He never could keep his mouth shet. That's the reason I wouldn't give him a job in this store."

Mr. Strout extinguished some of the lights, locked the door, and resumed his seat by the stove.

"Ain't you going home?" asked Hiram.

"Not jest yet; I've some thinkin' to do. I don't take much stock in fightin' but I'd like to punch Abner Stiles' head."

"What's he been doing?"

"Why, didn't you hear what he said he said to that crazy fellow about Sawyer getting the best of me at my own game?"

"Wall, he told the truth, didn't he, Strout?"

"Look here, Mr. Hiram Maxwell, I want you to understand that if we are to continue together as partners in this 'ere grocery business, there must be mutual respect atween us."

"Wall," said Hiram, "I s'pose you mean by that, that ef I ain't what

you consider respect'ful to you, you'll get out and leave me the business. You see, Obadiah, it's not for you or me to say who'll stay in--that's for the trustees. So, I wouldn't lay down the law too fine, Obadiah."

"Wall, I hoped," said Strout, "that when that Sawyer married 'Zeke Pettingill's sister and left this town that we'd be able to have a little peace round here and run things our own way. Course, I don't want any man to get drowned, but it wasn't my fault that the ship he was on ran into another. He was allus runnin' into somethin' that didn't concern him. But bein' he's gone, and no blame can be laid at my door, I thought we'd heard the last of him, but since he's died the air's fuller of Sawyer than it was afore. It makes me sick the way everybody tumbles over themselves to make of that boy of his'n. I don't think there's much to him."

"He's got a big head, an' he's a mighty bright little fellow," said Hiram.

"Wall, then he resembles his father in one respect--_he_ had a big head."

"I'm surprised, Obadiah, to hear you talk the way you do. I ain't forgot that meetin' in the Town Hall where you got up and owned up that he was 'bout right, and that you'd been mean as dirt, but he shook hands with you, and forgave you like a gentleman as he was, and I thought you were good friends."

"I'm good friends with anybody that keeps out of my way," said Strout. "But that Sawyer was like that _malary_ that the boys got off to war. It gets into your blood and you can't get it out. Why, he snubbed 'Zeke Pettingill jest the same as he did me when they had that sleigh ride, and he didn't have spunk enough to hit back. If 'Zeke had jined in with me we'd had him out o' town lively. And then the way he butted in at my concert and turned a high-class musical entertainment inter a nigger minstrel show by whistling a tune was enough to make anybody mad clean through."

"Wall, you got mad, didn't you?" said Hiram. "What good did it do yer?"

Mr. Strout's newly aroused wrath was not appeased.

"Then again, the way he squeezed himself in at that surprise party. Since I married Bessie Chisholm, I've talked to her a good many times 'bout the way she danced with him that night."

"Come now, Strout, what did she say? She wasn't engaged to you then. What did she say? Now be honest."

Mr. Strout could not restrain a grim smile.

"Wall, to tell the truth, Hiram, she told me it was none of my

business, an' when I came to think it over I didn't believe it was-- but it would be now."

Mr. Strout's vials of wrath had not all been emptied. He seemed to be enjoying a rehearsal of all his past troubles and grievances.

"I guess that if the folks had known at first that the Jim Sawyer who died in the Poor House was his uncle, they wouldn't have considered him such great shucks after all. An' the way he tried to get Huldy Mason to marry him and throw over 'Zeke Pettingill, who had loved her ever since she was a baby, was a mighty mean piece of business in my opinion."

This remark gave Hiram an opportunity which he was not slow in improving.

"I heerd as how there was another feller in town who tried to get Huldy to marry him and throw poor 'Zeke over."

Mr. Strout puckered up his mouth and there was a strained look on his face which indicated that the shot had gone home. But his verbal ammunition was not all expended.

"You can tell me what you've a mind to, but I know that he tried mighty hard to get Lindy Putnam to marry him, an' I don't imagine he'd have taken up with a blind girl if he hadn't heard that Heppy Putnam was going to leave her all her money. I had him looked up by some friends of mine in the city. They said he didn't have much himself, but his father paid his bills. His father jest gave him to understand that if he didn't marry the right girl, with plenty of dough, he wouldn't get much from him."

"Wall, you may be right and you may be wrong, Obadiah. But when a man's dead I don't think it does you any good to roast him and pick his bones. It's too much like those _cannibiles_ that crazy feller told us about. Quincy Adams Sawyer was always a good friend to me, and a better one to you, Strout, than you deserved, judgin' from the way you've been talkin'. His money has been the makin' of both on us, and while we do business together I hope we'll let Mr. Sawyer, as the church folks say, rest in pieces."

CHAPTER XIX

BOYHOOD TO MANHOOD

Until he was fourteen years of age, young Quincy attended the public schools in Fernborough and Cottonton. While in England he had had a governess and later a tutor, so that when he reached America he was much farther advanced than Fernborough boys of his own age. Methods

in the New England town were different, however, and his Uncle Ezekiel was satisfied to have him keep pace with the others, and not arouse antagonism by asking for any special promotion.

Ezekiel's son Quincy had decided to become a farmer, following in his father's footsteps. But scientific farming was supplanting old methods, and he had taken the course at the Agricultural College and received his diploma.

Young Quincy wished a college education. To obtain admission it was necessary for him to attend a preparatory school, and, relying upon Mr. Gay's description of its advantages, Andover was selected.

While at the Cottonton High School, Quincy's chum had been a boy two years older than himself, named Thomas Chripp. He was the son of a weaver at Cottonton. Like Quincy, he had been born in England, but his father had been drawn to America by the lure of higher wages, nothing having been said to him, however, about the increased cost of living.

Thomas's father would not let him become a back-boy in the mill.

"I've breathed cotton all my life," said Mr. Chripp to Ezekiel, "and I think too much of my only boy to condemn him to a life in a hot room, where the only music is the whizzing shuttles. No, my boy Tom shall breathe God's fresh air and become a big, strong man instead of a wizened-up little fellow like me. Why, would you believe it, Mr. Pettingill, I began work in a cotton mill when I was eight years old, and I've lived in one ever since--forty years! Sundays when I walk out in the fields I can't get the din out of my ears, and I told Susan, my old wife, the other day, that if I died before she did to have the lid screwed down extra tight so I could be sure of a little quiet."

"My nephew," said 'Zekiel, "thinks a lot of your boy and wants him to go to college with him."

"But I haven't got the money to pay his way," said Mr. Chripp.

"My nephew has plenty of money, and if he's willing to help your boy along in the world there's nobody to object that I know of."

So it was arranged that Tom Chripp should go to the preparatory school and college with Quincy, the latter to pay the expenses of both. "'Twas a lucky day for Tom that sent that Sawyer boy to school in Cottonton," said Mr. Chripp to his wife.

"It'll be the making of Tom," he added, and the happy mother thought so too.

When Mr. Strout heard of it, he remarked to his partner Mr. Maxwell,

"More of the arrogance of wealth. If I was a young man like Tom

Chripp I'd make my own way in the world."

Hiram swallowed some smoke, coughed, and then replied: "Probably he will, when he gits his eddikation. Money makes the mare go now as it always has, Obadiah, an' you an' me can't stop it."

"Like father, like son, I guess, Hiram. His father used to enjoy throwing his money away an' the son's goin' to sail in the same boat. I shouldn't be surprised if he came back to town some day and licked somebody jest to be like his father."

"I shouldn't nuther," said Hiram as he began putting up an order for the Hawkins House.

While Quincy was attending the public schools, Mrs. Nathaniel Sawyer made two visits each year to Fernborough to learn of her grandson's progress. Thanksgiving he passed at his Uncle 'Zekiel's where he had eagerly watched the growth of the turkey that was destined to grace the festal board on that day. At Christmas he went to Boston and returned laden with gifts, many of which were immediately donated to his cousins and Mandy Maxwell's children.

Mr. Strout's ire was kindled when Hiram described the presents his children had received from Quincy.

"Thank the Lord I've got money enough to buy my children's presents myself without dependin' on second-hand things that other folks don't want."

"So've I," said Hiram, "but what I save that way I puts in the bank, for I'm bound to own the old Pettingill Place some day."

"Oh, spend your money, Hiram. Your rich friends will give you the house some day." He was so pleased with the subtle humour of his last remark that he tossed a scoop half full of coffee into the sugar barrel, much to Hiram's amusement.

During Quincy's first year at Andover he was twice called from his studies. The Hon. Nathaniel Adams Sawyer after his return home from a bank directors' banquet was taken with an attack of acute indigestion. He was in great pain. One of the most prominent physicians in the city was summoned. He gave a strong hypodermic injection of morphine to stop the pain, but did nothing to remove the cause. The pain itself was stopped by the anodyne, but the cause of the pain--the indigestion--stopped the beating of Mr. Sawyer's heart within an hour.

By his will, \$250,000 were left to his daughter Florence, and \$100,000 to his daughter Maude. To compensate for the \$150,000 difference in the bequests, the Hon. Nathaniel Sawyer's interest in the firm of Sawyer, Crowninshield, and Lawrence was conveyed to Mr. Harry Merry, provided that one-third of his share from the income of the law-business was paid to the trustees of the estate of his

grandson Quincy Adams Sawyer. The remainder of his property, both real and personal, was left to his wife, Sarah Quincy Sawyer.

Quincy's grandmother did not live long to enjoy her fortune. Maude wished her to sell the Beacon Street house and come to Mount Vernon Street. Her mother wished her to come to Beacon Street. While the _pros_ and _cons_ were being considered, the old lady died of absolute inanition. She had been dominated so long by a superior will power, she had been so dependent upon her late husband in every event of her life, that without him she was a helpless creature, and so willing to drop her burden, that she did not cling to life but gave up without the semblance of a struggle. Her last will and testament was very short, containing but one clause, which gave all her property to her grandson Quincy Adams Sawyer. When Aunt Ella heard of her sister's death, she said to Alice:

"They were not two distinct beings, Nathaniel was one and a half, and Sarah only a half."

"That boy will sure go to the devil now," was Mr. Strout's comment.

"I don't think so," said Hiram. "He's too much like his father."

"How do you know where his father has gone?" snapped Mr. Strout, who did not believe, evidently, that good works were a sure passport to future bliss.

Quincy's vacation after his first year at Andover was passed at Fernborough. He was warmly welcomed and congratulated upon the great fortune that had fallen to him.

"He's got a big head, sure enough," said Mr. Strout, "but I think he's a little weak in the legs. He won't disgust the community by fightin' as his father did."

"I wish he'd thrash Bob Wood's son--he's too impudent to live," said Mrs. Amanda Maxwell, to whom Mr. Strout had addressed his remark.

"No danger o' that," and Mr. Strout laughed gleefully. "Young Bob's as good with his fists as his father was."

"He didn't amount to much when Mr. Sawyer tackled him," and with a scornful laugh Mrs. Maxwell flounced out of the store.

"Your wife's as bad as the rest on 'em, Hiram."

"Yes, Obadiah; it seems to be whoopedemic, as the doctors say."

Quincy's second and third years at Andover passed quickly and again vacation time had come.

"Let's go to Fernborough as usual," said Quincy, and Tom, without argument, seconded the motion. This time, Tom was Quincy's guest.

They were young men now. Quincy was seventeen and Tom nineteen, but the fields were as green, the fruit as sweet, the vegetables as crisp and fresh, and their friends as glad to see them as when they were children.

A year had brought some changes. Mrs. Maxwell mourned the loss of her son Obadiah, who had been gored by an angry bull and found dead in the West pasture. For a wonder, Mr. Strout showed some sympathy, perhaps because the little boy was his namesake.

The Rev. Caleb Howe had passed away. In his place the church had called the Rev. Hudson Quarles, a bachelor of forty, whose hobby was fancy fowls. He joined the Grange and talked on "Poultry Raising" and "A Small Fortune in Squabs." His hens were the heaviest for their age in the community, and to prove it he was always willing to "weigh up" at the grocery store.

Mr. Strout called him a crank and played a joke on him that led to a division in the church and came near costing Mr. Strout his position as organist.

There were two scales on the long grocery counter. Mr. Strout tampered with one of them by affixing two pounds of lead to it which he covered with gold paint to hide the deception.

Bob Wood's hen was weighed in the fraudulent scales and beat Mr. Quarles' by a half pound, the clergyman's being really a pound and a half the heavier. The plot would have been a success but for the keen-eyed Quincy who examined the scales and discovered the imposition.

Mr. Strout declared it was all a joke and that he was going to own up when he got ready to do so. This explanation was accepted by some and scoffed at by others. Naturally, Mr. Strout looked upon Quincy as a meddler.

"By Godfrey!" he exclaimed to Hiram, "either that Sawyer boy or me has got to leave town." "When are yer goin'?" asked Hiram, quietly, but he got no reply.

Miss Dixie Schaffer retired from the stage and settled down. Her mother-in-law, being an invalid confined to her room, prevented any interference in her household affairs, and she was free from suggestions as to what she should give, and what she shouldn't give her son, who had been named Hugh after her own father.

Many new people had moved into the town. Among the newcomers was a former detective on the Boston police force named Horace Dana. Through an injury received in making an important arrest, he had become a cripple, able to get around only slowly and with crutches. He was a widower with one daughter, about fifteen years of age, named Mary.

The young lady was as old in appearance as many girls of eighteen, and her looks so belied her age, that the village beaux paid court to her at once. Her most persistent suitor was young Bob Wood who had just reached his majority.

As she was walking one day in the Center Road, far from any dwelling, she met Bob. He improved the opportunity by asking her to be his wife.

"Why, Mr. Wood, I'm too young to marry."

"But I'm just old enough," said Bob, "and you suit me exactly."

"Mr. Wood, I'm going to tell you the truth. I'm not yet fifteen years old. Father says I can't have a beau till I'm eighteen, and I'm sure I don't want one."

Bob had learned much street slang during his visits to Cottonton, and considered its acquisition a benefit and its use an accomplishment.

"You've said it. Now sneeze it, and dust your brain."

Mary regarded him with astonishment. "I don't understand such language, Mr. Wood. What do you mean? I haven't a cold in my head."

Bob laughed insolently.

"No, but you've got a cold heart. What I meant by my French was that you're bluffing. If you ain't eighteen, I'm a primary school boy."

"Then you don't believe me!" Mary's blue eyes opened to their fullest extent.

Bob thought those blue eyes and light brown hair, golden in the sunlight, those rosy cheeks, and pretty mouth made a most attractive picture, and, in his rough way, he really loved her.

"I'm going home," said Mary, "and I shall tell my father you said I lied to you."

"No, you don't," cried Bob, and he grasped her arm so tightly that she winced. "You don't go until you promise me not to say anything to your father."

"I won't promise!" Hot tears filled her eyes.

"Then you don't go," and Bob tightened his grip.

The next moment a hand clutched his coat collar and he was thrown violently on his back.

Bob, who was agile, was quickly on his feet again and faced his assailant. "Oh, that's you, Sawyer, is it? Why do you interfere with

what's none of your business?"

"I think it is," said Quincy, calmly. "My, friend and I--" He turned, and at that moment Tom emerged from behind a clump of bushes at the roadside.

"My friend and I," Quincy repeated, "were behind those bushes and overheard your insulting language to this young lady and your brutal treatment of her."

"Hiding to see what you could hear," said Bob, sneeringly.

"Not at all. We came 'cross lots and were just stepping into the road when we espied you, and retreated, awaiting your departure."

"Very prettily said, Master Sawyer, but I don't believe a word of it."

"You called this young lady a liar and she was powerless to resent it, but I'm not. Tom, hold my coat."

"Oh, please don't fight," pleaded Mary. "I'll never speak to him again."

"Say, Quincy," exclaimed Tom, "he's too heavily built for you. Let me tackle him."

"Two to one! I s'pose that's what you city snobs call fair play."

Bob removed his coat and threw it on the ground. "If you'll come one at a time, I'll lick you both."

Quincy addressed Mary. "Don't be distressed. You may pardon his offence to you if you choose, but I'm going to settle my personal account with him. He doubted my word. I'm going to make him believe what I said, and by that time he'll be ready to apologize to you."

Bob squared off, but Quincy did not raise his hands.

"Are you 'fraid? Don't you know how to put up your dukes?"

"I'm not a boxer," said Quincy, "if that's what you mean. I'll look out for myself, rough and tumble."

Bob rushed forward and aimed a blow at Quincy's face. It fell short, for Quincy retreated; then, springing forward, he gave Bob a violent kick on his left knee. As his opponent threw his right leg over to keep his balance he was obliged to lean forward; Quincy caught him by the collar and Bob went sprawling upon the ground. He leaped to his feet, red with rage.

"Why don't you fight fair?" he bellowed.

"You fight your way and I'll fight mine," was Quincy's reply.

"All right," cried Bob, "I'll try your way."

He sprang upon Quincy and grabbed him by the collar with both hands and pulled him forward. This just suited Quincy, for, catching Bob around the legs, he lifted him high in the air and threw him backwards over his head. Bob's face was cut and bleeding, when he arose.

"Time's up," cried Tom. "Three straight falls settle it."

"The first one don't count," growled Bob. "He sneaked in on me and I had no show."

"He's right, Tom," said Quincy. "We'll have one more after this if he wants it."

This time Bob profited by having observed his antagonist's tactics. He caught Quincy around the body and tried to crush him with his brawny, muscular arms.

Tom gave a cry of alarm and came close to the wrestlers.

"Keep back, Tom," cried Quincy. As he spoke he fell backwards, carrying Bob with him, who gave a yell of exultation as Quincy's shoulders struck the ground. His hold was relaxed while falling. Quincy doubled his legs up, put both feet against Bob's stomach, gave him a violent kick, and Bob was once more upon his back.

"'Twarn't fair," he yelled. "I had him down first."

"We weren't playing for points," said Quincy, "and everything's fair in rough and tumble. If you want some more, I'm ready."

Bob stood sullenly, but made no move forward.

"Now, let's talk it over," said Tom. "Do you think this young lady or my friend lied to you? Before you answer, just remember this is my fight now, and unless you take back the lie and apologize for what you said and did to this young lady, I'll thrash you so they'll have to send a wagon to carry you home."

Bob did not speak.

"Quincy," said Tom, "you go along with the young lady, and I'll settle my account after you're gone. You look a little white around the gills. You had no right to fight a heavy-weight like him."

"I wish to thank you both," said Mary, "but I'm a stranger in this town--I have lived here only a few months, and--I don't know your names."

She blushed prettily and the lids modestly covered the blue eyes. The three had moved along the road a short distance while she was speaking.

"My name is Quincy Adams Sawyer, and this is my friend and classmate at Andover, Thomas Chripp."

The lids were lifted but the blush deepened. "My name is Mary Dana. I live with my father on Pettingill Street."

"Why," cried Quincy, "Ezekiel Pettingill is my uncle--I live with him. I'm going home your way, and, with your permission, I will escort you to your father's house."

"All right, Quincy--you go ahead," said Tom. "But you must excuse me. I've kept Mr. Wood waiting."

They were around a bend in the road by this time. When Tom returned to the scene of the encounter, Mr. Wood was not in sight. Mr. Chripp laughed, and paraphrased an old couplet.

"He who fights, then runs away,
Will have to fight some other day."

Quincy walked beside Mary, but said little. He would not acknowledge it, but the exertion had been too much for him. His knees felt weak, his sight grew dim, and, before Mary was aware of his condition, he sank upon the grass by the roadside.

She knelt beside him, took off his straw hat and fanned him. Then she lifted his head upon her knee and fanned more vigorously. Her big blue eyes were gazing at him when he opened his and looked up into her face. Again, a rosy flush came to her cheeks.

"I'm better now," said he. "I'm not very strong, but I can walk now."

He got up with a show of vigour that did not deceive Mary.

"You rest here, and I'll send your uncle for you with a carriage."

"By no means, Miss Mary, it was only a momentary feeling. Throwing him over my head is what did it."

"I'm so sorry you met Mr. Wood and me."

"Well, I'm not, Miss Mary. Uncle 'Zeke told me that Bob Wood's father used to be the town bully, and that my father, when they were both young, gave him a good thrashing. I've watched Bob--we were in school together, and he was always impudent and overbearing to me when I was a little fellow. I've felt that some day we'd have it out together. I'm glad it's over, and that I had the good fortune to serve you at the same time."

