THE EBB-TIDE.

A Trio and Quartette.

By

Robert Louis Stevenson and Lloyd Osbourne,

Authors of "The Wrecker," "The Wrong Box," etc.

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"There is a Tide in the Affairs of Men."

PART II.

The Quartette.

CHAPTER VII.

THE PEARL FISHER.

About 4 in the morning, as the Captain and Herrick sat together on the rail, there arose from the midst of the night in front of them the voice of breakers. Each sprang to his feet and stared and listened. The sound was continuous, like the passing of a train; no rise or fall could be distinguished; minute by minute the ocean heaved with an equal potency against the invisible isle; and as time passed, and Herrick waited in vain for any vicissitude in the volume of that roaring, a sense of the eternal weighed upon his mind. To the expert eye the isle itself was to be inferred from a certain string of blots along the starry heaven. And the schooner was laid to and anxiously observed till daylight.

There was little or no morning bank. A brightening came in the east; then a wash of some ineffable, faint, nameless hue between crimson and silver; and then coals of fire. These glimmered awhile on the sea line, and seemed to brighten and darken and spread out, and still the night and the stars reigned undisturbed; it was as though a spark should catch and glow and creep along the foot of some heavy and almost incombustible wall-hanging, and the room itself be scarce menaced. Yet a little after, and the whole east glowed with gold and scarlet, and the hollow of heaven was filled with the daylight.

The isle—the undiscovered, the scarce-believed in—now lay before them, and close aboard; and Herrick thought that never in his dreams had he beheld anything more strange and delicate. The beach was excellently white, the continuous barrier of trees inimitably green; the land perhaps ten feet high, the trees thirty more. Every here and there, as the schooner coasted northward, the wood was intermitted; and he could see clear over the inconsiderable strip of land (as a man looks over a wall) to the lagoon—and clear over that again to where the far side of the atoll prolonged its pencilling of trees against the morning sky. He tortured himself to find analogies. The isle was like the rim of a great vessel sunken in the waters; it was like the embankment of an annular railway grown upon with wood; it was like a verdant ringworm, gracing, not defacing, the blue brow of the ocean. So slender it seemed amidst the outrageous breakers, so frail and pretty, he would scarce have wondered to see it sink and disappear without a sound, and the waves close smoothly over its descent.

Meanwhile the Captain was in the fore-cross-trees, glass in hand, his eyes in every quarter, spying for an entrance, spying for signs of tenancy. But the isle continued to unfold itself in joints and to run out in indeterminate capes, and still there was neither house nor man nor the smoke of fire. Here a multitude of sea birds soared and twinkled and fished in the blue waters; and there, and for miles together, the fringe of cocoa palm and pandanus extended, and made desirable green bowers for nobody to visit, and the silence of death was only broken by the throbbing of the sea.

The airs were very light, their speed was small; the heat intense. The decks were scorching underfoot, the sun flamed overhead, brazen, out of a brazen sky; the pitch bubbled in the seams, and the brains in the brainpan. And all the while the excitement of the three adventurers glowed about their bones like a fever. They whispered, and nodded, and pointed, and put mouth to ear with a singular instinct of secrecy, approaching that island underhand like eavesdroppers and thieves; and even Davis from the crosstrees gave his orders mostly by gestures. The hands shared in this mute strain, like dogs, without comprehending it; and through the roar of so many miles of breakers, it was a silent ship that approached an empty island.

At last they drew near to the break in that interminable gangway. A spur of coral sand stood forth on the one hand; on the other a high and thick tuft of trees cut off the view; between was the mouth of the huge lavar. Twice a day the ocean crowded in that narrow entrance and was heaped between these frail walls; twice a day, with the return of the ebb, the mighty surplusage of water must struggle to escape. The hour in which the Farallone came there was the hour of flood. The sea turned (as with the instinct of the homing pigeon) for the vast receptacle, swept eddying through the gates, was transmuted as it did so into a wonder of watery and silken hues, and brimmed into the inland sea beyond. The schooner luffed up close-hauled, and was caught and carried away by the influx like a toy. She skimmed, she flew; a momentary shadow touched her decks from the shore side trees; the bottom of the channel showed up for a moment and was in a moment gone; the next she floated on the bosom of the lagoon, and below, in the transparent chamber of waters, a myriad of many-colored fishes were sporting, a myriad pale flowers of coral diversified the floor.