Mr. Dana thanked Quincy for his defence of his daughter from further insult and perhaps injury.

"I've been in a good many scraps myself, Mr. Sawyer. For seventeen years I was a member of the detective squad in Boston. I resigned because of injuries received in a fight with some bank robbers," and he pointed to the crutches beside his chair, "and although they wanted me to stay at police headquarters I wouldn't hang onto a job I couldn't do to my own satisfaction."

"I hope your daughter will have no further trouble with Mr. Wood."

"No danger, Mr. Sawyer. She is going to boarding school very soon to finish her education. Why, Mary, we have been very remiss. Can you not offer Mr. Sawyer some refreshment?"

Mary smiled and ran from the room.

"You'll be lonely without her," remarked Quincy.

"Yes, certainly, but I shall not be alone. It's a secret as yet, but the fact is I'm going to marry a young lady who lives in Westvale, part of Eastborough, you know, and I don't wish to force Mary to live with a step-mother. I think they would agree all right, but my plan will prevent any possible unpleasantness. I love them both too well to make them, and myself, unhappy."

Some dainty cakes, fruit, and cold well water were served in the dining room. Quincy ate slowly, but his thoughts were not about the food. He had shown little interest in the Fernborough girls with the exception of those in the families of his relatives and closest friends. But he was nearing the susceptible age, when, to a pure-minded boy, a girl playmate, by some mysterious transformation, becomes an object of admiration, and even veneration. That delicious mystery that surrounds young womanhood was attracting him. Mary was the cause of his newly-awakened interest, and soon a strong friendship sprang up between the two.

When Hiram heard that Quincy had got the best of young Bob Wood he ran back to the store and told his partner.

"Say, Strout, you can run the store for an hour or so. I must tell Mandy. She'll be 'mos' tickled to death."

Mr. Strout's disgust was shown in both voice and manner when Abner Stiles came in.

"Say, Abner, is it true that Sawyer boy licked Bob?"

"I should say so," said Abner. "He must have got an all-fired trouncing, for his face looks like a raw beefsteak, an' one of the fellers said he'd been spittin' blood."

"Them Sawyers is brutes," was Mr. Strout's comment. "I hope to the Lord that he is the last one of that brood to come to this town. Their money's the best part of 'em, but it ain't any better, when you come to that, than other folkses."

CHAPTER XX

MARY DANA

Quincy and Tom spent one more year at Andover. When they parted from the old school it was with feelings of deep regret.

"I could be happy here for ten years more," said Quincy.

"So could I," replied Tom. "But, after all, this is only a narrow path in the world of knowledge. Harvard is but a street and when we get out into the world I suppose we shall find a boulevard."

"I'm going to look down upon the world before I investigate its thoroughfares," remarked Quincy.

"What do you mean?"

"I shall visit Fernborough for only a short time this summer, a few days in which to see the folks, and then I shall go to the White Mountains. I'm going to stand on the top of Mount Washington, and look down on the busy hives of men."

Tom knew Quincy had received a letter from Mary, saying that she and her aunt intended spending the summer at Fabyans, and he felt that Quincy, being near Mary, would probably be on a higher pinnacle than any mountain could supply, and the "eternal hills" would become objects of secondary importance. But, Tom wisely refrained from mentioning these thoughts, for lovers do not seek confidants unless help is needed.

Quincy found Fernborough but little changed, During the fourteen years that he had been a resident of, or a visitor to, the town there had been but little to disturb its serenity. Goldsmith's "Deserted Village" could not have had a better record for unbroken placidity. The wrestling match between young Quincy and Bob Wood had been an incentive to some animated conversations at meal times and at the grocery, but the "locals" in the Fernborough Gazette had never risen above the usual level of,

Hal Prentiss has bought a Jersey cow,

Strout and Maxwell have a new wagon,

William Jones has painted his fence green,

Sol. Peters cut twenty tons of hay from his lot on the Center Road,

Mrs. Jerusha May is visiting her daughter Hannah at Westvale,

And more of the same kind, interesting to a rural community but considered inconsequential by those conversant with more exciting intelligence.

But Fernborough was destined to have its share of important events, which incidentally interfered with the well laid plans of both Quincy and Mary for the vacation in the mountains.

For the first time in the town's history newsboys went through its streets, calling out "All about the Murder at Cottonton," and offering for sale copies of the _Cottonton Journal_. The boys held up the papers so the headlines in large type could be seen. The word "Fernborough" caught the eyes of those attracted by the word "Murder" and the copies were soon disposed of, obliging many intending purchasers to share the news with those who had been fortunate enough to obtain copies.

Quincy was in Mason Square when the newsboys arrived and he purchased a paper. He glanced at the headlines and saw a name that caused him to utter an exclamation of astonishment. He did not stop to discuss the matter with any of the large crowd that had been collected, but whipping up his horse soon reached Mary's home. Leaving the animal standing in the yard he burst into the sitting room crying loudly, "Mary! Mary!"

"Why, what is the matter, Quincy--are you hurt?"

"No, but something has happened in Cottonton and they sent newsboys over here with the papers."

"Somebody living in Fernborough must be mixed up in the affair," said Mr. Dana, who was sitting in his rocking chair near the window.

"I should say there was, decidedly so. Sit down, and I'll read what it says."

"THE MURDER AT COTTONTON

"A YOUNG MAN NAMED ROBERT WOOD, A NATIVE OF FERNBOROUGH, ARRESTED AS THE CRIMINAL AND LOCKED UP WITHOUT BAIL. ANOTHER CANDIDATE FOR THE ELECTRIC CHAIR!"

"Bob Wood, he was the one who insulted you, wasn't he?"

"Yes, father, but that was a long time ago," said Mary. "Do let Quincy read the rest of it."

"A brutal murder was committed last night at the Ellicott Mills," Quincy continued. "The unfortunate victim was Mr. Samuel Ellicott, the treasurer and principal owner. He was found sitting at his desk with his head crushed in. The blood-stained implement of destruction has been discovered. Robert Wood, Jr., a native of the adjoining town of Fernborough, has been arrested and held without bail. Young Wood has been an employee at the mill, but had aspired to the hand of Mr. Ellicott's only daughter Mabel. Mr. Ellicott was firmly opposed to the match, and, with the view, probably, of forcing the young man to leave the city, had discharged him from his employ. Mr. Ellicott was busily engaged in making preparations for pay day, which occurs to-day, and was alone in his office at the time. There seems to be no doubt of the guilt of the accused. His cane was found in Mr. Ellicott's office and must have been used to inflict the murderous blows which have deprived Cottonton of one of its most enterprising and respected citizens."

"What do you think of that, Mary?" asked Quincy.

"I don't know yet. What do you think, father?"

"The case has no mystery--no charm for the detective's mind. I was thinking that naughty boys who plague little girls often become wicked men. Now, what do you think?"

Mary did not answer at once. When she did speak it was the result of deliberation. In a small way she had often tried to help her father out in solving some of the mysteries that had come up in his line of work, and now the detective instinct in her was strongly aroused as Quincy knew it would be.

"Quincy and I both know the young man,--not pleasurably, I'll admit," she said, finally. "Everybody thinks him guilty, but we have no right to join the multitude without cause. He may be innocent. It would be a double victory to repay an enemy with kindness, and, perhaps, save an innocent man's life."

"Just what I thought you would say," cried Quincy. "I feel too that there is a chance that Wood is not the one. But what can we do?" he continued.

"First, you must go and see Bob Wood's father, Quincy, and tell him that I am going to investigate the affair, with my father's help. But tell him he must be quiet about it. If we are to accomplish anything, it must be done without any one knowing we are interested in the matter. Father and I will look over all the papers that have reports of the trial, and, perhaps you had better attend the trial yourself, and make careful notes, for the papers do not always get things just straight. Then, I want to see Miss Mabel myself, and see what she says."

"But, why do you wish to do all this, Mary?" said Mr. Dana. "It strikes me as being a simple case of a very brutal murder, and one in

which there is no doubt that the authorities have got the right man."

"I don't believe him guilty, that's all."

"That's an opinion,--not a reason."

"I know it, but woman's intuition often comes nearer to the truth than man's judgment."

She threw her arms about her father's neck, and her eyes looked down into his, "You'll help all you can, won't you, father?" she pleaded.

"Well, I have nothing else to do, and this affair awakens my interest. But from what I know of the case now, I think they have the right man."

"You're a dear, good father to help," and she gave him another embrace and a kiss.

The next day there was a preliminary meeting which Quincy attended at Mary's request. It was with difficulty that Mary waited until he made his report.

"The principal witness was Gustave Pinchot, the night watchman. He heard loud voices but as Mr. Ellicott was quite deaf he did not attach much importance to that. Pinchot didn't see anyone come in or go out."

"Couldn't Bob Wood prove an alibi?"

"Hardly, for he testified that he went to the office that evening, and Miss Ellicott said that he told her he was going."

"No alibi--and no evidence yet," said Mr. Dana.

"It's coming," said Quincy. "Mrs. Larrabee with whom Wood boarded testified that he had a heavy oaken staff and that he took it with him when he went out that evening because he had sprained his ankle."

"Did Mr. Wood acknowledge that the staff was his?"

"He did finally. He injured his case by saying, at first, that he didn't take it with him, but Mrs. Larrabee's testimony knocked that."

"Is that all the testimony against him?" inquired Mary.

"Oh, no," continued Quincy. "Wood made a damaging statement that will make it go hard with him. When he asked Ellicott for his daughter's hand, the old man got mad and threatened to kick him out. Then the judge asked Wood what he said when Ellicott threatened him and the young fellow incriminated himself by saying that he told Ellicott if he did that he would not live to do it again."

"Did it appear that he had been kicked out?" inquired Mary.

"No; and Wood denied it as well."

"And you saw his father, Quincy? What did he have to say?"

"He's all broken up, but says that his son is innocent."

"Of course, that's to be expected," said Mary, and then continued, "I saw Mabel Ellicott yesterday. She's in love with him, sure, and of course does not think him guilty. She told me, though, that Bob Wood had said to her that if she were an orphan there would be no objection to their marriage."

"That would probably go against him, if the prosecution calls her at the trial, and she testifies to that. But, what do you really think about it, Mr. Dana?" asked Quincy.

"I have my suspicions, but I am not going to mention them yet. You two young people are taking hold of the matter in good shape, and I want to see what you can do about it; but, although, I do not say that Wood is not guilty, I do say that I doubt if the government has sufficient evidence to convict him."

* * * * *

Mary became so interested in the case that she decided not to go to the White Mountains for the summer, and Quincy also remained in Fernborough, helping Mary as much as he could. Often they would go off on long tramps in the surrounding country, and once Quincy went to Boston and was gone several days. That they procured some evidence was clear from the satisfied remarks made by Mr. Dana, who approved of the lines on which they were working.

Although they had made some headway they were not ready to present their theories when the time came for Bob Wood's trial. Many thought him innocent, but the jury were of a different opinion, and brought in a verdict of murder in the first degree.

The day after the close of the trial, the district attorney of Normouth County was sitting in his office opposite the Court House. He was preparing his address opposing the granting of a new trial, which he knew would be proposed the next day by the counsel for the defence.

He had gone over the evidence time and time again. He was a conscientious man. He felt that the law of the State had been defied--had been outraged--and yet within his heart was that natural feeling of sympathy and pity for the unfortunate being for whom but a few short weeks of life remained, and he could not help regretting the part he had been obliged to take in convicting the young man.

At that moment, a clerk entered and said that a young lady wished to

see him. In obedience to the direction given, the clerk withdrew; the door was opened again, and a blue eyed, fair-haired girl entered. Standing near the district attorney's desk, she said:

"Mr. Harlow, as there is no one here to introduce me, I will introduce myself. My name is Mary Dana. My father is, or rather was, a detective for seventeen years in Boston, but our present abiding place is the town of Fernborough. In the city he often used to tell me of the cases on which he was working, and I would try to solve them with him. Robert Wood lived in Fernborough, and from the day of his arrest I have been much interested in the case, and with the help of my father and a friend of mine, Quincy Adams Sawyer, the son of the former governor, I have been trying to find the man who murdered Mr. Ellicott,--for I have never believed that Robert Wood was the guilty person." She smiled, and added, "Detectives, I believe, are more often interested in strengthening evidence, and bringing about imprisonment and executions than they are in trying to prove people innocent."

"But, my dear young lady," said the district attorney, "the young man whom you speak of has already been proved guilty by a fair-minded jury. There seems to be no question of his being innocent, and, after the jury have returned their verdict it is rather late to still try to prove him not guilty."

"What I have to tell you I think is important. Can't you spare me a little time?"

"I have a luncheon engagement in half an hour, and can give you twenty minutes, but it will do no good, I am sure. Won't you sit down?" and Mr. Harlow placed a chair for her near his desk.

"Thank you," said Mary, as she seated herself, "I will be as brief as possible. I have read of many murder cases, but I believe I never knew of one in which there was more conclusive evidence against the person accused than in this instance. When I first took up the case, my father did not think there was a possible loophole of escape for him; but the truth does not always appear on the surface. Then, jurors get wrong impressions. Witnesses are often prejudiced. Sometimes the judge is not impartial. Then there are coincidences which are fatal so far as appearances go, but which can be satisfactorily explained."

The district attorney nodded, somewhat impatiently, and fingered his watch-chain.

"The day after the murder I called on Mabel Ellicott, primarily to ask her some questions about Robert Wood, but I also had a chance to see the body of her father, and to examine the wound upon the murdered man's head. I decided that Mr. Ellicott had been struck with something else beside the oaken staff which, covered with blood, was found near his chair. In fact, I found in the wound certain foreign substances which could not have formed part of an oaken staff.

"That was a clue, but I told it only to my father and Mr. Sawyer. It led us to look for something else. I must confess that a week passed without our discovering anything to bolster up my opinion. Finally, it occurred to me that perhaps the foreign substances I had found in the wound might have been on that part of the cane that comes in contact with the ground. But we will drop that for the present.

"Back of the mill is a piece of sunken ground. During the night, after Mr. Ellicott was murdered, there was a heavy fall of rain, and this piece of sunken ground was covered with water to the depth of several inches, in some places, at least six. I do not mean that the rainfall was so great, but the water ran down from higher elevations until it made, what appeared to be, quite an extensive pond.

"Mr. Sawyer and I made several circuits of this temporary pond; why, I could not exactly tell you. A detective, I have been told, can seldom tell why he examines certain objects so closely, but something seemed to draw me towards that improvised lake.

"While looking at the water, I saw something which projected several inches above its surface, and I had a curiosity to know what it was. Mr. Sawyer put on a pair of rubber boots, and waded out to it, lifted it from the water, and found it to be a large, irregular shaped stone weighing at least ten pounds, which he brought back to me. He then went back and splashed round in the pond with the hope of finding something else of interest, but could discover nothing.

"I wondered how that stone came to be in the middle of that pond, and we devoted several days after that to an examination of the surrounding country. Back from the mill, some four or five hundred feet away, was a ledge of rock. We, that is Mr. Sawyer and I, for I forgot to tell you my father is now a cripple and could only help us with his advice at home, examined its surface very carefully, using a magnifying glass and, to my great satisfaction, I finally located a place into which the stone found in the pond fitted nicely. Evidently, then, the stone had been detached for some purpose, and that purpose having been accomplished, the stone had been thrown into the pond."

The district attorney looked at his watch again and betrayed signs of uneasiness.

"Pardon me, Mr. Harlow, but would you not rather lose a dinner than send an innocent man to his death?"

"You still have ten minutes," was the district attorney's reply, "But, I cannot see the connection between what you are relating and your idea that Robert Wood is not guilty."

Mary continued her narration.

"I asked Mr. Sawyer to examine the tools and implements in the mill

workshop and he found a pickaxe, one point of which had been subjected to rather rough treatment. I naturally connected that pickaxe with the ledge of rock that had been found in the pond.

"An examination of the night watchman's quarters followed. Mr. Sawyer could discover nothing until he came to a small cupboard which was locked. Locks, however, do not keep detectives, or criminals either, from making further investigations. In the cupboard, he found a coil of rope. There was a certain peculiarity about that rope of which I will speak later.

"After that Mr. Sawyer loafed around the mill quite a good deal in the evenings and became acquainted with Mr. Pinchot the night watchman. He is a French Canadian. He told Mr. Sawyer that his parents lived in a small town near Montreal, that they were both quite old and he was their only living son, although he had five sisters, all working in the States.

"He had saved some money, and as his parents had a farm, and needed his assistance, he had resigned his position and the day following the murder was to have been the last one at the mill. He had withdrawn his resignation when told that the law would require him as a witness, and has continued in service.

"Mr. Sawyer then made a trip to Boston and found that Mr. Pinchot had not intended to go to Canada but had been making inquiries as to when a steamer would sail for France. He had been told he would have to go to New York. Am I taking up too much of your time, Mr. Harlow?"

"It makes no difference now. I am too late for the dinner. Pray proceed."

"While in the city Mr. Sawyer called upon the architects who drew the plans for the Ellicott Mills. I mean the original plan, for many changes have been made in the interior. He procured a copy of this, and we found that when the mill was first constructed, the part used by the treasurer at the time of the murder had been the receiving room for raw materials. I next made an excuse for us to visit the mills one Sunday and we investigated the second story of the mill. The floor was covered with grease and dirt and was black with age. I got upon my hands and knees and, with my magnifying glass, examined every foot of the floor.

"For a long time, my search was not rewarded, but, finally, I found a white place in the wood. A splinter had been detached. With a knife, I scraped the dirt from the floor. My search was rewarded. I had found a trap door! Its former use was apparent. On the wall, above the trap door, was a stout hook. Upon this hook the tackle had been put and goods lifted from the receiving room to the story above."

"Well what does all this lead up to?" asked the district attorney.

"I will show you very soon, now, Mr. Harlow. If you remember, the

safe at the mill was found open the morning after the murder but had been closed and locked by the superintendent. This was a very foolish thing to do, as the combination had been known only to the treasurer, and it was several days before it was opened by an expert sent by the manufacturers. It was then found that the money drawn by Mr. Ellicott for the payroll, some three thousand dollars, had disappeared."

"Yes, I remember," said the district attorney, "the thief was never found, and with the more important matter of the murder on our hands little attention was paid to the loss of the money. It was clear from the start that Robert Wood had nothing to do with it, because revenge, not robbery was his motive. But, what does all this mean that you are telling me?"

"I forgot to state, or, rather postponed saying it, that the coil of rope that was found in the cupboard had a noose in one end of it, and that in Mr. Ellicott's wound I found small particles of stone. I summed up the case thus: Pinchot plotted to steal the money drawn for payday and to kill Mr. Ellicott if it became necessary. He lifted the trap door, having thrown the noose in the rope over the hook in the wall. Mr. Ellicott was quite deaf and did not notice the opening of the trap door or the man's descent by means of the rope. He used the stone because he could throw it away and no weapon could be found. The murderer saw the oaken staff. He knew that Mr. Ellicott had a visitor that evening so he used the staff to complete his deadly work and left it behind as a witness against an innocent man. He took the money from the safe, drew himself up by the rope, closed the trap door, locked up the rope and threw the stone into the pond. In France he would be safe to spend the proceeds of his crime. A nice bit of circumstantial evidence, is it not?"

"Then you believe in circumstantial evidence, Miss Dana?"

"In certain cases. But I think it would render the community just as safe, and be more just to the accused if, in cases of circumstantial evidence where there is the least doubt, the sentence should be imprisonment for life with a provision in the law that there should be no pardon unless the innocence of the life convict was conclusively proven. When a murderer is taken red-handed, I would not abate one jot or tittle of the old Mosaic law--an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a life for a life. But you know that many murderers of whose premeditated guilt there could be no doubt have been much more leniently dealt with by our judges and juries than those caught in the coils of circumstantial evidence."

"Where is the watchman now?" asked the district attorney.

"Here in Cottonton, but he is intending to leave to-night for New York, I found out this morning. Of course, he was not able to leave before this as he had to stay in the vicinity, being a witness at the trial, but his leaving so soon now simply seemed to confirm my suspicions, and I thought it time to bring the matter to your attention."

"Miss Dana," said the district attorney, rising, and holding out his hand to her. "I have done the best I could to convict Robert Wood of the murder of Samuel Ellicott, because I really believed him guilty, and my oath of office bound me to do my duty; but, if he is innocent, I believe it as much my duty to right the wrong done him. You have built up a careful case, and I myself shall ask for a stay of sentence until after this new evidence can be presented to the Grand Jury. I believe you have saved an innocent man, and I feel your future as a great detective is assured."

It was unnecessary for Mr. Harlow to apply for stay of sentence in the case of *The Commonwealth of Massachusetts vs. Robert Wood*. Within an hour after Mary Dana had left the district attorney's office, Gustave Pinchot was under arrest, and, sitting in the same chair which Mary had occupied, was confessing his crime.

The day that Robert Wood was discharged, with no stain upon his name, Quincy and Mary took her father to Cottonton. At the prison they met Robert's father who had come to take his son home. He was profuse in his thanks to Mr. Dana, for to him he considered his son's escape from death was due.

"You are wrong, Mr. Wood," said Mr. Dana. "Your son owes his life not so much to me as to my daughter here, and to Mr. Sawyer. She practically worked up the case herself; I made but few suggestions, and it was at her request that Mr. Sawyer made certain investigations that fitted in with her own ideas and made success possible."

"Miss Dana," said young Robert, "a year ago I insulted you, and was properly treated for my words and actions by Mr. Sawyer. I owe you both an apology which I now make and ask your forgiveness. But for you, and Mr. Sawyer, I should have died a felon. You have, indeed, heaped coals of fire on my head."

Mary answered, "That was forgiven long ago, but if you wish my forgiveness you have it freely. How does Miss Ellicott feel now that you are declared innocent?"

"She came to see me this morning and we are to be married as soon as possible, and I am to become the treasurer of the mill. She will own three-quarters of the stock."

When Mr. Strout learned that Robert's release was due to the exertions of Mary and Quincy he sniffed and exclaimed:

"Folks in love will do all sorts of things. She's gone on that young Sawyer, and she only started in on the thing so she could have a chance to traipse around the country with him. He'll come back here for her some day, and her market'll be made. All I hope is that he'll take her to Boston, or some other foreign place to live an' we shall see and hear the last of 'em."

CHAPTER XXI

AT HARVARD

The newspapers gave much space to the near approach to miscarriage of justice in the Wood's case, and many editorials were written on the fallacy of allowing circumstantial evidence to carry as much weight as it did. But what was spoken of most was the clever detective work of Mary Dana. She was the recipient of congratulatory letters for her work from all parts of the country, and the press could not say too much in her praise.

Mary received a most flattering offer to join the Isburn Detective Bureau in Boston. Mr. Irving Isburn, the proprietor of the world-wide known agency, had for more than fifty years been engaged in solving mysteries and apprehending offenders against the law. His success had been phenomenal, and if his agency had been called "The Scotland Yard of America" it would have been a derogation rather than a compliment. He had surrounded himself with the most expert men and women in the profession, and in a letter to Mr. Dana he said he considered Miss Dana would be a most important and valuable acquisition to his staff. Mr. Dana, however, decided that Mary was too young to start business life, so she was sent to Boston to boarding school for a year. At the expiration of that time she joined Mr. Isburn's staff, and soon that gentleman wrote her father that in certain lines of investigation she was unexcelled.

With the coming of autumn, after Bob Wood's release, Quincy and Tom started in on their four years at Harvard. They had passed their entrance examinations without conditions, so the few days in the last of September, spent so anxiously by many of the freshman class in trying to make up conditions given them the spring before, allowed Quincy and Tom to live in Arcady until the portals of the temple of learning were ajar. Rooms were engaged at Beck Hall, and the young men began their inspection of the classic city on the Charles.

"This city is on the square," remarked Tom. "Lafayette, Central, Putnam, Harvard, Brattle, and some more on the East side I suppose."

"The college is on the square too," said Quincy, "as long as Dr. Eliot is Prexie."

College life has been depicted many times in books, and Quincy and Tom's four years probably contained few events that had not had their counterparts in the lives of other young Harvard men. They joined many clubs and societies the initiation ceremonies being, in reality, a mild form of hazing.

Quincy and his chum were not goody-goody boys, but they had mutually

pledged each other that they would lead temperate lives and refrain from all dissipation that would prejudice their standing as students. Quincy saw Mary frequently, and, after she was employed by Mr. Isburn, they talked over some of the most interesting of Mary's cases.

In their college life, Tom and Quincy were unsuspecting, and became the butt of many good-natured and some unkind jokes. On one occasion they were invited to join a theatre party. It was a variety or vaudeville show and ended with a pantomime, the closing scene in which was a skating carnival.

When the skaters came on, the members of the theatre party rose in their seats and pelted the performers with paper snowballs made hard by the liberal use of paste. The police were called in. Quincy and Tom had taken no part in the snowballing but, as examination showed their pockets were full of the substitutes for the natural product, they were adjudged as guilty as the others.

One evening Quincy and Tom went to the theatre together. During a pathetic speech by the heroine the clang of a big cow bell was heard. The audience vented its displeasure in hisses. Again came the clangour and all eyes were turned towards the unconscious youths, Quincy and Tom. Again were the policemen called in. Two young men who sat behind Quincy and his friend were accused of causing the disturbance. They indignantly denied any knowledge of it and left the theatre threatening a suit for damages. Further investigation by the minions of the law discovered the bell fastened to the hat-holder beneath Quincy's seat, while the string that served as a bell pull was under Tom's foot. Denial of such strong circumstantial evidence was useless and Quincy and Tom promised to cause no further annoyance. On their way home in the car they discussed the situation.

"It's Dupont and Kidder that put that up on us, and we must get even," said Tom.

"But how?" was the question.

A week later Tom purchased tickets for a whole row of seats at one of the principal theatres, explaining that they were for a large theatre party. Dupont and Kidder had been recipients of complimentary tickets which entitled them to seats in the middle of the row. They expected that Quincy and Tom and other students would complete the party. Not so, as events proved. Dupont and Kidder, immaculately dressed, had for companions two waitresses at a well-known Cambridge café, two Harvard Square hairdressers, and a number of individuals whose dress and general appearance indicated physical strength rather than mental powers. Dupont and Kidder went out at the end of the first act and did not return.

The next time that Tom met Fred Dupont he asked,

"Do you believe in the Declaration of Independence?"

"My great-grandfather signed it," said Dupont proudly.

"How does it read?" asked Tom--"something about men being born free and equal--a barber's as good as a millionaire's son--isn't it?"

"It's all right," replied Dupont, "Kidder and I only took one bell to the theatre, but you kindly supplied us with two. Nothing's too good for us at that caf  now, and we've invited Kitty and May to go to the theatre with us to-morrow night."

"It's no use, Quincy," said Tom. "Dupont and Kidder took their medicine as patiently as we did, and they liked it so well they're going to have more of it."

Then he told Quincy what Dupont had said.

"The victory's ours," cried Quincy. "That shows that Americans, rich or poor, are democratic at heart. All that keeps them apart is the foolish idea that the possession of money lifts them above their fellows. Put them on a money equality, and only the very exclusive ones will care about the colour of their blood. It was a good lesson for Dupont and Kidder whose fathers are wealthy men, and they have wisely profited by it."

"Then you don't believe in social castes?" said Tom.

"Why should I? My father married a poor girl and I don't expect to find my wife on Beacon Street or Commonwealth Avenue."

After Tom had asked his question the thought came to him that if Quincy had believed in social distinctions on account of wealth he would not have chosen the son of a cotton weaver as his boon companion, but it was too late to take back the question, and Quincy had answered it.

The four years of study were at an end. Quincy was loaded with scholastic honours while Tom's prowess has been most effectually shown on the ball team and in the 'Varsity Eight, which came near winning a trophy for the Crimson.

Just before Class Day, Quincy went into the office of Sawyer, Crowninshield, Lawrence & Merry to see Harry Merry about some matters connected with his income.

"Quincy, I am glad to see you," exclaimed Mr. Merry. "I was on the point of sending a messenger out to Cambridge to have you come right in. Something very strange has happened this morning and it may be a question which even your friend Miss Dana may find worthy of her skill in attempting to solve."

"What is it, Uncle Harry? There is nothing I love like a mystery, and Miss Dana often talks her cases over with me."

"This is a mystery in which you and your mother in England may be greatly concerned; but before letting her know anything about it I think it better to find out what it really means. For you to understand the matter clearly, I will have to go back a number of years. In your father's will your grandfather and Dr. Paul Culver were named as executors. After a while the doctor wished to resign, and as you know I was appointed in his place."

"Yes, and you have always done more than your duty, and I am truly grateful. But, pardon me for interrupting you. Please go on."

"To make myself thoroughly familiar with all the details of my trust, I went over all the old accounts. When your father and mother started on that unfortunate trip to Europe, your father took with him some English gold, some bank notes, and, to last him for his further expenses while abroad, five bills of exchange, each for two hundred pounds, Sterling, a total of about five thousand dollars. These bills of exchange were drawn by his bank here in Boston, and in favour of the bank's agents in London. About six years ago I changed the deposits of your trust account to another bank. Until then I had always kept that five thousand still intact, as it was drawing fair interest, and as, you may not know, your mother has always had an idea that your father was not drowned. But, when I changed the account, it seemed foolish to leave that money still there, and as the bills of exchange had never been presented for payment, I had no trouble in having them cancelled, and receiving the money.

"But, and here is where the important part of the matter comes in for you, one of those bills of exchange, drawn over twenty-three years ago, has to-day been returned to the bank here in Boston from the London agents."

"Why, Uncle Harry," cried Quincy, "what can it mean? Is it possible that my father is still alive? I can't understand it, I am bewildered," and strong man as he was he was unnerved.

"Calm yourself, Quincy," said Harry Merry, "I am afraid that would be entirely too good news to be true, but at least it must mean that your father's body was found some time or other, and probably the bill of exchange got into the hands of some dishonest person who has cashed it."

"Have you got it here?"

"Yes," and Mr. Merry handed a paper to him.

"Is the signature that of my father?" asked Quincy turning the bill over, and looking at the various endorsements on the back.

"I am not sure. If I were, there would be one great question solved, for he would never have put his name to it, of course, until he was ready to cash it. In a way it looks a little like his writing, but it

may be, and I think it is, a rather bungling forgery. It is more than likely that in the wallet in which he kept the bills of exchange he may have had some papers to which he had signed his name, and the signature was copied from that."

"I want to show this to Miss Dana," said Quincy, "perhaps she can help me solve the problem. Have you got any paper with my father's signature to it?"

"Wait a few minutes, and I will see if I can find any in the old files."

After a good quarter of an hour, which to Quincy seemed as though it would never end, Mr. Merry came back, covered with dust, but with the required paper in his hand.

"A lawyer should never destroy a paper," said Mr. Merry, "and I am glad to say this firm never does. Here is a letter your father wrote to your grandfather nearly thirty years ago, and is dated from Mason's Corner. Take it, and the bill of exchange with you. I hope you can solve the mystery, and let's pray it will turn out to mean that you are Quincy Adams Sawyer, Junior; but, my boy," and Harry put his hand on Quincy's shoulder, "do not build too many air castles on it. If you do, I am afraid you have a bitter disappointment before you."

Quincy immediately called on Mary Dana, and had a long talk with her about the matter. He told her all his conversation with Harry Merry and showed her the bill of exchange, and the signature of his father's which he knew to be genuine. After examining them both Mary said,

"In many ways, this looks like a very clever forgery. The characters are all made the same as in the signature to the letter,--notice the peculiar little twist to the S in the word Adams, but your father wrote a very firm, strong hand, and the writing on the bill of exchange is weaker and a little shaky. That is undoubtedly due partly to the fact that the signature on the bill of exchange is written with a very fine steel pen, while that in the letter was written with a quill. But, what makes me doubt the genuineness of the signature is this,--although the characters are practically the same on the two pieces of paper, your father's name in the letter is the writing of an educated man, that on the bill of exchange looks like the efforts of a man unaccustomed to write, probably through ignorance, but perhaps due to the fact that he has not held a pen for a long time."

"But, Mary," asked Quincy, "how are we going to find out about it, how can we learn who did sign it?"

"There are the endorsements on the back. They are the only clues. Below your father's name appears that of Jonathan Drake; then that of Agostino Tombini, and, below that, Macquay Hooker. There is also the stamp of the London bank. Where the bill of exchange was cashed does

not appear. It is evident, however, that the last person who signed it before it reached the bank in London was Macquay Hooker. We will cable London now, and in the morning will have an answer. Be in to see me early, but, if I were you, I would hold myself in readiness to leave for Europe at a moment's notice. Is your work all finished at Cambridge?"

"Yes, I had my last examination yesterday, and I should leave for the summer in a few days. Class Day is all that keeps me now, but I am perfectly willing to recall the invitations I have sent out, and can leave at any time."

On his return to his rooms Quincy told Tom what had happened.

"I had been intending to speak about our going abroad anyway this summer," said Quincy. "It's the style for college boys after being graduated to go to Europe. I want to see my mother and aunt, too. To be sure, I have had nice long, loving letters from them, and I've kept them fully posted as to my doings, but that doesn't quite come up to seeing them. Now, with this mystery on my hands, with all it may mean to me, I must go anyway. Will you come along with me?"

"If dad don't mind, I'll go."

"We'll run down to Fernborough for a day or two to say good-bye, if there is time, and you can see your father about it."

At ten o'clock the next morning, Quincy entered the office of the Isburn Detective Bureau.

"I have good news for you, Quincy," said Mary. "I have found out from London that Macquay Hooker is a banker in Rome, and I have cabled him, asking who the other two endorsers are. We should receive a reply by noon at the latest."

A good half hour before noon a messenger boy came in and handed Mary an envelope. She scanned the cablegram quickly, and handed it over to Quincy. It read, "Tombini banker, Drake American consul, Palermo, Sicily."

"You see," said Mary, with a smile, "matters are simplifying themselves considerably. I shall cable now to Drake at Palermo, and find out what I can about the original signer of the bill of exchange. This is Wednesday. The Gallia sails from here to England on Saturday. You had better engage passage, and make arrangements to go then. Come back late this afternoon, and I will tell you what has developed in the meantime."

After engaging a stateroom for Saturday, Quincy returned to Cambridge, packed what things he needed for a couple of days, and with Tom came back to Boston, intending to go to Fernborough on the late train in the evening.

"The answer has just come," said Mary, when Quincy saw her later in the day, "but, I am sorry it is not as satisfactory as I could wish. Mr. Drake is away from Palermo at present, and beyond the fact that a Quincy Adams Sawyer had registered at the consulate about a month ago and has since left the town, they seem to know nothing about the matter."

"Well," said Quincy, "we have a starting point anyway, and more than we had in Bob Wood's case in the beginning. I shall go directly to Fernborough Hall to see my mother for a day or so, but I think I will not mention the real reason for my trip abroad until I have found out more. I will tell her that Tom and I are anxious to get to the continent as soon as possible, and that we will return to England later on. Then we will go down through Italy to Sicily, and start in there tracing the signer of that bill of exchange."

"I think that is the best plan," said Mary. "In the meantime I will keep in close touch with Mr. Merry here, and if another one of those bills of exchange comes in I will cable you, care of your bankers in London, the names of the endorsers."

"Mary," said Quincy as he took her hand at parting, and held it perhaps a little longer than was really necessary, "I can't thank you for all you have done for me. I am truly grateful, and wish there were some way in which I could show you my true appreciation."

"Your thanks are all I want. Besides, you may be the means of bringing a very clever criminal to justice," and the smile left her face as she said it, "for I am afraid that is all you will find. You must not hope too much for what seems the impossible."

On their way to Fernborough that evening, Quincy and Tom decided it would be best not to mention the real object of their going to Europe, so Mr. Chripp thought it was only a pleasure trip. He did not object to his son going,--but he made one condition, that Tom should visit the village in old England in which he was born and bring him back a picture of the little thatched cottage in which Mr. Chripp had lived until the tales of high wages and better prospects in America had drawn him from his native land.

Quincy had said good-bye to all his relatives, friends, and acquaintances except Mr. Obadiah Strout. That gentleman should have no reason to say he had been snubbed.

When Quincy entered the store Mr. Strout was weighing some butter. Quincy noticed that the wooden plate and a sheet of thick paper were put on the scales before the butter was cut from the tub.

"Well, what can I do for you, Master Sawyer?" said Strout when the customer who had paid thirty cents a pound for butter including wood and paper had departed.

"I came to say good-bye. I am going to Europe."

"I s'pose you'll like England with its 'ristocrats and kings so well that you won't come back to these ordinary United States."

Quincy knew that Mr. Strout wished he would stay in England, so he replied,

"Oh, no. I'm coming back sure. I know a little about weighing groceries and I've decided to come back and go into business."

"What good will your book larnin' do you then?"

"For one thing, they teach something besides dead languages in colleges nowadays. I studied moral philosophy, which points out the difference between right and wrong, between honesty and dishonesty, between fifteen ounces of butter and one ounce of wood and paper, and sixteen ounces of butter to the pound."

With this parting shot, Quincy joined Tom in front of the store and they started for Boston, from which port the *Gallia* was to sail two days later.

CHAPTER XXII

ALICE'S DREAM

"Do you believe in dreams, Aunt Ella?"

"No, Alice, I do not."

"Not if they come true?"

"Only a coincidence. If they don't come true are you willing to acknowledge that all are unreliable? Or, if some prove true do you consider them all reliable? You can have either horn of the dilemma."

"What causes dreams, Aunt Ella?"

"Usually what's on your mind. Your brain doesn't wake up all at once and dreams flit through it until it gets full control."

"What if a person dreams the same thing three nights in succession?"

"That proves nothing. When my first husband died I dreamed for a month or more that he was still alive and that I must wake him at a certain time because the morning he died he was to take a train at an early hour. You make your own dreams."

"But supposing you see something in your dreams that you never saw

before--that you never knew existed until you viewed it when asleep?"

"What have you been dreaming, Alice?"

"You won't laugh at me?"

"I promise not to laugh, but I won't promise to believe."

"If my husband is dead," said Alice, "he is dead and I shall never see him again in this world; if he is still living, he is somewhere in this world, and it's my duty to find him."

"I will agree to that," assented her hearer, "but you know that I have no faith that he is alive. Just think, twenty-three years have passed away and you have had no word from him. Out of deference to your feelings, Alice, I had put off making my will since Sir Stuart died until yesterday. It is now signed and in my lawyer's hands. It is no secret, I have left all I possess to your son Quincy."

"Why did you do that?"

"I promised his father that he should have it, but as I think he will never come to claim it, I gave it to his son, as he or you would do if it was yours. Now, your dreams have put some idea into your head. Where do you think your husband is?"

"I don't know what country it is, but, in my dreams, thrice repeated, I have seen him standing in a grove of trees filled with fruit--lemons and oranges they appeared to be."

"Did he speak to you or you to him?"

"He looked at me but gave no sign of recognition. I called his name, but he did not answer me."

"That proves what I said. You are always thinking about him, and your mind made up your dream."

"Where do lemons and oranges grow?"

"In so many countries that you would have to go round the world to visit them all." She thought to herself, "they don't grow in the ocean."

"You speak of twenty-three years having passed. That's not so long. I have read of sailors being away longer than that and finally returning home. Men have stayed in prison longer than that and have come out into the world again. Why, Quincy is only fifty-three now."

"And I'm seventy--an old woman some think me, and others call me so, but if I were sure that by living I could see Quincy again, I'd manage some way to keep alive until he came."

"You are just lovely, Aunt Ella, and I love you more than ever for those words. I believe that Quincy wants me to come to him--and I am going!"

"My dear Alice, I'm sure the only way you will ever see Quincy is by going to him, for he can never come to you."

The next day Alice spent in studying the cyclopedias and maps. She estimated the cost of a six months' trip to the citron groves of Europe and America. For a week she pondered over the matter.

Then something occurred that led her to make up her mind definitely. She had the same dream for the fourth time. She awoke screaming, and shaking with terror. Her aunt was awakened and ran to her room.

"What is it, Alice? Dreaming again?"

"Yes, the same and yet different. I saw a big man raise a club and strike Quincy on the head. He fell and I awoke."

Aunt Ella grew cynical. "Why didn't you wait long enough to see the effect of the blow?"