Herrick stood transported. In the gratified lust of his eye he forgot the past and the present; forgot that he was menaced by a prison on the one hand and starvation on the other; forgot that he was come to that island, desperately foraging, clutching at expedients. A drove of flakes, the spilsted of the rainbow and billed like parrots, hovered up in the shadow of the schooner and passed clear of it, and gilmted in the submarine sun. They were beautiful, like birds, and their silent passage impressed him like a strain of song.

Meanwhile, to the eyes of Davis in the crosstrees, the lagoon continued to expand its empty waters, and the long succession of the shoreside trees to be paid out like fishing line off a reel. And still there was no mark of habitation. The schooner, immediately on entering, had been kept away to the nor'ard, where the water seemed to be the deepest; and she was now skimming past the tall grove of trees which stood on that side of the channel and denied further view. Of the whole of the low shores of the island, only this bight remained to be revealed. And suddenly the curtain was raised; they began to open out a haven, snugly elbowed there, and beheld, with an astonishment beyond words, the roofs of men. The appearance thus instantaneously disclosed to those on the deck of the Farallon was not that of a city, rather of a substantial country farmstead. There was the long line of sheds and storehouses apart, upon one side, a deep-verandaed dwelling house; on the other, perhaps a dozen native huts; a building with a belfry and some rude offer at architectural features that might be thought to have grown out for ornament; on the beach in front some heavy boats drawn up, and a pile of timber running forth into the burning shallows of the lagoon. From a flagstaff at the pierhead the red ensign of England was displayed. Behind, about, and over the same tall grove of palms which had masked the settlement in the beginning prolonged its roof of tumultuous green fans, and turned and ruffled overhead, and sang its silver song all day in the wind. The place had the indescribable but unmistakable appearance of being in commission, yet there breathed from it a sense of desertion that was almost poignant; no human figure was to be observed to and fro about the houses, and there was no sound of human industry or enjoyment. Only on the top of the beach and hard by the flagstaff a woman of exorbitant stature and as white as snow, was to be seen beckoning with uplifted arm. The second glance identified her as a piece of naval sculpture, the figurehead of a ship, that had long bevered and plunged into so many billows, and was now brought ashore to be the ensign and Epeisidion genius of that empty town.

The Farallone made a conflict to bring it off; the wind, besides, was stronger inside than without under the lee of the land; and the stolen schooner opened out successive objects with the swiftness of a panorama, so that the adventurers almost stupefied. The flag spoke for itself; it was an ancient and weathered trophy that had beaten itself to pieces on the post, flying over desolation; and, to make assurances stronger, there was to be described in the deep shade of the veranda a glitter of crystal and the fluttering of white napery. If the figurehead at the other end, with its perpetual gesture and its lebrous whiteness, reigned alone in that hamlet, as it seemed to do, it could not have reigned long. Men's hands had been busy, men's feet stirring there, within the circuit of the clock. The Farallones were sure of it; their eyes dwelt in the deep shadow of the palms for some one hiding; if intensity of looking might have prevailed, they would have pierced the walls of houses; and there came to them, in these pregnant seconds, a sense of being watched and played with, and of a blow impending, that was hardly bearable.

The extreme point of palms they had just passed enclosed a creek, which was thus hidden up to the last moment from the eyes of those on board, and from this a boat put suddenly and briskly out and a voice hailed.

"Schooner ahoy!" it cried. "Stand in for the pier! In two cables' lengths you'll have twenty fathoms and good holding ground."

The boat was manned with a couple of brown oarsmen in scanty kilts of blue. The speaker, who was steering, wore white clothes, the full dress of the tropics; a wide hat shaded his face; but it could be seen that he was of stalwart size, and his voice sounded like a gentleman's. So much could be made out. It was plain, besides, that the Farallones had been expected at sea, and the inhabitants were prepared for its reception.

Mechanically the orders were obeyed and the ship berthed, and the three adventurers gathered aft beside the house and waited, with galloping pulses and a perfect vacancy of mind, the coming of the stranger who might mean so much to them. They had no plan, no story prepared; there was no time to make one; they were caught red-handed, and must stand their chance. Yet this anxiety was checkered with hope. The island, being uninhabited, it was not possible the man could hold any office or be in a position to demand their papers. And beyond that, if there was any truth in Findlay, as it now seemed there should be, he was the representative of the "private reason;" he must see their coming with a profound disappointment; and perhaps (hope whispered) he would be willing and able to purchase their silence.

The boat was by this time forging alongside, and they were able at last to see what manner of man they had to do with. He was a huge fellow, six feet four in height, and of a build proportionately strong, but his sinews seemed to be dissolved in a listlessness that was more than languor. It was only the eye that corrected this impression; an eye of an unusual mingled brilliance and softness, sombre as coal and with lights that outshone the topaz; an eye of unimpaired health and virility; an eye that bade you beware of the man's devastating anger. A complexion naturally dark had been tanned in the island to a hue hardly distinguishable from that of a Tahitian; only his manners and movements, and the living force that dwelt in him, like fire in flint, betrayed the European. He was dressed in white drill, exquisitely made; his scarf and tie were of tender colored silk; on the thwart beside him there leaned a Winchester rifle.

"Is the Doctor on board?" he cried as he came alongside. "I mean, I suppose, I can't be the only man?" "Not yet of the Trinity Hall? Ah!" He did not look surprised, seemed rather to affect it in politeness; but his eye rested on each of the three white men in succession with a sudden curiosity that was almost savage. "Ah, then! said he, "there is some small mistake, no doubt, and I must ask you to what I am indebted for this pleasure?"

He was by this time on the deck, but he had the art to be quite unapproachable; the friendliest vulgarian, three parts drunk, would have known better than take liberties, and not one of the adventurers offered to shake hands.

"Well," said Davis, "I suppose you may call it an accident. We had heard of your island and read that thing in the Directory about the *Private Reasons*, you see; so when we saw the lagoon reflected in the eye of Davis in the crosstrees, the lagoon continued to expand its empty waters, and the long succession of the shoreside trees to be paid out like fishing line off a reel. And still there was no mark of habitation. The schooner, immediately on entering, had been kept away to the nor'ard, where the water seemed to be the deepest; and she was now skimming past the tall grove of trees which stood on that side of the channel and denied further view. Of the whole of the low shores of the island, only this bight remained to be revealed. And suddenly the curtain was raised; they began to open out a haven, snugly elbowed there, and beheld, with an astonishment beyond words, the roofs of men. The appearance thus instantaneously disclosed" to those on the deck of the Farallon was not that of a city, rather of a substantial country farmstead. There was the long line of sheds and storehouses apart, upon one side, a deep-verandaed dwelling house; on the other, perhaps a dozen native huts; a building with a belfry and some rude offer at architectural features that might be thought to have grown out for ornament; on the beach in front some heavy boats drawn up, and a pile of timber running forth into the burning shallows of the lagoon. From a flagstaff at the pierhead the red ensign of England was displayed. Behind, about, and over the same tall grove of palms which had masked the settlement in the beginning prolonged its roof of tumultuous green fans, and turned and ruffled overhead, and sang its silver song all day in the wind. The place had the indescribable but unmistakable appearance of being in commission, yet there breathed from it a sense of desertion that was almost poignant; no human figure was to be observed to and fro about the houses, and there was no sound of human industry or enjoyment. Only on the top of the beach and hard by the flagstaff a woman of exorbitant stature and as white as snow, was to be seen beckoning with uplifted arm. The second glance identified her as a piece of naval sculpture, the figurehead of a ship, that had long bevered and plunged into so many billows, and was now brought ashore to be the ensign and Epeisidion genius of that empty town.

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White birds whisked in the air above, a shoal of parti-colored fishes in the scarce denser medium below; between, like Mahomet's coffin, the boat drew away briskly on the surface, and its shadow followed it over the glittering floor of the lagoon. Attwater looked steadily back over his shoulders as he sat; he did not once remove his eyes from the Farallone and the group on her quarter deck beside the house till his boat ground upon the pier. Thence, with an agile pace, he hurried ashore, and they saw his white clothes shining in the checkered dusk of the grove until the house received him.

The Captain, with a speaking countenance, called the adventurers into the cabin.

"Well," he said to Herrick, when they were seated, "there's one good job at least. He's taken to you in earnest."

"Why is that a good job?" said Herrick.

"Oh, you'll see how it pans out presently," returned Davis. "You go ashore and stand in with him, that's all! You let on that you're there you can find out what he has, and what the charter is, and who's the fourth man—for there's four of them and we're only three."

"And suppose I do, what next?" cried Herrick. "Answer me that."

"So I will, Robert Herrick," said the Captain. "But first, let's see all clear. I guess you know," he said with an imperious solemnity, "I guess you know the bottom is about out of this Farallone speculation? I guess you know it's right out? and if this old Island hadn't been turned up right when it did, I guess you know where you and I and Huish would have been?"

"Yes, I know that," said Herrick. "No matter who's to blame, I know it. What next?"

"No matter who's to blame, you know it, right enough," said the Captain, "and I'm obliged to you for the reminder. Now here's this Attwater; what do you think of him?"