"Oh, Auntie," and Alice burst into tears. "What shall I do?"

"I know what I'm going to do. I shall send for Dr. Parshefield and have him give you a sleeping potion."

The next day Alice began making preparations for her journey. Aunt Ella's arguments and appeals were in vain.

"I must go," said Alice. "Where, I do not know, but God will direct me."

"God won't do anything of the kind," exclaimed Aunt Ella.

Her patience was exhausted. Then her manner changed. She accepted the inevitable, and did all she could to help her niece. One thing she insisted upon, and that was that Alice should have a companion. One who could speak French and German was found and Alice started upon her quest into, to her, unknown lands.

CHAPTER XXIII

"BY THE BEAUTIFUL BLUE DANUBE"

Alice did not tell Aunt Ella where she was going. To have done so would have led her aunt to say that it was foolish to go there, for although she aided Alice in getting ready for her journey she was

decidedly opposed to it. In fact, in her own mind she called it "a wild goose chase." But she had learned that Alice had an indomitable will and she fully realized that further argument and opposition were useless.

Alice went on board the boat at Dover with some foreboding. She had read and had been told of the rigours of the Channel passage and her experience was equal to the descriptions. Had it not been for the presence of Babette, the maid so wisely provided by her aunt, her journey might have ended at Calais, or even before. She had a horror of the water and it was with a sense of great mental and physical satisfaction that her feet touched solid ground again.

They went to Paris, but spent no time in the gay city. Their objective point was the south of Italy, and then the island of Sicily. Did not the guide books say that Sicily was the home of the orange and the lemon?

They would stop a short time in each important town. Carriages were taken from day to day and inquiry was made at the principal groves in the near vicinity of the towns. Then trips were made into the country, but everywhere Alice's questions were answered in the negative. She was allowed to talk to the labourers, by the aid of an interpreter, but none had any remembrance or had heard of any such man as she described.

At only one grove, near Palermo, was she refused admittance. The proprietor, Silvio Matrosa, said he had no authority to admit strangers. Besides, two of the men had been fighting and one was so seriously injured by a blow upon his head by a club, that he had been sent to the hospital and it was thought he would die. Under the circumstances "Would the ladies excuse him?" and Alice was obliged to give up her search in that direction.

She had been so impressed with the reality of her dreams that she had thought she could easily recognize her husband's surroundings, but she confessed to Babette, who was sympathetic and engaged eagerly in the search, that she had seen no place that resembled the scene of her dreams.

More weary wandering without result followed, and so intent was she on the object of her search that the beauties of "Sunny Italy" were lost upon her. The weather was hot and enervating and Babette suggested that her mistress should go to Switzerland and rest before continuing her search. Alice consented, but when they reached Vienna she was too ill to proceed farther. Babette was at home in Vienna for she could speak German, and she soon learned that the Hospital of St. Stephen's would give her mistress the rest and medical treatment that her condition required--for she was on the verge of nervous prostration. The discomfort of travelling was not the cause of her physical break-down for Aunt Ella had told her "that nothing was too good for a traveller" and every comfort and convenience that money could supply had been hers. Her mental disquietude had produced the

physical relapse. She had been so confident of the truth of her dreams, and that some power, she knew not what, but which she trusted implicitly, would lead her to her husband, that her disappointment was more than her strained nervous system could bear.

After a week's rest, although unable to rise, she called Babette to her bedside. "I wish to send word to my aunt in England but I do not feel able to sit up and write. I will dictate, you can write, and I will sign it."

Then Babette wrote:

"MY DEAR AUNT ELLA: Confession, they say, is good for the soul. My body is weak to-day and so Babette is writing my confession. I have been to Sicily and all over the southern part of Italy, but no success has come to me. If Quincy had been in one of those orange or lemon groves he could not have lived there for so many years; the work is too hard, and he was never used to manual labour. So, as soon as I am able, I am coming home. I will never trouble you with any more dreams. I believe, as you do, that they are products of imagination. I am not sick, only tired out, and naturally, at first, very much disheartened. I shall be with you very soon, never more to leave you." ALICE.

"P. S. As soon as I am able to take a drive I am going to view the attractions of this city--which Babette says is even more beautiful than Paris. I must see 'The Beautiful Blue Danube,' and I must hear Johann Strauss's orchestra. They will be the only happy memories of my fruitless journey."

CHAPTER XXIV

"WE THREE"

Nothing marred the pleasure of the trip on the *Gallia* and young Quincy and Tom could not have been happier than they were when the great steamer made its way up the Mersey towards its Liverpool pier.

A few hours only in the great bustling city and then they were off to find the house in which Tom's father was born and lived. It was near Chester, that modernized reminder of the old Roman days, and on their way to Fernborough Hall.

They found it uninhabited. The thatched roof was full of holes and the interior showed the devastation that wind and water had worked. Tall weeds filled the little garden and the general effect was dismal indeed.

"It won't do to take Dad a picture of this old shanty," said Tom.

"Perhaps we can find a house that looks like it," Quincy suggested.

They had no difficulty in doing that, for the same architectural plan, if the design be worthy the name, had plainly been followed in the construction of many cottages. They found one with the roof covered with moss and a garden full of old-fashioned flowers, and several views were taken with Quincy's camera.

"It's cheating in one way," said Tom, "but it would break Dad's heart to see a picture of his old home as it really is--so we'll show him one as it ought to be."

"And as it shall be," said Quincy. "It won't cost much to fix it up, all but the moss, and that will come on it in time. You get a man, Tom, find out the cost of renovating the house, and I'll pay the bill. So will the sense of untruthfulness be removed from our sensitive feelings." This was quickly arranged, for work, with the pay in advance, was a delectable possession in those parts.

When they reached Fernborough Hall, and Quincy was told of the search on which his mother had started out, he pretended to agree with his aunt that it was useless, and the height of folly, but from that moment hope sprang up within him, that, by some miracle, his father was still alive. He did not confide his hopes to Aunt Ella, and gave her no inkling of the real reason for his trip to Europe.

"It would make me very happy to know that my father was living," he said, "but after so long a time it seems foolish to think it, does it not? When do you expect mother home, Aunt Ella?"

"The letter was written a month ago from Vienna, but, unfortunately, she did not give her address. If she were well, she should have been here before this. I have an idea that she may have gone to Switzerland on her way home, and charmed by its scenery, or forced by her weak condition, has remained there. Stay here for a week with your friend, and perhaps some word will come."

"No, Auntie," said Quincy, "Tom and I will run over to Vienna, and if we don't find her we will push on to William Tell's republic. We will write you often--Tom one day and I the next."

"I have often wondered," said Quincy to Tom two days later as they were on the cars speeding to Vienna--"I have often wondered," he repeated, "how my mother could let me go away and stay away from her for fourteen long years. That she loves me, her letters show plainly. She says often that I am all she has in the world, but she never sent for me to come and see her nor did she ever come to see me. How do you explain it, Tom?"

"Very easily. That disaster at sea and the loss of your father has given her a horror of the ocean which she cannot overcome. She fears

to trust herself or one she loves to its mercies again. Perhaps we can't understand her feelings, but you must respect them."

"I do," replied Quincy. "I have never doubted her love for me, and your theory, perhaps, explains her failure to manifest her love more forcibly."

On the train they made a most agreeable acquaintance and regretted their inability to accept his invitation to visit him. His name was Louis Wallingford. He was an American, born in Missouri. He had been a reporter, then editor. His passion was music and he had forsaken a literary life for that of a musician. He had joined an orchestra much in demand at private parties given by the wealthy residents of St. Louis. At one of these, he had become infatuated with the daughter of a railroad magnate who counted his wealth by millions. A poor violinist, he knew it was useless to ask her father for his daughter's hand. The young lady's mother was dead. The father died suddenly of apoplexy, and Miss Edith Winser came into possession of the millions. Then he had spoken and been accepted. Conscious that her husband, talented as he was, would not be accepted, without a hard struggle, by the upper class, they decided to live in Europe.

He had found a deserted chateau on the borders of Lake Maggiore. Money bought it, and money had transformed it into an earthly Paradise. The building, of white marble, was adapted for classic treatment, and Greek and Roman art were symbolized therein.

The chateau contained a large music room and a miniature theatre in which Mr. Wallingford's musical compositions and operas were performed.

"I have just come from Paris," said Mr. Wallingford, "where I have made arrangements for six concerts by my orchestra which will play many of my own pieces. Can you not be in Paris in a month and hear them?"

"Tell him your story," whispered Tom to Quincy, and he did so.

Mr. Wallingford was deeply interested.

"If you find both your father and mother, they deserve another honeymoon. Bring them to Vertano and in the joys of the present we will make them forget the sorrows of the past."

"I am afraid," said Quincy, "that such good fortune would be more than miraculous."

"Come with your mother and friend then," said Mr. Wallingford as he left them to change cars.

They went to the Hotel Metropole in Vienna. Quincy consulted his guide book.

"Everybody lives in apartment houses in Vienna, so this book says. The question is, in which one shall we find my mother and her maid?"

"All we can do," said Tom, "is to plug away every day. Keep a-going, keep asking questions, keep our eyes and ears open, and keep up our courage."

"Your plan is certainly 'for keeps,' as we children used to say. Come along. Your plan is adopted. Have you written Lady Fernborough? 'Tis your turn."

Many days of fruitless travel and the young men began to despair of success. Quincy was debating with himself whether it would not be better to give up the search for his mother, and follow up the clue about his father. He felt that every day was precious.

"I have an idea, Quincy," Tom said one morning. "Perhaps your mother is quite sick and has gone to a public hospital or a private one of some kind."

"That's a fine idea, Tom. We'll begin on them after breakfast."

The sharp reports of gun shots and the softer cracking of pistols were heard.

"What's that?" cried Quincy.

"Some men are on a strike. They had trouble with the police last night and this morning's paper says the strikers have thrown up barricades. Probably the police and soldiers are trying to dislodge them."

The firing continued, and from their windows the soldiers and people could be seen moving towards the scene of disturbance.

"Let's go out and see what is going on," said Quincy.

"Let's stay in and keep out of trouble," was Tom's reply. "It is the innocent bystander who always gets shot."

"I'm going down to the office to find out about it," and Quincy took his hat and left the room.

Tom was suspicious of his intentions and followed him. Quincy had left the hotel and was walking rapidly towards the scene of disturbance. Tom ran after him, and kept him in sight, but did not speak to him. At first he felt offended that Quincy had not asked him to go with him. Then he reflected: "I virtually told him in advance that I wouldn't go. He's his own master."

They were nearing a street from which came the sounds of conflict--loud cries, curses, and the reports of firearms. Tom ran forward to prevent Quincy from turning into the street. He was too late--Quincy

had turned the corner. Tom, regardless of danger, followed him. He started back with a cry of horror. Quincy had been shot and was lying upon the sidewalk, the blood streaming from a gun-shot wound in his right arm. Tom took him up in his arms, as though he had been a child, and returned to the safety of the unexposed street.

As he lay Quincy upon the sidewalk and took out his handkerchief to make a tourniquet with which to stanch the flow of blood, he cried: "Oh, Quincy, why did you walk right into danger?"

As he uttered the words, a man who was standing nearby, whose dress and swarthy face proclaimed him to be a foreigner, stepped forward and grasped Tom roughly by the arm.

"What did you call that young man," asked the stranger, his voice trembling, perceptibly.

"I called him by his name--Quincy."

"Quincy what? Pardon me, but I have a reason for asking."

"His name is no secret," said Tom, as he twisted the handkerchief tightly above the wound. "I can't understand your interest in him, but his name is Quincy Adams Sawyer."

"Thank Heaven," exclaimed the man. "And thank you," he added, grasping Tom's hand--"Is he English?"

"No, we're both Yankees, from Fernborough, Massachusetts."

The man knelt beside Quincy and gazed at him earnestly. He looked up at Tom.

"I could bless the man who fired that shot. My name is Quincy Adams Sawyer and this young man is my son!"

Tom's surmise had been correct. Alice did not improve and a long stay at the Hospital became necessary before the return to England would be possible.

"What's that noise, Babette?" asked Alice.

"There must be a riot somewhere," was the reply. "The soldiers are marching past. They are fighting in a street nearby."

Alice said no more. What had she to do with fighting and bloodshed? Her suffering was greater than any bullet could inflict. She fell into a doze from which she was awakened by a loud cry from Babette.

"Oh, Madame, a carriage has just stopped here, and they are bringing a wounded man into the Hospital. There are two men with him--one looks like an Englishman or American."

"Go down, Babette, and see if you can find out who they are. I should be glad if I could be of help to one of my own countrymen."

It seemed a very long time before the maid returned. When she did, the usually self-confident Babette seemed dazed. She did not speak until her mistress asked:

"Did you find out anything?"

"Yes, Madame."

"What?"

"They are all Americans, Madame. A young man and his friend; the older man is the father."

"The companion's?"

"No, the young man's."

"Did you learn their names or where they are from?"

Babette sank upon her knees by the bedside.

"Oh, Madame, I am so happy."

Alice regarded her with astonishment.

"Happy! Happy because a young man has been shot. You must have a bloodthirsty nature, Babette."

"It isn't the shooting, Madame. It's the name."

"The name? What name? You are nervous, Babette. You must lie down and rest. I keep you up too late nights reading and writing."

"Oh, Madame, how can I say it? Can you bear it?"

"I have borne suspense for twenty-three years. I can bear much. What is it you would tell me?"

"You know, Madame, I said the older man was the young man's father. They both have the same name."

"That's not uncommon, especially in America. The young man is called Junior. Sometimes when they are very proud of a family name they number them. Supposing my husband were living, and my son had a son, named after himself, the little boy would be Quincy Adams Sawyer 3rd."

"Madame, I must tell you. The father and the son bear the name of Quincy Adams Sawyer!"

Alice regarded her as if affrighted. Then she leaped from the bed and cried: "Bring me my clothes, Babette. My husband and son! We three, brought together by the hand of God once more."

The revulsion was too great. The pent-up agony of twenty-three years dissolved in a moment. Alice fainted and fell into Babette's arms.

CHAPTER XXV

A PERIOD OF TWENTY-THREE YEARS

It took hours for the overjoyed wife and mother and the long-lost husband and father to tell their stories. Alice's was told first, and was followed by young Quincy's recital of his life at Fernborough, his four years at Harvard, and the story of the returned bill of exchange leading him to Europe, and his search for his mother in Vienna which ended with such happiness for all. Finally, the father began:

"On the night of the collision, after seeing you safely started in the life-boat with the last of the passengers, Captain Hawkins thought of a small boat on the upper deck which had been overlooked in the general scramble to get away from the doomed Altonia. Shouting to me to follow him, the Captain rushed up the ladder to the railing, and together we started to lower the boat. It was raised about three feet above the deck, being held in position by two supports shaped like a letter X. I had already loosened the ropes on my side, and then tried to kick out the support nearest me. It stuck, and finally I got down on my hands and knees thinking I could force it out better in that position. The water was steadily pouring in at the ship's side, and it was only a question of a few minutes before the Altonia would founder. Finally I gave one mighty push, the support gave away, the boat came down upon me like a ton weight,--and that was the last I knew until I awoke in a large room full of single beds, and a kindly faced old priest told me I was in the Hospital of San Marco, Palermo, Sicily.

"My God, the shock when I found that my sleep,--for such it was to me,--had lasted over twenty-three years! What thoughts went through my mind! Had you, Alice, been saved or lost? If saved, were you still living, and my son, whom I had never seen, was he living? Were Aunt Ella and my father and mother and my sisters still alive? I was roused from my revery by the good Father Paolo.

"He told me that the week before he had been summoned to the death-bed of an old seaman, Captain Vando, who had confessed that over twenty years before, while sailing from Boston to Palermo, two days after a very bad fog, he had picked up at sea a small open boat in which were two men, both of whom at first seemed dead. One, it was

Captain Hawkins, was beyond all help; he was frozen to death,--frozen to death, Alice, in an effort to save my life, for, besides my own coat, his was found tucked around me.

"After hours of work, I was brought back to life,--but a life worse than death. The Captain told Father Paolo that my mind was a blank, I could remember nothing of my past, I did not know my name. Then temptation came to Captain Vando. He took from me my belt, in which I had some English gold, a few English bank-notes, and the five bills of exchange, each for a thousand pounds. The latter he did not dare to dispose of, but the money he appropriated to his own use. He soon found I could be of no use to him on ship-board, so, on his arrival at Palermo, he sold me to a rich planter, for a hundred lire, and I was put to work in the orange groves.

"Captain Vando in his confession told Father Paolo that he still had my belt containing the bills of exchange, and before his death he delivered these over to the priest. After the Captain's death, Father Paolo went to Signor Matrosa, who, when confronted with the facts, admitted I had been sold to him, and that I was known under the name of Alessandro Nondra, but he told him that I had been mixed up in a fight, and had received such a bad wound that I had been sent to the hospital. One of his managers, an Italian, had married an English girl, and they had a daughter with light hair, and blue eyes. It seems I had been sent to his house one day with a message, and when I saw his daughter, I cried out, 'Alice, Alice,' and caught the girl in my arms. Her father was so enraged that he picked up a gun lying near at hand, and gave me such a terrific blow on the head that I was knocked senseless. I remember nothing of it, but mistaking Anita for you was, undoubtedly, my first approach to my former consciousness. That scene was probably the one which you saw in your dream, Alice, and to think that afterwards you should be so near me in Palermo, and neither of us know it!

"At the hospital the doctors found that the blow on my head had caused but a comparatively unimportant scalp wound, but, in dressing it, they found that at some earlier time my skull had been crushed. They performed the delicate operation of trepanning the skull, and when I came out from the effects of the ether, my mind was in the same state as it had been twenty-three years before.

"After that my recovery was rapid. Father Paolo made Signor Matrosa pay me thirty-three hundred lire as my wages for the many years I had worked for him, and I gave a thousand of it to the manager's daughter, to whom, in a way, I owed my return to my natural self. The rest I gave to Father Paolo for the use of his church.

"Luckily, in my belt that Captain Vando had appropriated was my passport. I went to the United States consul at Palermo, Mr. Drake, had the passport visØd, and got him to cash one of the bills of exchange for me. Suddenly, one day, the thought came into my mind, had you, Alice, thinking me dead, married again? I decided to find out before the announcement of my return to the land of the living

could be spread broadcast, and I persuaded Mr. Drake to keep back the information from his official report for a while, at least. This he was able to do easily, as he was on the point of going away for a vacation of a few months, and the other members of the consulate knew very little of my case.

"I decided to continue bearing the name of Alessandro Nondra for a while, at least, and I knew I could make a living in some way when my present funds were exhausted. How I regretted the cashing of that bill of exchange, because I knew it would eventually lead to my discovery; but I was so changed, with my iron-gray hair, and Van Dyke beard, that I felt I could escape detection until I knew whether my wife still waited for me or not.

"I decided to make my way north to Ostend, and would cross from there to England, where I felt sure I could find some news of you, or Aunt Ella. I stopped off here in Vienna for a day or two. When I heard my son called by name this morning I could not resist, and instead of finding my son alone, I have also found his mother, my wife."

CHAPTER XXVI

"CATESSA"

Quincy gloried in his wife's faith and constancy. Alice, while she rejoiced in her husband's return bewailed his lost opportunities.

"Think what you have lost, Quincy. You might have been President."

"If I have escaped that I shall not regret my long imprisonment."

"Why, Quincy, would you have refused a nomination?"

"Many are called, but few are chosen. I have never cherished any such ambition. I am not in love with politics and I detest the average politician. Our country produces few statesmen and it never will until the civil service law is made applicable to legislators and to high officials. We have much to learn from China in this respect."

Telegrams had been sent to Aunt Ella and Mr. Wallingford apprising them of the happy reunion. From the latter came a message extending a hearty invitation to come to Vertano.

Young Quincy's wound though painful, and particularly uncomfortable, was not serious. Tom was his constant companion and attendant while Quincy passed nearly all his time with his wife. She improved rapidly and their departure was delayed only until young Quincy's wound was healed.

"You now have a longer name than ever," his mother said to him one day.

"How's that? It's too long now. What must be added?"

"Why, now that your father is alive, you are Quincy Adams Sawyer, Junior."

"I am more than willing to make the addition, mother, and hope it will be many years before I am obliged to shorten it."

When they reached Vertano but three days remained before the departure of Mr. Wallingford and his orchestra for Paris, but during that time there were drives through the beautiful country, boat rides upon the lake, rehearsals by the orchestra and the performance of an operetta written by Mr. Wallingford in which he, his wife, and seven children took part.

"Shall we go to Paris?" asked Alice.

"Certainly," said Quincy. "We owe Mr. Wallingford the return courtesy of our attendance at his six concerts."

The trip across the channel did not possess so many terrors for Alice with her husband and son for company, but she was glad when they stepped upon land at Dover.

"I shall never love the water," she said.

They reached London in the afternoon too late to take the train for Heathfield in which town Fernborough Hall was situated. A telegram was sent to Aunt Ella informing her of their safe arrival in London, and that they would be with her the next day.

"What can I do to amuse you this evening, Alice?"

"Sit down and let me look at you, I have so much time to make up."

"They give _Martha_ at the opera to-night--it is my favourite--full of the sweetest melodies in which I substitute Alice for Martha. Quincy and Tom would like to go, and I have another reason which I will tell you after the first act."

Alice's curiosity was aroused and she expressed her desire to go. After the first act, Alice turned an inquisitive face to her husband.

"What was your other reason for coming here to-night?"

"Don't you think Catessa is a fine tenor?"

"He has the most beautiful voice I ever heard," Alice replied.

"I know him. He is an old friend of mine. I'm going behind the scenes

to congratulate him personally."

"Did you meet him in Italy?"

"No--in Fernborough, Massachusetts."

"Why, Quincy, what _do_ you mean? There were no Italians in Fernborough."

"He is not an Italian. He's a Yankee. Look at his name."

"That's Italian surely."

"It's only his Yankee name transposed. Aren't you good on anagrams?"

"Certainly, I'm not. Please tell me."

"Do you remember a young man in Fernborough with consumption whom I sent to a sanatorium in New York?"

"Yes, Mr. Scates."

"You've hit it. Mr. Arthur Scates, or A. Scates for short. Now look at that Italian name again."

"I am doing so, and it looks just as foreign as ever."

"Agreed, but Catessa contains just the same letters as A. Scates, only they are arranged differently."

After the second act, Quincy visited Mr. Scates in his dressing room. The tenor insisted on Quincy and his party taking supper with him at his hotel after the opera. He offered to repay the cost of his treatment with interest.

"No," said Quincy, "I do not need it, and will not take it. Use it to help some poor artist."

It was one o'clock when Quincy and his party reached their hotel.

"Did you enjoy yourself, Alice?"

"I had a delightful evening. But how happy you must feel to know that your money saved such a precious life."

"I do," said he. "Good deeds always bring their reward. See what I got--twenty-three years hard labour in an orange grove."

"Hush, Quincy. There is no possible connection between the two events."

"I disagree with you. I think I am the connection, but I don't really think one caused the other."

"I should say not. You are not often cynical."

"I am not, dear. Only when one does a good deed he must not expect to be repaid in exactly his own coin."

"Did Mr. Scates offer to repay you?"

"He did, and I told him to give it to some poor fellow who needed it."

"Quincy, I don't know which to admire most. Your good heartedness, or your ability to make one sum of money perform many good actions."

The home coming to Fernborough Hall was a sad contrast to the pleasure of the evening before. They found Aunt Ella in bed with two doctors in attendance. Though weak, and failing fast there was no diminution of her mental powers. She expressed a wish to see Quincy alone.

"Quincy, your wife's faith has made a new woman of me. I have always wished to live for ever, I had such a fear of death and uncertainty as to the future. My fears are all gone.

"The same Power that put me in this world and has given me so many blessings, with some sorrows, so that I would properly appreciate the blessings, will take care of me in the next. I have never been a wicked woman, but often a foolish one. The most foolish thing I have ever done was to doubt the faith your wife had that you were still alive. She's an angel.

"Give me a sup of that wine, Quincy," she continued, "I haven't smoked a cigarette since I promised Alice I wouldn't. Wasn't that self-denial? Now, there's a very important matter that needs attention. I told you when you married Alice that when I died you should have everything. Don't interrupt me. Believing you were dead I made a new will and left everything to your son."

She drew a paper from under the bedclothes.

"Here it is. Burn it up. The other one is in the hands of my solicitor in London."

Quincy laid the will upon the bed.

"Aunt Ella, I shall not burn the will nor destroy it. I am satisfied with the disposition of your fortune. I should have been equally well satisfied if you had possessed other heirs. But, did you leave your property to Quincy Adams Sawyer Junior?"

Aunt Ella's eyes snapped with some of their old fire.

"I've got it right. I have described my heir so carefully that there

can be no mistake. Don't you imagine that there is a chance for you to break my will."

There was a smile on her face as she spoke, and Quincy smiled to show that he did not misunderstand her pleasantry. As he turned to go, Aunt Ella called:

"Quincy!"

He approached the bed again.

"Another sip of that wine. I always liked wine--but not too much of it."

She beckoned to him to come nearer. "Quincy, I want you, before you go away to have the fish cleared out of the lake. Stuart wouldn't let me do it, and since he died I have kept them as a tribute to his memory. He said to me, when the name dies out, let the fish die too. The name is near death, and the fish must go. Now, send Alice to me."

When she came, she bent over and kissed her aunt tenderly.

"Alice, I wish you were going with me. You know what I mean, dear. I hope you will have long life and great happiness to make up for what you've gone through. You have your husband back again. I am going to mine, Robert and Stuart. There is no marriage or giving in marriage there--only love. Quincy is going to look after the fish in the lake."

Aunt Ella lingered for a week, then passed quietly away while asleep. She was laid beside Sir Stuart in the family vault, and the name Fernborough lived only as that of a little country town in New England.

At the funeral Quincy met his sister Florence who looked upon him as one raised from the dead.

"I did not forget you, Quincy, for my first-born bears your name."

Linda, Countess of Sussex, came with her husband the Earl, and her daughter, the Lady Alice Hastings, a tall, statuesque blonde, in her twenty-eighth year.

"I've something wonderful to tell you," said the Countess to Quincy and his wife. "My daughter is soon to be married, but not to one of our set. Her choice has fallen upon Mr. John Langdon, an American. He's very wealthy, and is coming to England to live. Isn't that romantic--so out of the usual."

"America loses every time," said Quincy. "First our girls and their father's money, and now our men and their money. In time, England will form part of the great American nation."

"You mean," said the Countess, "the great English-speaking nation," and Quincy bowed in acceptance of the amendment.

The probating of the will, making arrangement for the sale of Fernborough Hall, and providing for the payment of the proceeds and annual income to Quincy Jr. caused a long delay, for English law moves but little faster than it did when Jarndyce brought suit against Jarndyce.

Quincy Jr. and Tom were thrown on their own resources during the long wait. London was their resort, and, to them, Scotland Yard and its detectives, the most interesting part of the city.

When the party finally embarked, by a coincidence, it was on the Gallia which had brought young Quincy and his companion to England seven months before.

No storms or heavy fogs were met upon the way, and the party was landed safely in New York.

CHAPTER XXVII

O. STROUT. FINE GROCERIES

During the summer that the foregoing events were happening in Europe, Mr. Hiram Maxwell, in the little New England town of Fernborough had a serious accident happen to himself the effects of which were far reaching, and finally affected many people.

In unloading a barrel of sugar from a wagon, it slipped from the skid and fell upon his leg causing a compound fracture. He was taken home, but when the doctor was called he advised his immediate removal to the Isaac Pettingill Free Hospital for he was afraid an amputation would be necessary. Unfortunately, his fears proved to be true, and Hiram's right leg was amputated just below the knee.

"That Hiram's an unlucky cuss," said Mr. Strout to his hearers one evening at the grocery. "But think of me. This is our busy season and with everything piled onto me I'm just about tuckered out. What help will he be stumbling around on crutches?"

"Can't he have a wooden leg?" asked Abner Stiles.

"Yes, of course he can. An' if you lost your head and got a wooden one in its place you'd be just as well off as you are now."

This remark caused a laugh at Abner which he took good-naturedly. When Mr. Strout was out of sorts he always vented his spleen on somebody.

"Well," said Benoni Hill, "I'm awful sorry for Hiram with a wife and children to support. Of course his pay will go right on, bein' as he's a partner."

"I don't know about that," said Strout. "That's for the trustees to decide, and I've got to decide whether I'll do two men's work for one man's pay."

"He would for you," Abner blurted out.

"If you think so much of him, why don't you come in and do his work for him?" said Strout.

"When you were going to buy this store, and Mr. Sawyer got ahead of yer, yer promised me a job here as pay for some special nosin' round I'd done fer yer--but when yer got in the saddle you forgot the feller who'd boosted yer up. When a man breaks his word to me onct he don't do it a second time. That's why," and Abner went out and slammed the door after him.

Mr. Strout was angry, and when in that state of mind he was often lacking in prudence in speech.

"That comes of turning a place of business into a resort for loafers. If I owned this store outright there'd be a big sign up somewhere-- 'When you've transacted your business, think of Home Sweet Home.'"

"I reckon that's a hint," said Benoni Hill, as he arose and put on his hat. "You won't be troubled with me or my trade in futur'. There are stores in Cottonton jus' as good as this, and the proprietors are gentlemen."

He left the store, and one by one the "loafers" followed him as no one had the courage to break the silence that fell upon the company after old Mr. Hill's departure.

Mr. Strout, left alone to close up the store, was more angry than ever.

"What cussed fools. I was hitting back at Abner and they thought the coat fit and put it on. They'll come round again. They won't enjoy tramping over to Cottonton for kerosene and molasses."

The store was lighted by kerosene lamps resting on brackets. It was Mr. Strout's custom to take them down, blow them out, and replace them on the brackets. One was always left burning, as Mr. Strout said "so burglars could see their way round."

Mr. Strout's anger rose higher and higher and there was no one present upon whom he could expend it. He grasped one of the lamps, but his hold on the glass handle was insecure and it fell to the floor, the lamp breaking, while the burning oil was thrown in every

direction. He wished then that some of the "loafers" were present to help him put the fire out. There was no water nearer than the pump in the back yard. He grabbed a pail and started to get some water. He forgot the back-steps and fell headlong. For some minutes he was so dazed that he could do nothing. The glare of the fire lighted up the yard, or he would have had difficulty in filling the pail. When he returned, he saw that the fire was beyond his control. He could not go through the store, so he climbed the back yard fence and made his way to the front of the store crying "Fire" at the top of his voice.

It seemed an age to him, before anyone responded. He felt then the need of friends, neighbours--even "loafers" would have been acceptable.

A bucket brigade formed, but their efforts were unavailing. As the other lamps were exploded by the heat new inflammable material was thrown about. In a quarter of an hour the whole interior was in flames, and in an hour only a grim, black skeleton, lighted up by occasional flashes of flame, remained of Strout and Maxwell's grocery store.

Next morning comment was rife. Mr. Strout had told how the fire was caused but there were unbelievers.

"I think the cuss set it on fire himself," said Abner Stiles to his employer, Mr. Ezekiel Pettingill.

"Be careful, Abner," was the caution given him. "It don't do to accuse a man of anything 'less you have proof, an' your thinkin' so ain't proof." Mr. Strout went to Boston to see the trustees. The insurance was adjusted and Mr. Strout was authorized to proceed with the re-building at once. During the interim orders were filled from the Montrose store. Fortunately, the stable and wagon shed were some distance from the store, and had not been in danger.

The new store was larger than the old one, and many improvements, in Mr. Strout's opinion, were incorporated in the new structure. He ordered the new sign. When it was put up, the whole town, including the "loafers" were present. "I s'pose he fixed it with the trustees" said Benoni Hill to Abner Stiles.

"Danged if I think so," was the reply. "He's allers been meaner'n dirt to Hiram, an' has allers wanted to git him out. Burnin' up the store giv' him his chance."

"You mean the store burnin' up," corrected Benoni.

"I dunno. The Bible says God works in a mysterious way his wonders to perform, an' so do some individooals."

One noon after dinner, Mr. Strout said to his wife. "Bessie, put on your things an' come down to the new store. I want to show you somethin'."

"And leave the dishes?"

"You can bring 'em with you if you want to," her husband replied.

When they reached the store, upon which the painters were at work, he pointed to the new sign.

"See that? Read it out loud."

Mrs. Strout complied:

"O. STROUT. FINE GROCERIES."

"What did I tell yer?" was his only comment.

CHAPTER XXVIII

THE HOME COMING

Quincy desired to have his return to America unheralded by items in the newspapers of stories of his wonderful rescue, captivity, and final recovery of his reason, so when he booked for passage on the Gallia he gave the name of Mr. S. Adams, wife and son.

During the homeward voyage the father and son had an opportunity to become acquainted. The father told the story of his life at Mason's Corner; first going back to his college days. He told his son how he had opposed his father's wish that he would become a lawyer and sustain the reputation of the old firm of Sawyer, Crowninshield, and Lawrence; about his health breaking down and his visit to Mason's Corner; about the blind girl whom he had made his wife, and how he had secured medical assistance and her sight had been restored. Once again he lived over his life in the country town, and told about his friends and foes--Obadiah Strout and Bob Wood--who were enemies no longer, and honest, good-hearted Zeke Pettingill, and his sweet wife, little Huldah Mason. And Hiram who stammered so and Mandy who didn't. Nearly all the people mentioned in their long talks were well known to young Quincy and after his father had finished his reminiscences the young man supplied the sequel.

"What do you think of Mr. Strout?" asked the father.

"Think? I know he's a dishonest man. You say that you parted friends. He is no friend of yours or mine."

Then he told of his encounter with young Bob Wood.

"I had some trouble with his father many years ago," said Quincy.

"What did he do to you?"

"Nothing to me. He insulted a young lady, and I took her part. Tom was going to help me but I arranged to handle him, in a very unscientific way though."

"It was a rough and tumble of the worst sort," interjected Tom. "I was afraid they'd bite each other before they got through."

"Quincy," said his father, "you must take boxing lessons. When occasion requires, it is the gentleman's weapon."

The mention of Mary Dana naturally led to a rehearsal of the Wood case, and all Mary had done in helping Quincy at the beginning of the search for his father.

"I think I see which way the wind blows," laughed his father, while Quincy blushed to the roots of his hair, "and I want to meet the young lady who did so much to bring us all together again."

Alice was proud of her son. He resembled her, having light hair and blue eyes; a decided contrast to his father whose skin had been darkened by Italian suns, who had dark eyes, dark hair frosted at the ends, and a heavy beard, cut in Van Dyke fashion. Few, if any, would have recognized in him the young man who more than twenty-three years before had taken passage on the *Altonia*, looking forward to a pleasant trip and an early return to his native land.

Alice explained to her son her apparent lack of affection for him in allowing him to be separated from her so long.

"I knew you were with your relatives and good friends, Quincy. In my nervous, depressed state I was poor company for a young, healthy boy. Then, I had such a fear of the ocean I dared not go to you and was afraid to have you come to me. Can you forgive me?"

"My darling mother," said young Quincy, "what you did turned out for the best. I have been educated as an American and that fully atones for my apparent neglect. Your beautiful letters kept you always in my mind, and I used to take great pleasure in telling my schoolmates what a pretty mother I had."

Alice, despite her years, blushed.

"Quincy, you are like your father in praising those you love."

Tom gave Quincy's father graphic descriptions of the changes in Fernborough and fully endorsed his friend's opinion of Mr. Strout.

"He's a snake in the grass," said Tom. "He'd pat you on the back with one hand and cut your throat, figuratively speaking, with the other."

"Do you think he'd recognize me?" asked Quincy.

"I think not," said Tom. "His perceptive powers are not strong. He's sub-acute rather than 'cute.'"

Quincy and Alice sat for hours looking out upon the wide expanse of ocean, and at the blue sky above them. It did not seem possible that so many years had passed since they were together. Memory is a great friend. It bridged the great gap in their lives. They were lovers as of yore, and would be always. They did not hesitate to talk of the cruel past--not sadly, for were they not in the happy present?

Said Alice one morning, "While you were gone I was in a terribly nervous condition. Aunt Ella said that I must have something to employ my mind--and I wrote, or tried to write. I couldn't keep my mind on one thing long enough to write a story, but I have collected the material for one, and now that I am happy once more, when we have settled down, I am going to write it."

"What's the title, or, rather, the subject?" her husband inquired.

"Oh, it opens with a ship-wreck--not a collision but a fire was the cause. Among the passengers are many children--of high and low degree--and they get mixed up--fall into wrong persons' hands,-- fathers and mothers are lost and cannot claim them, and their future lives have supplied me with the strongest and most intricate and exciting plot that I have ever constructed."

"Which is the 'star' child?"

"He is the son of a Russian Grand Duke--the offspring of a morganatic marriage--his mother is driven from the country by order of the Czar. The title is The Son of Sergius."

They did not remain in New York but took the first train for Boston. They were driven to the Mount Vernon Street house.

"I knew you were coming," cried Maude, as she ran eagerly down the steps to meet them.

"Who has turned traitor? I pledged them all to secrecy," cried Quincy.

"Harry told me, and I had a cablegram from Florence."

"Did she use my name? If so, we are undone and the reporters will swarm like bees."

"You are safe," said Maude. "The message read: Brother found. Keep quiet."

Tom was prevailed upon to remain in Boston until Quincy could go to Fernborough. At supper they were introduced to Maude's family.

"Six of them," said Quincy. "I am uncle to a numerous extent. Maude, what are all their names--the girls first."

"This is Sarah, named after mother; Ella for Aunt Ella, and little Maude for her mother."

"Good! Now the boys."

"Stuart--the old gentleman was so nice to Harry and me when we were on our wedding tour--Nat for father, and Harry--"

"Thank Heaven--no Quincy. That name was becoming contagious. I am glad, Maude, that you were wise and kept the epidemic out of your family."

That evening Quincy and Mr. Merry talked about business matters. Harry told of Hiram's accident and the destruction of the store by fire.

"There's something funny about it," said Harry. "We authorized Mr. Strout to rebuild and restock at once, and we hear that he has done so, but he has not called on us for a dollar, nor has he sent up any bills for payment."

"I wish you would send a telegram to Mr. Ezekiel Pettingill the first thing to-morrow morning asking him to come to the city--say important business."

About three o'clock Ezekiel arrived at the office of Sawyer, Crowninshield, Lawrence and Merry. He was shown into what had been the late Hon. Nathaniel's private office, and came face to face with Quincy.

"I'm heartily glad to see you again," he exclaimed as he wrung Quincy's helpless hand after the first surprise of the meeting. "Hurdy'll be delighted too. You must come down and tell us all about it. Just to think--more'n twenty years--but you're looking well."

Quincy assured him that his health was never better.

"What I wanted to see you about are affairs in Fernborough. What is Strout up to?"

"You've used just the right word. He's up to something. He's got up a sign--O. Strout, Fine Groceries--an' says Hiram's out of the firm, and that he owns the whole business."

Quincy smiled. "So, I've got to fight it out with him again, have I? Well it will be the final conflict. To use Mr. Strout's words, one or the other of us will have to leave town. You aren't going back to-night?"

"Oh, I must."

"Well, come up to the house first and see Alice and the boy. Well go down to-morrow."

CHAPTER XXIX

THE FINAL CONFLICT

When Tom Chripp showed his father the photograph of the house in which he was born, he burst into tears.

"Just as pretty as ever," he exclaimed. "The roof's been mended, beent it, and just the same flowers all around it as when I was a boy. Tom, I'm glad to see you back safe and sound--but that picter-- Tom, when I die, you just put that picter in the coffin with me, won't you? I want your grandfather to see that the old place was looked after when he was gone."

Tom promised.

A dark featured, dark haired man entered Mr. Strout's store. The proprietor knew he was a stranger--perhaps just moved into town, and a prospective customer.

"What can I do for you?" he inquired blandly, for he was capable of being affable.

"I am looking for Mr. Hiram Maxwell."

"He ain't here no more."

"But he's your partner, isn't he?"

"Didn't you read my sign? There ain't no partner on it."

"There ought to be."

Mr. Strout looked at the stranger with astonishment. Then he laughed, and, with a remembrance of Mr. Richard Ricker, asked sneeringly:

"What asylum did you come from?"