"I do not know," said Herrick. "I am attracted and, repelled. He was insufferably rude to you."

"And you, Huish?" said the Captain.

Huish sat on closing a favorite tooth root; he scarce looked up from that engrossing task. "Don't ask me what I think of him!" he said, "There's a day comin', I pray Gawd, when I can tell it him myself."

"Huish means the same as what I do," said Davis, "only he means a man came stepping around and saying 'Look here, I'm Attwater—and you knew it was so, by God!'—I sized him right straight up. Here's the real article, I said, and I don't like it; here's the real first-rate, copper-bottomed aristocrat, same as what Ward McAllister would lick the boots of, and like the taste of them! Why! I don't know, ye, do I? God damn ye, did God make ye? No, that couldn't be nothing but genuine; a man got to be born to that, and notice! smart as champagne and hard as nails; no kind of a fool; no, sir; not a pound of him! Now, I ask you, what brings this fellow to a lonely island for? I said. He's not here collecting eggs. He's a palace at home, and powdered flunkies; and if he don't stay there, you bet he knows the reason why! Follow?"

"Oh, yes, I hear you," said Huish.

"He's been good enough to come here, then," continued the Captain. "For ten years he's been doing a great business. It's pearl and shell, of course; there couldn't be nothing else in such a place, and no doubt the shell goes off regularly by this Trinity Hall, and the money for it straight into the bank, so that's no use to us. But what else is there? Is there nothing else he would be likely to keep here? Is there nothing else he would be bound to keep here? Yes, sir, the pearls! First, because they're too valuable to trust out of his hands. Second, because pearls want a lot of handling and matching; and the man who sells his pearls as they come in, one here, one there, instead of hanging back and holding up—well, that man's a fool, and it's not Attwater."

"It's likely," said Huish, "that's w'at it is; not proved, but likely."

"It's proved," said Davis bluntly.

"Suppose it was?" said Herrick. "Suppose that was all so, and he had these pearls—a ten years' collection of them? Suppose he had! There's my question."

The Captain drummed with his thick hands on the board in front of him; he looked steadily to Herrick's face, and Herrick as steadily looked upon the table and the pattering fingers; there was a gentle oscillation of the anchored ship, and a big patch of sunlight traveled to and fro between one and the other.

"Hear me!" Herrick burst out suddenly.

"No, you better hear me first," said Davis.

"Hear me and understand me. We've got no use for that fellow, whatever you may have. He's your kind, he's not ours; he's took to you, and he's got his boots on me and Huish. Save him if you can!"

"Save him?" repeated Herrick.

"Save him, if you're able," reiterated Davis with a blow of his clenched fist. "Go ashore, and talk him smooth, and if you get him and his pearls aboard I'll share him. If you don't there's going to be a funeral. Is that so, Huish? Does that suit you?"

"I ain't a forgiving man," said Huish, "but I'm not the sort to spoil business neither. Bring the bloke on board and his pearls along with him, and you can have it your own way; marooned he's not, so far as I'm concerned."

"Well, and if I can't?" cried Herrick, while the sweat streamed upon his face. "You talk to me as if I was God Almighty, to do this and that. But if I can't?"

"My son," said the Captain, "you better do your level best, or you'll see what's what."

"Oh, yes," said Huish. "Oh, criker, yes!" He looked across at Herrick with a toothless smile that was shocking in its savagery; and his ear caught apparently by the trivial expression he had used, broke into a piece of the chorus of a music hall song, which he must have heard twenty years before in his mastless childhood, in that, in that hour and place, seemed hateful as a blasphemy: "Hikey, hikey, criker, hikey, chillingawallaba dory."

The Captain suffered him to finish; his face was unchanged.

"The way things are, there's many a man that wouldn't let you go ashore," he resumed. "But I'm not that kind. I know you'd never go back on me, Herrick! Or if you choose to—go, and do it, and be damned!" he cried, and rose abruptly from the table.

He strolled out of the house, and, as he reached the door, turned and called Huish, suddenly and violently, like the barking of a dog. Huish followed, and Herrick remained alone in the cabin.

"Now, see here!" whispered Davis. "I know that man. If you open your mouth to him again, you'll ruin all."

(To be continued.)

WILD BEASTS IN BATTLE.

A Trapped Cinnamon Bear Attacked by a Mountain Lion.

Raleigh F. Wilkinson, a ranchman living near Craig, Mon., tells an interesting story of a fight between a bear, a coyote, and a mountain lion. The coyote, as every woodsman knows, is the greatest coward in the animal kingdom. A cinnamon bear will fight when there is no escape, while a mountain lion or a catamount is always ready for a fight when he thinks he has the best of it.

Mr. Wilkinson, having lost a fine brood of ducks, and suspecting that a coyote was responsible, set a bear trap, baited with fresh beef. Early the next morning he was awakened by a howl which betokened results. Knowing that the coyote, if caught, could not get away from the heavy claws of the bear trap, he returned to sleep. An hour later he was awakened by a chorus of fierce animal voices. When he visited the trap he found a coyote caught fast by the shoulder, and a cinnamon bear had likewise been caught, showing that both animals had made a strike for the beef at the same time, the coyote's hunger having doubtless overcome his native cowardice. Ten feet away was a magnificent great mountain lion, waiting until one of the fighters had killed the other before finishing the winner.

Curiously enough, neither the bear nor the coyote showed a disposition to attack the other. Each stood on three legs, watching their common enemy, the lion, evidently unconcerned at their purpose. The air in the mean time was filled with the mighty roar of their voices. Mr. Wilkinson, thinking that their cries might bring more animals to the scene, got his rifle into range, though determined not to interrupt what promised to be a most exciting fight.

A half hour passed before the lion got impatient. Then he gradually drew near the trap, measuring the distance so as to keep out of range. The frightened coyote lay flat on the ground, with his nose in the dirt, while the bear stood erect, with one paw drawn back to defend himself. The lion, snarling and spitting, exchanged a number of swift strokes with the bear, then retreated and crawled to the top of a sheep shed near by. There he lay crouched for a moment; then made a spring, dropping squarely on the bear. A terrific struggle followed. The lion closed his teeth on the bear's throat and was in turn caught in a mighty hug. The two fell to the ground, the bear on top, with the blood pouring in a stream over his brown hide. They rolled from side to side and the trap was pulled from its stakes. Then the bear rose on his hind legs, carrying the lion with him. He managed to loosen the lion's hold on his throat and get a grip on his adversary's neck. The fight was then soon over. The lion's eyes rolled outward, his head dropped, and he was strangled to death.

The bear was not much better off. He staggered like a drunken man, bleeding from many wounds. He still had life enough to look after the coyote, which was nearly frightened to death. He made two strokes at the coward of the plains and crushed the life out of him. Then the bear staggered to the sheep shed and rolled over dead.

THE GOOD ANGEL.

A Story Told on Christmas Eve.

By Octave Thanet.

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We were a house party spending Christmas at Roger's country house at Highland Park. Though Roger is a Chicago lawyer, he was born a Virginian; and we recalled many a Southern Christmas, that Christmas eve, over a bowl of genuine Virginian eggnog. A noble fire blazed up Roger's colonial chimney, as generous if not so crooked as his ancestors' chimneys in Berkeley Manor; and we could, did we choose, rest our eyes from its blinding splendor by a search through the dusk and the moonlit night outside the window panes, until the vast dark bulk of the lake shaped itself out of the incessant moan of its surf on the beach.

Somehow our talk, which had started lightly enough amid dead-and-gone Virginian revels, sank into a sombre mood, and presently we were discussing, not an occasional misstep over the bounds of temperance, but the black problem of drunkenness itself.

The Judge had a high opinion of the Keeley cure; but the Doctor believed in legislation backed by a good stiff sentence in prison. Roger had listened, saying nothing, but puffing away at that brier-wood pipe of his that he smokes whenever he is under the protection of his own household gods. At last he removed the pipe and poised it in air with the manner of one about to speak. We all listened, for Roger does not often discourse out of court; and when he does he is likely to have something to say. Besides, Roger is the best fellow in the world.

"I have nothing to say against the Keeley cure," said Roger in his soft, deliberative tones. "No doubt it helps some men mightily, and that is not saying that the Doctor here cannot give just as good a hypodermic as they give at Dwight; there is the contagion of sympathy and the influence of faith to be taken into account, you know. There is sense, too, in what Ben" (waving the pipe at the Doctor) "has to say about fear as a deterrent, and I dare say many fellows have been reformed through their affections, which is the pleasing theory of the ladies. My own impression is that each case has a possible cure, if we could only find it. I know a man who was scared into reform, and another man who reformed neither from fear nor favor, but principally, I think, because he saw the odiousness of his own vice in another man's actions. That was a queer case."

"You mean Jimmy," said the Judge. "See here, Roger, your wife isn't here, and we are all in the family. Tell us about Jimmy."

"Patty wouldn't mind, I know. Tell them, Roger," said his sister. So, in the end Roger did tell us.