"I beg your pardon," said the stranger. "I used to know Mr. Maxwell, and they told me in the city that he was a member of the firm of Strout and Maxwell."

"Who told ye?"

"The trustees of the estate of Mr. Sawyer. Mr. Quincy Adams Sawyer.

Did you know him?"

"I never knew any good of him. So they told yer, did they? That shows how much attention they give to business. The old store was burned up and that busted the firm. This store's mine from cellar to chimney."

"The old firm must have paid you well."

"Pretty well--but I made my money in State Street, speculating and I'm well fixed."

"I'm glad to hear that you've prospered. I wish my friend Maxwell had been as fortunate. What became of his interest and Mr. Sawyer's in the store?"

"Went up in smoke, didn't I tell yer?"

"I beg your pardon," said the stranger again. "But doesn't your store stand on land belonging to the old firm?"

Strout squinted at the stranger. "I guess you're a lawyer lookin' for points, but you're on the wrong track. You won't get 'em."

"I'm not a lawyer, Mr. Strout. I only inquired thinking my friend Mr. Maxwell might--"

"Well, he won't," said Strout. "Mr. Quincy Adams Sawyer cheated me out of one store but he can't drive me out of this. He thought he was awful smart, but when he bought the store he didn't buy the land. It belonged to the town. I'm one of the selectmen, and one of the assessors found it out and told me, and I bought it--an' this store an' way up to the sky, and the land way down to China belongs to O. Strout."

"I am much obliged, Mr. Strout, for your courtesy--only one more question and then I'll try and find my friend Mr. Maxwell--if somebody will be kind enough to tell me where he is."

"You didn't ask where he was. If you want to know he's up to the Hospital. He's had his leg off, an'll have to walk on crutches."

"So bad as that,--I'm _very_ sorry," said the stranger.

"I've got to put up some orders--see that sign?" and he pointed to one which read:

"When You've transacted your Business, Think of Home, Sweet Home."

"I beg your pardon, Mr. Strout, for taking so much of your valuable time. Do you know whether Mr. Quincy Adams Sawyer is in town?"

Strout laughed scornfully. "In town? That's good. Why, man, he's been dead more'n twenty years--food for fishes, if they'd eat him, which I

doubt. He's left a boy, same name, that used to go to school here, but, thank Heaven, he's got lots of money, and probably won't trouble us any more. Perhaps he's the one you want."

"Are you sure the boy's father is dead? I saw him in Boston yesterday."

"I don't take any stock in any such nonsense. This ain't the days of miracles."

"I saw him in this town this morning."

"Where?" gasped Strout.

"Right here. That's my name, Quincy Adams Sawyer. Do you want me to identify myself?" He stepped back, puckered up his mouth, and began whistling "Listen to the Mocking Bird."

Strout was both startled and mad. "Just like you to come spyin' round. You allers was a meddler, an' underhanded. But now you know the truth, what are you going to do about it?"

Quincy walked to the door. "Well, Mr. Strout, I'm going to put it about as you did when I first came to Mason's Corner, Either you or I have got to leave town. This is our last fight, and I'm going to win."

He left the store quickly and made his way to where Ezekiel was waiting for him with the carryall.

"Now, 'Zeke, we'll go to the Hospital and see poor Hiram."

They found him hobbling about on crutches in the grounds of the Hospital.

"How long have you been here, Hiram?" was Quincy's first question.

"About twelve weeks. You see, besides breaking my leg I cracked my knee pan an' that's made it wuss."

"We'll fix you up very soon. I'll get you an artificial leg from New York. You'll be able to walk all right but you mustn't do any heavy lifting."

"Guess I shan't have no chance to lift anything now Strout's got the store."

"Don't worry about that, Hiram. There are towns that have two stores in them. How's Mandy?"

[Illustration: "'JUST LIKE YOU TO COME SPYIN' ROUND. YOU ALLERS WAS A MEDDLER.'"]

"Gettin' along all right. Mr. Pettingill, there, sends a man over to help her, and Mrs. Crowley is as good as two any day."

"Don't worry, Hiram. You'll come out on top yet"

"If I do, 'twill be because you'll put me there, I reckon."

As they were driving back 'Zekiel asked Quincy if he knew Mrs. Hawkins was going to sell out.

"No, why. Getting too old?"

"No, she's as spry as a cat, and she's seventy odd. That ain't the reason. Jonas is dead."

"What was the matter?"

"Chickens."

"What--overeating?"

"No, somebody stole his chickens. So he arranged a gun with a spring and he must have forgotten it."

"He didn't 'kalkilate' on its hitting him?"

"Guess not. Mrs. Hawkins says she's too old to marry agin, and she can't run the house without a man she can trust."

"Let's stop and see her."

When they entered, Mrs. Hawkins threw up her hands. "Lord a Massy! I heerd at the store all about you comin' back, but where on airth _did_ you come from? They said you was dead an' here you are as handsome as ever. How's your wife, an' that boy o' yourn?"

"Both well, I'm happy to say. 'Zeke tells me you want to sell out."

"Yes. Now Jonas has gone there's nobody to take care of the chickens, an' a hotel 'thout chickens an' fresh eggs is no home for a hungry man."

"What will you take for the place just as it stands?"

"Well, I've figured up an' I should lose money ef I took less'n four thousand dollars, an' I ought to have five."

"I'll take the refusal of it for forty-eight hours at five thousand. Is it agreed?"

"I'd hold it a month for you, Mister Sawyer, but I want to go and help Mandy soon's I can now that Hiram's laid up for nobody knows how long."

"We'll have Hiram on his feet again very soon, Mrs. Hawkins. I'll be down again in a few days."

"Give my love to Alice," she called after them as they were driving away.

The next evening Quincy asked his son to come to the library with him.

"Quincy, I want to borrow fifty thousand dollars. Can you spare it?"

"Twice as much if you need it. I'll give it to you. It's yours anyway."

"No, I want to borrow it at six per cent."

"Are you going into business?"

"Yes." Then Quincy told him of his conversation with Mr. Strout.

"How are you going to beat him?" asked young Quincy.

"I'll tell you. I'm going to buy the Hawkins House. I shall have it lifted up and another story put underneath. There will be room for a store twice as large as Strout's, and a hotel entrance and office on the ground floor. I'll put Hiram Maxwell in charge of the store."

"Who'll run the hotel?"

"Zeke says Sam Hill is the man for the place, and his wife Tilly will be the housekeeper, chief cook, etc."

"Do you mean to run Mr. Strout out of town?"

"That is my present intention. Not for personal vengeance but for the ultimate good of the community."

"I'd like to help, but the work isn't in my line."

"Seriously speaking, Quincy, what is your line--the law?"

"No."

"Business?"

"No."

"What then?"

"Don't know. Am thinking it over."

"Have you seen that Miss Dana yet?"

"No. Mr. Isburn told me she is out West now on an important case."

"We'll get her to find Strout after he leaves Fernborough. Give me that check to-morrow early. I'm going to Fernborough with an architect to have plans made for the alterations."

Mr. Strout could look from his window and see what was going on at the Hawkins House.

"Who's bought the hotel, Abner?"

"Well, Mr. Strout, they do say it's Mr. Quincy Adams Sawyer, an' that Sam Hill and his wife Tilly are going to run it."

"I won't sell them a darned thing."

Mr. Stiles grinned. "Can't they buy in Cottonton, or Montrose, or Eastborough? Mr. Sawyer's got stores there."

"Well they'll want things in a hurry, but they won't get them from me."

A month later Abner rushed into the store.

"Say, Strout, they're putting up a new sign on the Hawkins House. Come and see it."

Mr. Strout walked leisurely to the window and put up his hand to shade his eyes. Great white letters on a blue ground.

THE SAWYER GROCERY COMPANY

"By George, Strout, there's going to be another grocery."

Mr. Strout did not speak, but walked back behind the counter. Abner went to see the sign raising.

Mr. Strout soliloquized: "So, he's going to fight me, is he? Well, I'll spend every dollar I have, and borrow some more, before I'll give in. He'll cut prices--so will I."

Then a troubled look came into his face.

"Confound it. My commission as postmaster runs out in a month, but our Congressman is a good friend of mine."

Opening night came at the new store, Saturday being selected. Over the doorway was an electric sign--

WELCOME TO ALL

Mr. Strout's store was nearly deserted. About ten o'clock Abner came

in.

"I say, Strout, it's just scrumptious. They got three times as many goods as you have. An' there's a smoking room back of the store with a sign over the door _'Exclusively for Loafers. Loaf and Enjoy Your Soul.'_ They say a poet feller named Whitman writ that last part. Saturday morning is to be bargain day and everything is to be sold at half price. And, say, isn't the hotel fine? Everybody was invited upstairs, an' there was a free lunch spread out."

"Abner, you've talked enough. You'd better go home."

The warfare continued for three months. At the end of the first, Hiram Maxwell, an old soldier, was appointed postmaster, _vice_ Obadiah Strout. At the end of the second month Mr. Strout resigned his position as organist and the gentleman who led the orchestra that played during the evening at the hotel was chosen in his stead. At the end of the third month a red flag was seen hanging at the door of Mr. Strout's store and Mr. Beers the auctioneer whose once rotund voice had now become thin and quavering, sold off the remaining stock and the fixtures. Then the curtains were pulled down and the door locked. The next day Mr. and Mrs. Strout and family left town.

"What's become of Strout?" Quincy asked his son, who had just returned from Fernborough. Another month had passed since the auction sale.

"I heard he was seen on State Street a few days ago, and he said the best move he ever made was leaving that one-horse country town; that he could make more money in a day in State Street than he could in a month in the grocery business. It seems he has become what they call a curb broker or speculator."

"I am glad," said Quincy, "that Mr. Strout has found a more profitable and congenial field. It must have been very dull for him the last three months of his stay in that one-horse town."

CHAPTER XXX

TOM, JACK AND NED

Quincy decided to have his company incorporated. This necessitated visits to the Secretary of the Commonwealth and the Tax Commissioner. The amount paid in cash capital was \$200,000. Besides the four stores doing business, sixteen more were contemplated in Boston, Cambridge, Lowell, Lawrence, Fall River, New Bedford, and other small cities and large towns.

The design was not to form a trust with a view of controlling certain

food products and raising prices, but to establish a line of stores in which the best grade at the lowest cash price should be the rule. This price was to be fixed for the Boston store and was to be the same in all the stores.

"Whom shall I put in charge of the Boston store, Quincy?" his father asked. "He will have to be general manager for the whole circuit."

"I know a man," said young Quincy, "who is honest, conscientious, and a perfect tiger for work, but he knows nothing about the grocery business. He has adaptability, that valuable quality, but, while learning, he might make some costly mistakes."

"I want you to act as Treasurer for the company. It's your money, and you should handle it."

"I've no objection to drawing checks. We sha'n't have to borrow any money for there's half a million available any time. Why didn't you have a larger capital, father?"

"Because the State taxes it so heavily; but there's no tax on borrowed money. The fellow who lends pays that."

"If I loan money do I have to pay taxes on it when I haven't got it?"

"Certainly, and you pay just the same if there's no prospect of its ever being repaid."

"That's funny."

"Funny! Why, our Massachusetts tax laws are funnier than a comic almanac, and about as sensible."

Quincy took up a pen and began writing.

"What are you writing, father?"

"I'll show you in a few minutes."

"How will that do?"

Quincy read:

QUINCY ADAMS SAWYER, _President_. QUINCY
ADAMS SAWYER, Jr., _Treasurer_. THOMAS CHRIPP,
General Manager. Cash Capital, \$200,000.

Cable, _Vienna_. 20 _Stores_.

THE SAWYER GROCERY COMPANY, INC.

Wholesale and Retail.

"Just the man I had in mind, father. You can depend upon him every time, and he'll keep his subordinates right up to the mark."

Upon his return to his native state Quincy had found many of his old friends still in office. The governor and higher officials were only annuals--some not very hardy at that--while the minor officials, in many cases, were hardy perennials, whom no political hot weather or cold storm could wither or destroy.

A presidential campaign was on, and speakers, for there were few orators, were in demand. Quincy's visits to so many cities inspecting the Company's stores had brought him in contact with hundreds of local politicians. One day there came a call from the State Committee to come in and see the Secretary.

"Do you want to do something for the party?" asked Mr. Thwing, the Secretary.

"I have already subscribed," said Quincy. "Do you need more?"

"Money talks," said Mr. Thwing, "and so do you. I have a score of letters from different cities asking me to add you to our list of speakers, and to be sure and let the writers hear you."

"I had no intention--" Quincy began.

"You're an ex-governor, and know all the State. Aren't you in the grocery business in a big way?"

"Rather."

"'Twill boom your business in great style. Better even for groceries than boots and shoes, for food is a daily consumption."

"I wouldn't go on the stump just to advertise my business."

"Of course not. You would take just what the gods provided and ask no questions, and make no comments. Shall we put you down for, say, twenty nights?"

Quincy consented, but he stipulated that he was not to be placed in any city or town where he had a store.

Mr. Thwing vehemently objected. "Why, the men who want you to come live where the stores are."

"I can't help it. Put me in the next town, and if they're so anxious to hear me they'll come."

After the campaign was over, the votes cast, and the victory won, Mr. Thwing said, "That was a good business idea of yours, Governor, about your not going into the towns where your stores were. Of course you instructed your general manager."

"I don't know what you mean," said Quincy.

"Didn't you know when you spoke in places adjoining those in which you had stores that your Mr. Chripp, I think that's the name--just flooded the towns with circulars announcing that you were to speak and that you were the President of the grocery company doing business in the adjoining city, that your goods were the best, your prices the lowest--and that your teams would deliver goods free of charge in all places within five miles?"

Mr. Thwing stopped to take breath, and Quincy nearly lost his in astonishment.

"Great business idea, Mr. Sawyer."

"I knew nothing about it. I should have stopped it had I known."

"Why so? You got a double ad. Bright man that Chripp. You'll have to raise his salary."

Quincy did not reply. The deed was done, and a public explanation would do no good. Chripp surely had his employer's interests at heart, even if he had mixed politics and business rather too openly. The next month's statement showed a great increase in trade. Mr. Chripp was not called to account, but his salary was materially increased at the suggestion of young Quincy.

The new President had been inaugurated, the Cabinet nominees confirmed, and the distribution of political "plums" began. Quincy felt that the lightning had struck in the wrong place when he was approached and sounded as to whether he would accept a foreign mission. He talked the matter over with his wife.

"Quincy," said she, "I would go, if I were you."

"Are you not happy here?"

"Yes, and no. Happy to be near my son, and relatives and friends; no, because your business takes you away so much that I see little of you. If you take the mission, I shall have you with me all the time. I am selfish, I know, but it is my love for you that makes me so."

The Hon. Quincy Adams Sawyer was nominated and confirmed as Ambassador to Austria-Hungary. Alice had made the selection.

"Let us go to Vienna, Quincy. It was there we met after our long separation--and, this is purely a personal matter, I wish to study the scenes of my story, 'The Son of Sergius,' at close range."

Before Quincy's departure it had been decided to lease the Beacon Street house for four years. Maude was given her choice but preferred the house in Mount Vernon Street where she had lived since her

marriage.

Young Quincy was obliged to take bachelor quarters which he found at Norumbega Chambers.

His suite consisted of a sitting-room, two sleeping rooms each with bath, and a small room intended for a library or study, and which was utilized by him as an office.

Quincy went down the harbour with his father and mother on the ocean liner, returning on the tug with Tom. On the way back young Quincy took a small envelope from his pocket and extracted a short note which he had read at least a dozen times since its receipt. It was from Miss Mary Dana and informed him that she had returned to Boston and would be pleased to see him, the next day, at her office with the Isburn Detective Bureau.

It was a cold, raw day in the early part of April and when they reached the city Quincy was taken with a chill. When they reached Norumbega Chambers the chill had turned to a fever, and Tom suggested sending for a doctor. Quincy stoutly protested against any such action being taken, but Tom summoned one despite his objections. In this way, Quincy became acquainted with John Loring Bannister, M. D.

Dr. Bannister was unknown to his patient when he paid his first visit, and was professionally non-communicative, but he told him afterwards, when their acquaintance had ripened to such an extent that the names Quincy and Jack took the place of more formal designations, that it had always seemed a wonder to him that he had survived. Quincy, with no intention of indulging in flattery, replied that if a certain physician had not been called in he, probably, would not have done so.

Quincy's condition on the second day was so low, indeed, that Dr. Bannister told Tom if his friend had not made a will he had better do so. Tom's first thought was to send for Mr. Merry, but he decided that might lead to a charge of family influence, and he appealed to the doctor.

Dr. Bannister told Tom he was well acquainted with a young lawyer and that he would send him up to see Mr. Sawyer. Quincy was in such a condition when Lawyer Edward Everett Colbert made his first visit, that if he had been asked the name of the principal beneficiary he would probably have told the lawyer to let it go to the Devil. The second time that Mr. Colbert called, Quincy's physical will had resumed control and he had no need of any other.

When convalescing Quincy said to Tom, when the nurse was absent, "If you thought I was going to die, why didn't you send for Aunt Maude, and--and--you know whom I mean--Miss Dana?"

"I saw them every day, but you were too weak to see them, but if--they would have been summoned."

"Tom, your head is so level that a plane couldn't make a shaving."

Tom was obliged to be away daytimes, the buying for twenty stores requiring much travel.

Dr. Bannister and Lawyer Colbert were occasional visitors and Quincy received a manifest mental exhilaration from his intercourse with them. His sickness had led him to think about the future. Was he to live and die as the treasurer of a grocery company? Had he no higher ideal?

A story told by Jack and Ned, which they knew to be true, because they were the principal actors therein, led Quincy to give himself up to some mighty thinking.

The story was related one evening in the sitting-room when Tom was present.

"What I'm going to tell," began Ned, "will include much more than I saw or knew myself, but it all comes from authentic sources. I shall omit names, since they are unessential.

"Among my clients was an old gentleman, over seventy years of age, but still erect and vigorous. One morning I received a letter requesting me to call at his house. I found him in bed feeling all tired out. He said he had never had a doctor in his life.

"The doctor, here, assures me that those people who never need a doctor until they are well advanced in life are not likely to require a physician's services more than once. The next call is for the undertaker."

"That's so," broke in Jack; "it's the person who is continually calling upon a doctor for every little ailment who lives to an old age, for instead of letting disease creep upon him, he calls for medical assistance as soon as he experiences any derangement of his physical system. If all the people would follow this plan, it would increase the longevity of the human race."

"And materially increase the income of the medical profession," added Quincy.

"It proved to be the old gentleman's first and last sickness. In order that you may fully understand the wonderful event which took place the night he died, I shall have to give you a history of his family."

Quincy consulted his watch. "It is now but a few minutes past seven. I will give you until midnight, my usual time for retiring."

"I have an engagement at ten or thereabouts," said Jack, "but it's a matter of life instead of death."

Ned continued: "My client had a son and daughter, both married. They were good children and loved their father on the American plan. The son had married an avaricious woman, while the daughter was married to a man who was not so avaricious as his sister-in-law. The old gentleman was very wealthy and like all good children they were thinking of the time when the property would be divided."

"I see signs of a family squabble," remarked Quincy.

"It came to pass," said Ned. "The French have a maxim which says it is advisable to search for the woman in all mysterious cases. In this instance, the woman did not wait to be searched for but came of her own accord. She insisted upon having the card bearing the name of Mrs. James Bliss sent up to the sick man; when he saw it he, in turn, insisted upon seeing the woman. The family wished to be present at the interview but my client demanded a private conversation which lasted for an hour.

"Jack had been in daily attendance as a physician, but I was not sent for until the day following Mrs. Bliss's visit. He had told his son that he wished to make his will, and the son told the other members of the family. They wished him to make a will, of course, but they were afraid that woman had exercised undue influence. As the son expressed it, the better way would be to let the law make the decision.

"My client insisted upon seeing me alone. He told me the woman's story. Many years before, when my client was a poor man, her father had set him up in business. He had told his daughter of the loan before his death, and her visit was to ask for payment as she was a widow and poor, with three children to support.

"My client directed me to put her in the will for fifty thousand dollars, saying the original loan at six per cent, would amount to fully that amount.