He rubbed the shining top of his head from which his brown curls are receding, his kind, keen eyes contracted, he sighed and began:

"My first acquaintance with Jimmy," said Roger, "goes back to a period that makes me feel my age, for I was old enough to be in Harvard Law School and Jimmy was in knickerbockers. I found him in a high seat of a circus in Chicago exulting in the dangers of the trapeze. He had made friends with a newsboy—even at that tender age Jimmy's perilous sociability was in full bloom—and they were exchanging emotions. 'My!' squeals Jimmy, 'ain't she a daring lady! Would your mamma dare do that? Mine wouldn't!'

"'Who is your mamma,' said I, we being already on terms of *camaraderie*, thanks to the balmy influences of peanuts and pink lemonade. Jimmy answered frankly: 'Oh, my mamma is Mrs. James Cunningham, and I ain't got any papa, and we don't live in Chicago, but we're visiting my aunt Sue, and Ralph wouldn't take me to the circus, so I ran away.' I surmised that his mother was dragging all the cisterns and harassing the police about him by this time, and I wheedled him into giving me the street number, and the upshot of the incident was I returned him to his mother that afternoon. That is how I became acquainted with the Cunninghams. I have felt a sneaking obligation to Jimmy ever since. There were only Patty and Jimmy in the family. I married Patty. Mr. Cunningham left his fortune unconditionally to his wife. There was half a million dollars: enough to spoil a boy, not enough to fill him with the sense of obligation that sometimes a great fortune will bring. It did spoil Jimmy. He was at my wedding, the sweetest little golden-haired angel in blue velvet you ever saw. And after the wedding breakfast, while Patty was trying to console her mother, he tied an old shoe full of rice to the bridal carriage, and then confiscated a bottle of champagne to cheer some choice friend of his waiting in the stable, and contrived during the revel to tumble out of the second-story window and break his collar bone—which his mother thought was punishment enough.

"I didn't; but I was too new to the family circle to be loud in my opinions. I didn't hear very much more of Jimmy that year, until he got into a mess at school, and the master, being a friend of mine, I had to lay the young rascal out of his just deserts. Naturally, after that, it fell to me to null Master Jim out of hot water as a regular job. I must say it was a pretty steady job, too. He was expelled from two schools, where he had been so popular that he returned home with a miscellany of tokens of regret in the shape of broken pocketknives, old cravats, a revolver without any cartridges, and three trained mice. It was Mrs. Cunningham's notion to have a tutor for him. Digby was an innocent young fellow in training for a clergyman. He was so innocent that Jim worked his sprees off on him as malaria. Like every one else he grew fond of Jimmy; and Jimmy liked him so much that he borrowed money to buy Digby a gold watch when they parted. He taught poor Digby draw poker, and when the malaria waxed it too bad Digby taught him the classics. Really Digby did push him through the college examinations. To be sure he was heavily conditioned, and dropped the next year, but you couldn't blame his tutor for that.

"Then Ralph took Jimmy into the business just as I was beginning to fear Mrs. Cunningham would regard the law as the best reform school for a wild young man, and saddle Jim on me. Ralph kept Jim a year. Then he came to me and told me about the Keeley cure, and was sure it would make a man of Jim.

"Well, I should not like to offer Jim's case in disparagement of the Dwight work. He offered to bet it wouldn't cure him; and only went, as he expressed it, 'to oblige the ladies.'

"The worst thing about Jim was that he liked his evil ways. He was the most unabashed sinner you ever saw. He went through a certain form of penitence when he was getting over a fit of intoxication; but he announced boldly that he didn't intend to give up his times—only, in deference to the morbid sensitiveness of his family, he might agree to have rather fewer of them. I assure you he would argue the matter, cool as a darky with a chicken under his hat. It was a redeeming trait of my gentleman that he wasn't a little bit of a hypocrite. 'You have no idea, Roger, what a glorious sensation it is to let yourself go,' says he. 'You deadly respectable fellows that are forever choking your natural passions and handcuffing any instinct that is a bit wild, you don't realize the tremendous exhilaration there is in the gallop.'

"At this he swung round in his chair, and says he, 'I say, Roger, were you ever drunk?'

"Well," said Roger's sister, for Roger had paused.

"I told him," answered Roger, "that once in my college days, when our baseball team won, I had made all the different kinds of an ass of myself, including that; and I had awakened the next morning with my head like a sawmill gone wrong, and my throat like baked leather, and my stomach beneath contempt; had spent several days in cursing myself and paying my bills, and had never repeated the experience.

"'That's odd,' said Jimmy, affably; 'I never even have a headache until I get quite done up, you know, and I don't think I make an ass of myself.'

"'You do,' I rapped out, 'and a particularly nauseous one. I wish you could see yourself.'

"But he simply laughed and asked me to lend him a double X; there was no moving Jimmy. I made every appeal my imagination could suggest. I even talked about his mother, who was broken-hearted over him. Then he lost his temper for the first time. He spoke like a much-injured man, demanding to know why we allowed Mrs. Cunningham to guess anything about his carousals; didn't he take particular pains, he asked with an air of indignant virtue, to keep them from her? And here was that chump Ralph toddling over to her or writing every time he was late at the office! And he had always treated Ralph so squarely; always gave him warning when he was going take a week off; yes, and put off his fun when there was a rush of business, sometimes. Ralph to talk!

"He might have added—though he didn't: Jimmy wasn't conceited—that, sober, he was a particularly valuable man. He had plenty of energy and plenty of industry, and the Simon-pure business instinct, which, you know, isn't lying around loose, either. Confound him! I wouldn't ask a better clerk or a better partner if I could only keep him straight. I have heard Ralph wail a dozen times. There it was: Jimmy would not keep straight. To look at him, with his delicate face and curling hair and pensive eyes, always so trim and dainty in his appearance and so gentle of manner, you could not suspect him of a degrading vice. And, besides, when Jimmy was sober he was so strikingly, so immaculately sober. I don't mean that he didn't touch liquor; that was the wonder of it to some people, he could touch liquor, he could drink moderately, occasionally, like any abstemious but not totally abstaining man, and yet not seem tempted by his moderate drinking. And he would walk for months in the paths of temperance—until the next time. Suddenly the desire or the weariness of temperance, or, call it what you will, the thing would be on him, and he would drink and drink and drink, for days, for weeks, until the physical power to keep liquor in him left him, or until he was raving in delirium. And the clean, decent fellow would be as neglected and degraded looking a not as Dorrance said the latter. It was pretty bad for the women, I can tell you. Well, never mind that part. I won't enlarge, either, on our efforts to reform Jimmy. We tried all the approved schemes. We sent him at great expense to a ranch, from which he returned with a mortal contempt for all manifestations of having shots. We sent him to one to encourage him to press his claims. Jimmy bought him off with a thousand dollars; he was thrifty as well as magnanimous, and Jimmy was a generous soul, never stingy with his mother's money.

"Another venture was more promising. We sent to James to the lakes with a tried and true temperance Captain. This time Jimmy succeeded very sadly, because Jimmy smuggled a assortment of liquors on board, enough to last a long cruise, and when he found that the voyage was to be a short one, nearly killed himself drinking all the stock at once, to save it! Finally we agreed on a desperate remedy. Well, I was the one that suggested it. We had been having Jimmy with us all summer. I had just built this house then. And after a month or six weeks of beautiful behavior he took home a confiding client of mine paid him for me and went to Chicago on a holy terror of a spree. This time I was angry; I don't think, with all the worry and the disappointment and the tragedy of the thing, I had been angry before. Don't suppose that I could explain to any one who didn't know Jimmy the extraordinary charm of the fellow. Irresponsible as he was, you could no more help having your heart move toward him than taking off your coat for the sun. See Æsop's Fables. He had a quick and happy sympathy about him, and a real interest in other people that was irresistible. And while, of course, his perverse gratification of the basest part of him, though it should break his mother's heart, was infernally selfish, he wasn't selfish in little things. I have seen him do a dozen times a vagrant kindness that wouldn't occur to most men. But, as I said, this time there was a kind of contempt of our feelings in the performance that rasped me, besides it was a last straw. And Mrs. Cunningham was reluctantly brought to consent to my plan. I wanted him up in Chicago. It was time I had doing it, but never mind that. I found him in a squalid hole. He had pawned the very clothes on his back to the saloon keeper, whose little room he was occupying. Such a room! And Jimmy, who must have perfumed water for his bath and a valet of his own! He looked ghastly. His pale face smouched with a week-old beard and a big strip of black plaster on his forehead that didn't hide a half-healed cut; but he gave me a most impertinent grin that sent all my pity flying. 'Hope you brought a cab with you,' he cried in his clear, easy voice. I felt myself growing warm; but I motioned the messenger with me to put a large Gladstone that he was carrying on the cleanest looking chair, and I replied in the same tone, 'In that bag,' said I, 'are some clothes. They are swell clothes, and I need them. I shall want them, and they will not fetch much at a pawnshop; but they are clean and whole and suitable to a man who has to earn his living. That is you in future. If you will put on those clothes I have a cab outside, and we will go to a private hospital where you can stay and be quiet until you are strong again. Then the doctor will buy you a ticket and give you a sum of money, and hereafter you will have to depend on yourself. For we are done, Jimmy!—I did think of calling him James to be impressive, you know, but there was no time—we are done with brothers, ill, and shabby as he was, and I hadn't the nerve to try James on—yes, we are quite done, and if you get into any more trouble you will have to get out by yourself.