"The son, when told the story by me made no objection to the bequest but the son's wife and the son-in-law declared that the note she had was outlawed and that she shouldn't have a cent. The son-in-law put a private detective on her track who learned that Mrs. Bliss was a test and trance medium, and that she gave materialization sØances at private houses. The whole family then declared her to be a fraud and impostor, and declared their intention of breaking the will if it was signed.

"Now we are getting to the lively part of the story. The will was ready for signing. It was about five minutes past six when I was admitted and I went right up to my client's room. I had been there about five minutes when Jack came in. He was followed by the entire family, the son-in-law having been chosen to prevent the signing of the will.

"Then occurred a sensational episode. Mrs. Bliss came to inquire about my client's condition and the unsuspecting nurse admitted her. She came directly to the room where we were all assembled."

"A strong situation for a play," remarked Quincy.

"They played it," said Ned. "The son-in-law took Mrs. Bliss into an adjoining room and ordered her to stay there. Then he returned. This was to be a Waterloo but he was the Wellington.

"My client was propped up in bed, a pen placed in his hand, while the document rested on a large book which Jack held.

"The son-in-law began the oratory. 'I protest,' he screamed. 'This sacrilege, this injustice shall not be done with my consent.' What was it you said to him, Jack?"

"I told him unless he stopped talking in such an excited manner, and made less noise, it would have a very prejudicial effect upon my patient's health.

"The son-in-law then denounced Mrs. Bliss as an adventuress, and that she had no legal claim upon his father-in-law. His loud voice and violent gestures were too much for the invalid. The pen dropped from his nerveless fingers and he fell back exhausted. I think you had better take it up now, Ned."

"All right. You gave me a chance to rest my voice. Yes, thank you," as Tom passed him a glass of water.

Ned resumed, "The door was opened and Mrs. Bliss looked in. 'Has he signed?' she asked.

"No, he hasn't," yelled the son-in-law, 'and while I live he never shall' Now you come in again, Jack."

"Ladies and gentlemen,' said I, 'this excitement must stop. As medical adviser I order you all to leave the room.' They objected, but I told them if they didn't, I should resign charge of the case and refuse to give a death certificate unless there was an inquest. That frightened them, and they all went out, the son-in-law escorting Mrs. Bliss."

"We propped up the patient again, and I gave him some brandy. He said, 'I must sign.' He took the pen and made a ragged, disjointed capital 'T.'

"The pen dropped from his hand and he fell back upon the pillow. Ned put the unsigned will in his pocket. I found that the end was very near and I told Ned to call the family. Now, it's your turn, Ned."

"I told the family they had better go to their father's room at once. Mrs. Bliss arose with the intention of following them but I told her

she was not one of the family; that she could remain with me as my services were no longer needed. She turned to me and asked: 'Was it signed?' I shook my head. Without a word she sank upon the nearest chair and buried her face in her arms.

"I stood irresolute. The spectacle of this silent woman, speechless because she was to be deprived of what was justly due her, was a situation with which I did not know how to deal. I was saved the necessity of saying or doing anything by the sudden entrance of Jack who cried: 'Ned, it's all over; he's dead.'"

"Now comes the wonderful, inexplicable, part of the story. There was a single gas-burner alight in the room. It was turned down low; faces were discernible, but the room was only half lighted. Hearing a movement, Jack and I turned towards Mrs. Bliss. She had lifted her head from the table and was gazing directly at us. Her eyes were open, but they had a glassy look. Then it seemed as though the room was gradually becoming darker and darker, until the darkness became intense.

"My first thought was that Mrs. Bliss had put out the gas. Before I had time to question her, Jack and I caught sight of a white spot that was approaching us from the corner of the room nearest the doorway which led into the hallway. This light, which was no larger than a man's hand at first, increased in size and intensity until it covered a space at least two feet wide and six feet high. I must admit that my hair was inclined to stand on end."

"And mine too," exclaimed Jack.

"Suddenly," said Ned, "the light, which was nebulous, began to fall away in places and assume a shape like the form of a man. Then the portion where a man's head ought to be, assumed the appearance of one. Jack and I clasped hands and retreated to the farther corner of the room. This act on our part was purely voluntary. If I had possessed a Remington rifle, six Colt's revolvers, and a dynamite bomb, I should have backed out just the same.

"We could not remove our eyes from the glittering, moving, thing; and now a most surprising change took place. The light seemed to leave the figure, so that it was not visible as a light, and yet it filled the room with a radiant glow.

"Who was that who stood before us? Could we believe our eyes? Were they playing us a trick? Were we the victims of a too active imagination? No, there could be no mistake. The form that stood before us was that of the man who lay dead in the next room.

"Turning towards us, from the form came the words distinctly spoken-- 'It must be signed!' The figure pointed to the table near which Mrs. Bliss still sat in an apparently unconscious state. I took the will from my pocket, opened it, advanced to the table, and laid it thereon. The figure reached out its right hand and beckoned. The thought came to me that he wanted a pen. There was none in the room.

Jack divined the situation as quickly as I did and took his stylographic pen from his visiting book, fitted it for use, and laid it on the table beside the will. The form advanced, took up the pen, joined a small letter to the capital 'T' already written, and finished out the name in full.

"The form then laid the pen upon the table and pointed to the places set apart for witnesses. I wrote my name, Edward Everett Colbert, and Jack put his,--John Loring Bannister, under mine."

"Did the form sit down?" asked Quincy.

"No. The only chair near the table was the one in which Mrs. Bliss sat. I could not resist the inclination to whisper in Jack's ear: 'What do you think of that?' We both turned with the intention of taking another look at 'That,' but it had disappeared and the gas was burning at about half-light.

"Mrs. Bliss arose from her seat with a pleasant smile on her face. 'You said that he had signed it--I understood you to say so, did I not?' I said nothing, but drew the will from my pocket and pointed to the signatures. Then Jack said it was his duty to see the sorrowing family and for me to escort Mrs. Bliss to a car.

"Jack and I took dinner together in a private room at Young's the next day. We decided that it was my duty to present the will for probate. Although it is presumed by the statutes of this Commonwealth that a will is signed by a living man, I was unable to find anything in said statutes to prevent a dead man, if he were so disposed and able, or enabled, doing so."

"Of course the will was presented for probate," said Quincy.

"It was," replied Ned, "and despite the energetic efforts of the avaricious son-in-law, was admitted. His lawyer brought up the point that the will should have had three witnesses, but I showed him the note, told him Mrs. Bliss's story, and declared that I would fight the case up to the Supreme Court if necessary.

"There was no doubt in the mind of the registrar as to the authenticity of the will for was it not duly signed and witnessed by Dr. Bannister, a physician of the highest repute, and Lawyer Colbert, a bright and shining light of the legal profession?"

"Your story taxes my credulity," said Quincy, "but I will not allow it to break our friendship. Tom, kindly ring for that supper to be sent up." He looked at his watch. "Doctor, you've time to spare. 'Tis only nine-thirty."

THE GREAT ISBURN RUBY

Mr. Irving Isburn, the proprietor of the great detective bureau was over seventy years of age, and, although he still had a general supervision over the business, and was in his office for a short time anyway, nearly every day, he was leaving the details more and more to his subordinates. From the very beginning Mary Dana had made wonderful improvement in her detective work, and the results of her last case, on which she had been kept in the West for several months, were so satisfactory that she was given practically the entire management of the Bureau.

One day, shortly after her return from the West, Mr. Isburn called her into his private office. He took great interest in electrical inventions, and had one in his office of a decidedly novel design. Back of his office chair, standing against the wall, just behind the door that led into the hallway, was a mahogany bookcase fully seven feet in height. Upon the top were several valuable statuettes, but the most noticeable object was a rosy-cheeked apple. It was not really an apple--only an imitation of one--made of brass. Using the stem as a handle, the upper portion of the apple could be lifted off, forming a cover. The apple was fastened firmly to the top of the bookcase.

While talking over the case in hand with her employer, Miss Dana chanced to fix her eyes upon the brass apple.

"Mr. Isburn, why do you keep that peculiar ornament on the top of your bookcase?"

"Oh, you mean the apple. It contains something that is very valuable. The method of opening it is a secret, but as somebody may succeed in doing so some day I will show you its contents, for otherwise I might be unable to prove that it contained anything."

He opened a secret drawer in his desk, inserted his forefinger and, apparently, pressed a button. The doors of the bookcase flew open as if by magic, and, at the same time, a bell inside the bookcase rang sharply. Miss Dana watched each motion of her employer intently.

"That is all done by electricity," said he. "But it does something else--opens the apple."

He reached up and lifted the cover. Then he removed something from the apple and placed it in Miss Dana's hand.

"Oh, how lovely!" she exclaimed.

It was a ring made of the finest gold and containing an immense ruby.

"That," said her employer, "I call the Isburn Ruby. It belonged to my

mother, and it is precious to me, both on account of its great intrinsic value, and as an heirloom."

He dropped it into the brass apple, replaced the cover, and shut the doors of the bookcase.

"That cover can only be removed when the bookcase doors are open; they can only be opened by touching the button in the secret drawer in my desk, and, even then, a notice of the opening is given by the electric bell. I think the ruby is well protected, but if anybody steals it I shall call upon you to find the thief."

Miss Dana said, laughingly, that she feared she would never have a chance to distinguish herself in that direction.

About a fortnight later, Mr. Isburn sat at his desk one morning opening his mail. He was so preoccupied with an interesting letter containing an account of the very mysterious disappearance of a young woman, that he was not aware, for some time, of the presence of a person who stood beside his desk.

He looked up, suddenly, and saw a pretty girl, dressed in picturesque Italian costume, holding a basket filled with roses, pinks, and other cut flowers. Mr. Isburn was passionately fond of flowers and kept a vase filled with them upon his desk. He selected a large bunch of flowers made up of the different kinds.

At that moment the door was opened and a clerk appeared: "Mr. Isburn, there is a call for you on the long distance telephone."

"I will be back in a moment," he said to the flower girl, as he went into an adjoining room. The telephone bell was being rung continuously, and he called "Hello" several times before the tintinnabulation ceased.

The call was from a town some fifty miles away. The operator informed him that No. 42 wished her to tell him that she had a valuable clue in case T 697 and would not return for several days. Mr. Isburn knew that No. 42 was Miss Dana.

He returned to his office. The young Italian girl still stood by his desk holding the basket of flowers. He gave her more than the amount she asked for, and, bowing low and smiling, she left the office: Referring to his call index, he found that T 697 was that of a young man, Tarleton, belonging to a wealthy family, who was the buyer for a manufactory of electrical machines. In their construction, a large quantity of platinum was used, a metal more valuable, weight for weight, than gold. His purchases had been very heavy, but a checking up of stock used showed that not half of it had been applied to actual construction. The question was--"What had become of the missing metal?" and that question it was No. 42's business to answer.

Mr. Isburn was a frequenter of clubs and social functions, partly

because he enjoyed them, but, principally, because many valuable clues had been run across while attending them.

He had been invited to be a guest at a reception tendered to an Indian Maharajah. He knew that the East Indian princes were profuse in their use of gems and he decided to wear the ruby, for it was a beautiful stone and would be sure to attract the Maharajah's attention. On opening the brass apple he found, to his astonishment, that the ring was gone. Three days later Miss Dana returned and made her report on the Tarleton case. The young man had stolen the platinum, sold it, and lost the money in speculation. His rich father had made good the company's loss, and there would be no prosecution.

"He'll be a bigger criminal some day," remarked Mr. Isburn.

"Money saved him," said Miss Dana. "While I was in the town a workman stole a pound of brass screws--he is a poor inventor and needed them to complete a model, and he got six months in jail."

"Miss Dana, what punishment would be adequate for the thief who stole my ruby?"

She laughed, and said: "Anybody smart enough to do it, should have a reward."

"The reward," said he, "will go to the one who finds and returns it."

"You are joking, Mr. Isburn."

"I wish I were. No, it is gone. I cannot imagine how it was possible for any one to get possession of that ring. Only you and I knew how to open the bookcase doors, and I would as soon suspect myself as you."

"I am glad that you have that opinion," said Miss Dana. "I have thought several times that I was sorry that you told me about it, for I have felt that if anything happened I should be an object of suspicion."

"Oh, no," cried Mr. Isburn. "No such suspicion ever entered my mind. I could not be so mean and ungenerous as to think such a thing. The only person I suspect is an Italian girl who came in here to sell some flowers. It was the day I received the long distance telephone message from you in regard to the Tarleton case. I was only out of the room a few minutes, and when I came back she was standing just where I left her."

"It would be like looking for a needle in a haystack to find that girl," said Miss Dana.

"Yes, those Italian girls look very much alike. She was one of medium height, as a great many women are. You are of medium height, Miss Dana, so that is a very poor clue to work upon. She had dark hair."

"Mine is light," remarked Miss Dana.

"I did not notice the colour of her eyes--probably black."

"Mine are blue."

"Her complexion was dark."

"Well, I surely have not a dark complexion."

"What do you mean?" asked Mr. Isburn.

"You talk as though you were, in some way, connected with this affair."

"But I am."

"How so?" and Mr. Isburn's voice betrayed his astonishment.

"Don't you remember saying if the ring was lost or stolen that you should call upon me to recover it?"

"Why, yes, I do remember. If you find it, you shall have a big reward. If found, I am going to give the ring to a young lady."

"Who is she? Pardon my hasty inquisitiveness."

"My niece, Rose Isburn. She is my only brother's daughter. He has just died and left her in my charge. Nothing has happened since I began my professional career that has so puzzled and disgusted me as the loss of that ring. I thought myself acute, and I am outwitted by a chit of a girl. I think I'll sell out, take my niece to Europe and marry her off to a Prince or a Duke."

"Don't do it!" laughed Miss Dana. "Leave her your money, and let her choose some honest, clean, young American."

"Well, I think you are right," answered Mr. Isburn, laughing at Mary's half serious, half comic air, "but I must first sell my business. Will you find me a purchaser? I want to travel, and loaf the rest of my life. I've had my fill of adventure and excitement."

"Perhaps you can find a purchaser while I'm finding the ring. As you say, your description of her is very meagre. But she was a flower girl and that is one point gained."

"But she may be selling oranges or dragging a hand-organ to-day."

"True," replied Miss Dana, "and she may be selling flowers again to-morrow," and the conversation dropped.

About a week later, Miss Dana entered Mr. Isburn's private office.

There was a smile upon her face, as she cried:

"I have been successful!"

"You usually are," Mr. Isburn remarked, not comprehending to what she alluded.

"You will be somewhat surprised, no doubt, when I tell you--that I have recovered the ruby!"

Mr. Isburn sprang to his feet.

"I know that you are a truthful young woman, Miss Dana, but, pardon me, I shall disbelieve your statement, until the ruby is once more in my hands."

"I have not only recovered the ruby, but I have induced the Italian girl who took it--"

"By George!" cried Isburn, "I always suspected her."

"I have induced the culprit, Mr. Isburn, to come here and place it in your hands."

"Well, you're a wonder, Miss Dana. You should give up being a detective and become a teacher of morals."

Miss Dana ignored his suggestion. "I have her in my office and the door is locked. You see, I have the key here," and she held it up for his inspection.

"She is quite overcome at being discovered. I am going to talk with her for a few minutes. You may come, say, in ten minutes. The door will be unlocked if she is ready. I shall be with her to witness the restitution of your property."

Never did ten minutes pass so slowly as did those to Mr. Isburn. He placed his watch upon his desk and watched each minute as it slowly ticked away. When the time was up, he went to the door of Miss Dana's office. He turned the knob--the door opened at a slight pressure, and he entered. In a chair by the window, with her head bowed, sat a young Italian girl. As Isburn approached her; he glanced about the room, but Miss Dana was not present.

"Signorita," he said, "I am informed that you have come to restore the ring which you took from me." Then he noticed by her side was the same basket in which she had brought the flowers, but this time it was empty.

She rose to her feet and looked into his eyes with a glance of mute appeal. She took up the basket, and walked towards the door, beckoning to him to follow. Without resenting the incongruity of the situation, he did so. They passed through the hallway and into his

private office.

She lifted the cover of one side of the basket and took from it a small parcel. She removed the tissue paper disclosing a bunch of cotton wool. From this she extracted the jewel that he prized so highly.

He reached forward to take it, but she drew back. She first shut down the cover of the basket. Then she went to the desk, opened the private drawer and pressed the button. The bookcase doors flew open. Her next move was to place the basket in front of the bookcase. Stepping upon it, which enabled her to reach the apple, she removed the cover, and dropped the ring into its receptacle, replaced the cover, stepped down and took up her basket, then closed the bookcase doors.

"And that's how you did it," ejaculated Isburn, greatly astonished at her coolness and audacity. "But how did you find out how to open the bookcase doors?"

"You told me," said the girl in good English, the first words she had spoken.

"I told you?" he cried.

The Italian girl had a fit of uncontrollable laughter.

"Have you forgotten the old adage, Mr. Isburn, that it is a good plan to set a thief to catch a thief?"

Isburn sank into a chair. "Can I believe my ears? Miss Dana?"

"Exactly," said the young woman. "This is one of my make-ups. This is what I wore when I discovered the clue that led to the arrest of Corona in that Italian murder case."

"But I don't understand yet," cried Isburn. "How could you be here as an Italian flower girl when you telephoned me from a place more than fifty miles away?"

"Money will do a great deal," replied Miss Dana, "but you must tell your subordinates what to do for the money. I induced the operator in that little country town to give you to understand that I was still there. The fact was, I left the noon before, located young Tarleton, turned him over to the police, and was in the city by 8 o'clock. I told the operator to keep on ringing until you came for you were very deaf. Pardon me for that, but I was afraid you would hear the bell when the bookcase doors opened. Now, you know all, and I await my discharge."

Mr. Isburn looked serious. "Miss Dana, I see but one matter to be arranged now, and that is your half-interest in the business. You know I told you that if you found the ruby I would take you as a

partner."

"Oh, that's all a joke," cried Miss Dana. "What I did was for fun. I only wished to show you how the thing could be done, and I beg your pardon for causing you so many hours of uneasiness on account of the supposed loss of your valuable ring."

"Yes," said Mr. Isburn, "I feel as though you should make some atonement for the disquietude you have caused me. I shall insist upon going to Europe with Rose, and you must manage the business while we are gone, as full partner."

"The staff won't take orders from a woman." "Yes, they will, if you tell them how you fooled me. If they object then, call for their resignations and engage a new force."

CHAPTER XXXII

"IT WAS SO SUDDEN"

The Hotel Cawthorne was, in some respects, a correct designation but in others a misnomer. It had rooms to let, or rather suites, and it had a clerk. So far, a hostelry. It had no dining room, no bar, no billiard room, no news-stand, no barber shop, no boot-black, no laundry--and in these respects, at least, it belied its name.

Some childless couples, some aged ones with married children, many young men, a few confirmed old bachelors, and a few unmarried women roomed therein. On stormy days, or when their inclinations so prompted, the tenants could have meals served in their rooms at a marked increase over hotel rates.

But the "Cawthorne" was exclusive, and for that reason, principally, Miss Dana had chosen it as her city domicile. Tenants were not introduced to each other, and one could live a year within its walls without being obliged to say good morning to any one, with the possible exceptions of the housekeeper, or the elevator man, but that was not compulsory, but depended upon the tenant's initiative.

Every hotel has an "out"; at the "Cawthorne" it was an "in." The "in" was Mr. Lorenzo Cass, the clerk and general *_factotum_*. His besetting sin was inordinate curiosity, but it was this oftentime disagreeable quality which particularly commended him to the ex-Rev. Arthur Borrowscale, the owner of the "Cawthorne."

Mr. Borrowscale had not given up the ministry on account of advanced age, for he was only forty; nor on account of physical infirmity, for he was a rugged specimen of manhood and enjoyed the best of health. His critics, and all successful men have them, declared that he had

forsaken the service of God for that of Mammon. While officiating, he had received a large salary. Being a bachelor, he had lived economically and invested his savings in real estate. He was the owner of six tenement houses--models of their kind, and the "Cawthorne." Before leaving college, he had loved a young girl named Edith Cawthorne. She had died, and at her grave he had parted with her,--and love of women, but, that sentiment was not wholly dead within him, the name of his hotel attested.

He had another attribute; he was intensely moral. The "Cawthorne" was his pride, but he had a constant fear that some undesirable--that is, immoral--person would find lodgment in his caravansary. For certain reasons, Mr. Cass was indispensable. He had been a "high roller" until he came under the Rev. Mr. Borrowscale's tutelage.

"Mr. Cass, you know the bad when you see it--I do not. The reputation of my house must be like Caesar's ghost--above suspicion."

He had said "ghost." He had seen but two plays--"Hamlet" and "Julius Caesar," and for that reason his dramatic inaccuracy may be excused.

So Mr. Cass became a moral sleuth, and woe betide an applicant for rooms, and occasional board, who could not produce unimpeachable references, and point to an unsullied record in the past.

Miss Dana's respectability and social standing had been abundantly vouched for, and her financial responsibility had been demonstrated by monthly payments in advance.

It was the first evening Quincy had been out since his illness.

"Is Miss Dana in?" asked Quincy as he presented his card to Mr. Cass.

"I am quite positive she is. I am strengthened in this belief by the fact that she had her supper sent up to her room. A fine specimen of womanhood, and a remarkable appetite for so lovely a creature."

Quincy had an inclination to brain him with the telephone stand, but restrained his murderous impulse.

"Will you please send up my card?" was his interrogatory protest against further enumeration of Miss Dana's charms and gastronomic ability. "No need to do so, Mr. Sawyer," for he had inspected the card carefully. "We have a private telephone in each room. Will you await her in the public parlour?"

"Hasn't she more than one room?"

"Oh, yes; a three room suite, sitting-room, boudoir, which I am sure she uses more as a study, a chamber--and private bath."

Quincy said, "I would prefer to see her in her sitting-room."

"Oh, certainly," replied Mr. Cass. "Our rules are only prohibitive in the case of single chambers or alcove suites, when the caller and tenant are of opposite sexes. The proprietor--he was formerly a clergyman--is tenacious on certain points."

"And so am I," was Quincy's response, for his temper was rising, "and you will oblige me by communicating with Miss Dana at once, and informing her of my desire to see her."

"Oh, certainly," replied Mr. Cass, "but my employer, who, as I have said, was formerly a clergyman, is tenacious on another point; all tenants who receive visitors in their rooms must have their names entered in a book prescribed for the purpose, and also the names of their callers."

Quincy's murderous instinct was again aroused, but Mr. Cass was unmindful of his danger and made the required entry. The humorous side of the affair then struck Quincy, and taking a memorandum book from his pocket, he said:

"I, too, am tenacious on one point. I never visit a hotel for the first time without writing down the name of the clerk. Will you oblige me?"

"Oh, certainly. Cass, Mr. Lorenzo Cass."

"Do you spell it with a 'C'?" asked Quincy, innocently, as he pretended to write.

"Oh, certainly. C-a-s-s-."

"Thank you," said Quincy.

"We make it a rule, or rather my employer does, that tenants and their callers shall be treated with civility and their wants attended to promptly."

Again Quincy eyed the telephone stand with a view to its use as a weapon.

"Ting-a-ling! Ting-a-ling! Miss Dana--yes, Mr. Cass--Mr. Quincy Adams Sawyer, Junior, wishes to call upon you in your sitting-room. Is it agreeable to you? Very well, he will come right up."

Mr. Cass replaced the receiver with deliberation, first unwinding a tangled coil in the cord.

"Take the elevator--third floor--number 42--she insisted upon taking that suite for some personal reason--"

Quincy waited to hear no more but started for the elevator. Mr. Cass reached it as soon as he did, and motioned for the elevator man to postpone the ascent until he had finished his remarks.

"The outside door is locked at eleven, Mr. Sawyer, but you have only to turn the upper handle to insure an exit."

"Your clerk is quite loquacious," remarked Quincy as they slowly mounted upward.

"What's that?"

"He has a sore tongue," said Quincy, as the elevator door was closed behind him.

After cordial greetings on both sides, for they had not seen each other for nearly a year, Quincy exclaimed, as he sank into a proffered easy chair: "Mary, I am a murderer at heart."

"That is not strange, Quincy. I have read that the friends of police officers and detectives often imbibe, or rather absorb, criminal propensities. Who is the intended victim, and how do you expect to escape arrest, conviction, and punishment, after incriminating yourself by a confession to a licensed detective?"

"If I had killed your hotel clerk it would have been due to emotional insanity, and I should expect an acquittal--and, perhaps, a testimonial."

"I got a testimonial to-day from Mr. Isburn. He said I was a wonder."

"I agree with him."

Miss Dana flushed perceptibly.

"He had what he considered a good reason for his compliment. I am afraid yours rests on unsupported grounds."

"Not at all. Have I not known you since you were a child? Can he say as much? Did I not work with you on Bob Wood's case? The help you were to me in trying to solve the mystery of the return of my father's bill of exchange I will never forget," and for a long time Quincy and Mary talked over the miraculous return of his father.

Finally Quincy said, "I interrupted you. You said that Mr. Isburn considered he had good reasons for complimenting you. Will you tell me what they were?"

"It is a long story."

"I'm all attention."

"Then I'll begin at once. If you need a stimulant at any stage of the narrative, just signify your want and I'll ring for it."

"Is there a bar?"

"No, but there's a cellar."

"I may need some Apollinaris," said Quincy, as he settled himself more comfortably in the easy chair; "as my flesh is again strong, I always take my spirit very weak."

Mary had that sweetest of woman's charm--a low-pitched voice, and as she told the story of the loss of the great Isburn ruby and its recovery Quincy's thoughts were less on the words that he heard than the woman who uttered them. In his mind he was building a castle in which he was the Lord and the story-teller was the Lady.

He was awakened from his dream by Mary's query:

"Didn't I fool him nicely?"

"You certainly did. And so he's going to give you a half-interest in the business. If he keeps his word"--

"Which I very much doubt," interrupted Mary.

"I'll buy the other half and we'll be partners."

He came near adding "for life," but decided that such a declaration would be inopportune. "Why should you engage in business, Quincy? You are not obliged to work."

"That's the unfortunate part of it. I wish I were. I have so much money that I don't know what to do with it, except let it grow. But, speaking seriously, I've no intention of remaining a do-nothing. I'm treasurer of my father's grocery company but I have no liking for mercantile business. I can give away, but can neither buy nor sell--to advantage. I heard a story not long ago that set me thinking."

"I told you my story, Quincy, why not tell me yours?"

"I will. It's a mystery--unsolved, and, I think, unsolvable. But I feel that my vocation will be the solving of mysteries. My mother wrote detective stories and I must have inherited a mania for mysteries and criminal problems. But I'll tell you what set me thinking."

Then he related the story that had been told him by Jack and Ned. As he concluded, he asked: "Do you think it was signed?"

"Of course it was, but not by the dead man."

"By whom, then?"

"By Mrs. Bliss. She materialized the form by her mediumistic prowess, but she signed the will."

"But Jack and Ned saw the form, as they called it, take the pen and

write his name."

"They thought they did. She hypnotized them so they saw whatever she impressed upon their minds."

"Can sensible, highly educated people be so influenced?"

"The bigger the brain the more easily influenced. She couldn't have so impressed an idiot, or an illiterate, unreceptive man. Let me tell you how a hundred people were fooled lately."

"I should be delighted to hear you tell it."

"You should have sympathy for them, after your spiritualistic experience," said Mary with a smile.

"There is a married couple in this city whom we will call Mr. and Mrs. Cartwright, because those are not their names. They have been married less than two years. He is 68 and she 28, so you see it was what they call a December and May union. It was worse. He is a bank president and his god is money--his diversion sitting in his elegant library and reading _de luxe_ editions of the world's literary masterpieces. She is young, and beautiful, and craves society, attention, admiration.

"She didn't get the last two at home, but society furnished them. He attended her to parties and receptions and then went back to his library until it was time to escort her home.

"One night when he went for her she could not be found. No one had seen her leave--she had mysteriously disappeared. Mr. Isburn gave me the case. I'll make the story short for it is eleven o'clock." "I know how to get out. Mr. Cass told me." "Your knowledge of a method of egress does not warrant an extension of your visit to midnight, does it?" asked Mary laughingly.

"Considering the attractions presented, I think they do," replied Quincy, banteringly.

She resumed her story.

"There was a man in the case, young, handsome, and wealthy. Just such a man as she should have married. They had planned an elopement to Europe. Not together. She was to go to Liverpool, he was to follow later to Paris, and there meet her. Quite ingenious, wasn't it? Our agent at Liverpool was called to locate her and prevent her inamorata from communicating with her, at the same time using his influence to induce her to return to Boston without meeting her lover. His powers of persuasion, I mean our agent's, must have been great, for she consented.

"A month later she attended a reception next door to the house from which she disappeared, and silenced the tongue of scandal by saying

that she had been hastily summoned to the bedside of a sick friend, her chum at Wellesley, and had returned home only the day previous. Her last statement was true. Good detective work by a good detective, and a great, big white lie fooled her friends and acquaintances, but if I were her husband she would not lack attention or admiration in the future, and I would furnish it."

"When I get married, I will bear your admonition in mind."

"I have another admonition. If you meet Mr. Cass when you go down, be nice to him. Why, when you know him, he is a treasure. I can bear his inquisitiveness, for it shields me from others. This is my sanctuary, and Mr. Cass protects me from the literary wolves--the reporters. He thinks I am a writer because I have so many books, and, to him, an author is next to an angel. Was he rude to you? You must forgive him, for he is my Saint George who protects me from the Dragon."

Quincy was mollified to a certain extent. "Do I look like a Dragon? If I am one, history came near being reversed, for at one time your Saint George's hold on life was frail."

Late in the afternoon of the next day Quincy made another call on Mary. He had telephoned and learned that she was in her room. Mr. Cass was temporarily absent from his desk and Quincy went at once to the elevator.

"I axed Mr. Cass about his tongue," said the elevator man.

"Was it better?" asked Quincy.

"He said I was labourin' under a misapprehension. What's that?"

"He meant that it was improving," said Quincy, as he hurried from the elevator.

"How did you get home last night?" was Mary's salutation as he entered.

"I groped my way down two flights of stairs in the dark. When I opened the front door by the upper handle as Mr. Cass had kindly instructed me to do, I found that gentleman on the steps. 'Quite late,' said he. 'Not for me,' said I. At that moment my auto drew up at the curb."

"A narrow escape from a Cass-trophe," exclaimed Miss Dana. "Pardon the pun, but sometimes he is insufferably loquacious."

Quincy smiled grimly. "He wasn't through with me. He followed me. 'My employer,' he began, 'is very tenacious on several points, and one of them is the acceleration of matrimonial preliminaries, commonly called courting, in the house which he owns and successfully conducts with my humble assistance. Will you allow me to ask you a question?'

"Alexander had opened the auto door, and I stood with one foot on the step."

Quincy was silent for a moment. Miss Dana's curiosity was excited.

"What did he ask you to do?"

"His question was--'are you going to marry Miss Dana?'"

"Preposterous!" cried Miss Dana. "I shall leave the 'Cawthorne' to-morrow. What answer did you give to so impertinent a question?"

"I said, not to-night. Not until to-morrow. Then I jumped in, slammed the door, and off we went leaving Mr. Cass fully informed as to my intentions."

Mary thought, under the circumstances, that a change of subjects was necessary.

"I am working on the Harrison case. I don't believe he poisoned his wife. I think the law killed an innocent man."

"Another Robert Wood affair? Have you seen your little namesake, Mary Wood?"

"Yes. I am going to spend to-morrow in the laboratory making toxic analyses."

"I've been very busy to-day."

"Not working?"

"No, getting ready to. I've bought out an established business."

"You said you disliked business."

"Not this kind. You were right about Isburn. He didn't mean what he said about giving you a half-interest in the agency."

"I'm not disappointed. I didn't think he did. Why should he pay me for returning what I took from him as a professional joke?"

"Well I fixed it up with him, and he will sail for Europe with his niece as soon as we can take charge."

"We? Why, what do you mean, Mr. Sawyer?"

"I mean that I've engaged to pay Mr. Isburn one hundred thousand dollars for his agency, a one-half interest to become mine and the other half to be transferred to my wife as soon as I am married, which will be soon."

"Then you will be my employer," and Mary's blue eyes were opened as

wide as they could be.

"Within a week, I shall be Mr. Isburn. I shall not use my own name."

His manner changed instantly.

"This morning I met an old college friend. He was doing the historical points of old Boston with his father and his father's friend, a Rev. Mr. Dysart of Yonkers, New York."

Miss Dana started, and exclaimed, involuntarily, "Mr. Dysart--not Mr. Octavius Dysart?"

"Yes, that was the name. Why, do you know him? I'll be honest, I know you do."

"My mother was born in Yonkers, and Mr. Dysart was the clergyman who officiated at my father's wedding. He used to call on us whenever he came to Boston. But how did he know that you knew me?"

"He said he was going to Fernborough to see your father, and I availed myself of the opportunity to mention my acquaintance with you. He wished you could come and see him."

"Where is he? Of course I will go."

"He is staying with Mr. Larned, my college mate's father, who lives in Jamaica Plain, but he will not be there until this evening. He's attending a religious conference this afternoon and goes to Fernborough early to-morrow."

"Then I can't see him."

"Why not? I'm going out this evening--small party invited--entirely informal--half my auto is at your service."

"Will you get me back to the hotel before the doors are closed? I shall pack up to-morrow."

"I promise," said Quincy. "I will come for you at seven sharp."

Punctually at seven, a closed auto stopped before the "Cawthorne" and Quincy alighted. Mary stepped from the elevator, wearing a new spring costume and a marvellous aggregation of flowers upon her hat, walked to the door without looking at Mr. Cass, and before he could frame one of his employer's tenacious points and follow her, she had been handed into the auto and whirled swiftly away.

"Is Alexander driving?" she asked. "No. He's asleep--up too late last night. We have a strange _chauffeur_. I selected him for that reason."

"Why, what do you mean?"

"I didn't wish anybody to know where we had gone."

"Why not, pray?"

"I mean, what we'd gone for."

"Nonsense. Why, a friendly call--what more?"

"Are your gloves on?"

"No, I didn't have time. I'll put them on now."

"No hurry--plenty of time. You are agitated. Allow me to feel your pulse."

"You are funny to-night, Quincy."

"Not funny--just happy."

Quincy took forcible possession of her half-resisting hand and slipped a diamond solitaire on the proper finger.

"Why, what are you doing? Isn't it a beauty? Is this the great Sawyer diamond? Whose is it?"

"It's yours. It is an engagement ring. It's the first step towards keeping my promise to Mr. Cass, and he's tenacious, you know. I told you all about it when I called this afternoon. So, please don't say 'this is so sudden.'"

"Are you crazy, Quincy?"

"No, sane. Delightfully so. I told Mr. Cass I couldn't marry you until to-day. I got the license this noon."

They were passing through a dimly-lighted street, but, occasionally, the street lamps threw flashes across two earnest faces. She endeavoured to remove the ring.

"Mary," said Quincy, "if you allow the ring to remain, I shall be a very happy man, dear,--for I love you. I have loved you ever since the day that I thrashed Bob Wood, and when I lay exhausted, you looked down at me with those beautiful blue eyes and said 'all for me!' I am all for you,--are you for me?"

He put his arm about her and drew her towards him; their lips met. A bright light shone in the auto windows--but they were sitting erect--they even looked primly.

"It is a long ride," she ventured.

"Too short," he replied, "and yet, I wish we were there."

Again she spoke: "This is a most unprecedented affair. Can it be real, or are we actors?"

"We are detectives, and they always do unexpected and unprecedented things."

"What will your father say--you a multimillionaire and I a poor girl who works for a living?"

"My mother was poor and blind when my father married her."

"Yes, I know; but she wrote a book and became famous."

"You're a 'wonder' now, and you will become famous."

"What will your friends say?"

"If they wish to remain my friends they will either say nothing, or congratulate me. How shall we be married--in church? I'll spend a hundred thousand on our wedding, if you say so."

"No. As little publicity as possible. Use the money to help those poor creatures who are sick with the disease called crime; that is the symptom. The cause is often bad environment, and the poverty which prevents improvement."

"What a philosopher you are. That simple ceremony suits me exactly, Mary. What a sweet name you have. Why not have Mr. Dysart perform the ceremony? We'll be married with a ring."

Mary laughed: "Where will you get yours?"

"Detectives are always prepared for emergencies. I bought them this noon, after I procured the license. They seemed to go together."

"Well, Quincy, I think you are the most presumptuous mortal in existence. How dared you do such a thing--so many things, I mean?"

"Was not the prize worth even more of an endeavour? I have always thought Young Lochinvar was a model lover. But here we are."

The Rev. Mr. Dysart received them with pleasant words of welcome, and reminiscences of life in Yonkers, and memories of Mary's mother, held Cupid in abeyance for an hour. Quincy passed the license to the clergyman who read it and looked up inquiringly.

"It's all right, isn't it?" Quincy asked.

"Why yes,--but--I never supposed--why, of course--but when?"

"Now, at once," said Quincy. "We must be home by eleven, for they lock the doors."

The simple ceremony was soon over.

"Can you give Mrs. Sawyer a certificate, Mr. Dysart?"

"Fortunately, yes. I bought some to-day, for I needed them."

He went into an adjoining room to fill it out.

"Mary, my darling, I am a rich man--richer than I deserve to be, for I have created nothing--but I would give every dollar of my fortune rather than lose you. Does your wedding ring fit? Mine is all right."

"It ought to be--you had a chance to try yours on."

"I am a designing villain, Mary. While you were telling that story last night, you will remember that I walked about the room. One of your rings was on the mantelpiece and I tried it on."

When the clergyman handed Mrs. Sawyer the certificate, Quincy passed him his fee.

"You've made a mistake, Mr. Sawyer. This is a hundred dollar bill."

"It ought to be a thousand. I'll send you a check for the difference to-morrow--for yourself, or your church, as you prefer."

As they descended the steps, the clergyman raised his hands.

"I wish you both long life and prosperity, and may Heaven's blessing fall upon you."

"Back to the 'Cawthorne,'" said Quincy, as he pressed a small roll of paper into the _chauffeur's_ hand--which roll of paper a friendly street light showed to be a five dollar bill.

"What will that horrid Mr. Cass say?"

"I'll fix him," replied Quincy. "Just await developments, patiently, my dear."

It was a quarter of eleven when they reached the hotel. Mr. Cass was at his desk, the light turned down in anticipation of the closing hour.

"The certificate, darling," Quincy whispered.

"Please turn up the light, Mr. Cass, and read that."

Mr. Cass adjusted his _pince-nez_. Quincy was relentless. His turn had come.

"Is that in proper form, Mr. Cass? I know your rules are strict, and

that your employer holds you to them tenaciously," and there was a strong accent on the last word.

"Would your reverend employer object to your harbouring a newly-married couple for one night? Show him your wedding ring, Mrs. Sawyer. We must satisfy his moral scruples."

Mr. Cass regarded them attentively. Then he said, slowly: "I anticipated such a result, but wasn't it rather sudden?"

"We shall lose the elevator," cried Mary. "It shuts down at eleven."

"Shall we go on a tour?" asked Quincy the next morning.

"I can't leave the Harrison case. I must follow a clue this morning."

"Where shall we live, Mary? In grandfather's house on Beacon Street, or shall I build a new one? I'll make it a palace, if you say so."

"Well, I sha'n't say so--but let's live anywhere but here."

"We'll bid Mr. Cass a long farewell--but I admire his tenacity. He's a sort of moral bull-dog. I might use him in my business."

"Our business, Quincy."

"That's so--we are partners professionally, and lovers ever."

As she disengaged herself from his embrace, Mary exclaimed: "I've planned a model honeymoon for us, Quincy. You must go over the Harrison case with me. I'm sure we can prove that he was an innocent man, and--"

"We'll find the real criminal, Mary, and bring him to justice."

"It will be a long and tedious investigation. I may have to visit every drug store in the city."

"That's easy. I'll buy you a touring car--I will act as chauffeur--"

"Why a touring car--why not a runabout just for two?"

"As you say, my dear. Your word is law--or the next thing to it. By the way, Mary, we must live on Beacon Street."

"Why, must?"

"Because Mr. Strout has bought a house on Commonwealth Avenue, and we must keep the line drawn sharp between the old families and the nouveaux riches!_"

THE END.

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