"I hardly was prepared for Jimmy's reply. 'I guess you have a little right to notion,' said he, rubbing the stubble on his chin with an air of impartial meditation, precisely as if he were some one else, 'anyhow it is worth trying, say, you don't expect me to stay out in the cold indefinitely, do you? The fatted calf oughtn't to get past veal! Let a period of probation, let it be a year! You are an awfully good fellow, Roger; but you never were original, and this plan of yours is usually a year. Let's make it a year. By the way, don't you think it would be nice for me, in the meanwhile, to pay that money of yours that I—ah, antedated—borrowed in Baltimore? I'm the honest boy in the First Reader, who breaks the plate-glass window?'

"I said that it might be a little comfort to his mother.

"'I daresay the dear old mater has hopes of me yet,' said he, 'so will I have a fallow time. Roger, keeping her from flying the track, and sending me supplies on the sly. But I'll help you out, old man. Don't get discouraged.' And I give you my word the scamp patted me on the back. I packed him into his clothes and took him away. On the way to the hospitable was neither sullen nor depressed. In fact, to my shame be it spoken, he gave me an account of life among the lowly saloons that was so funny I was laughing when we drew up before the hospital, and I saw the doctor come solemnly out to help Jimmy down. Now, here's a great moral problem: Why do we weakly forgive amusing reprobates so much more readily than the equally undeserving who don't amuse us? Jimmy's funny stories disarmed me. I am ashamed to say I sent him another sum of money. I took Jim to see Henry Clare (the predilection S. S. P., Judge—Jimmy liked those), and privately doubled the fund in the Doctor's hands. If I could be such a weakling, you may fancy I felt pretty shaky about Mrs. Cunningham. But Jimmy was as good as his word. A week later his mother received a letter. It explained that he had not gone away from Chicago, having procured 'an honest, thoughtnot brilliant, job out of the city;' the Doctor would return the money for his ticket. He would write every Sunday. Roger had left him a card with his address, she was not to worry, and with all his faults he loved her still. It is wonderful what a comfort that letter was to my mother-in-law. Well, I believe she has it tucked away in the leaves of her Bible yet. I am very fond of my mother-in-law, Jimmy's letter kept his word this time, too. There came a short letter to his mother every week for three months. Once during that time, dining with a friend, I thought I saw Jimmy at—well, at a Chicago hotel; he was serving a country client of mine, Reisling, by name, and he was placing the dishes and carving the wild game with the suave decorum of a veteran. He met my startled gaze without a sign of recognition; but I could not be mistaken. I thought of speaking to him, then I reflected, 'Better not. Jimmy is at least working hard, better keep my hands off for a while.'

"I told Mrs. Cunningham I knew where Jimmy was and that he was all right, which eased her mind; and I told Patty the truth. She said, 'You let him alone, Roger,' and I promised, but the next time I was in Chicago Jimmy appeared at my office. He was well dressed and entirely sober. His first proceeding was to draw out a little roll of bank notes from his pocket and lay them before me. 'First installment,' said he.

"'Thank you,' said I, 'and how are you getting on?'

"'Oh, fairly well, but I have a droll job.'

"'What is it?'

"'I daresay you came here to see Reisling?'

"'Yes,' said I. 'Are you employed by him?'

"'By Mr. Reisling,' said Jimmy, smiling. 'I'm the one that advised your being employed.'

"My errand had to do with Reisling. He was a young man who had been living in a neighboring state as somebody's clerk. His habits were so erratic he had difficulty in keeping his situation. All at once, to this self-indulgent, unambitious, semi-immoral creature there came a great fortune from a Californian uncle. Reisling simply lost his head; he went all to bits. The money began to fly in huge chunks to sharpers of all kinds and his wife—he was married—took fright. She and her sister were his nearest relations. In the laws of his State a spendthrift who drinks to excess may have a guardian appointed to take charge of his property. The guardian has other powers of extensive nature, one being the right to send his ward to an asylum for treatment. I had seen a case involving some Chicago property, rather a neat case. And somehow they had an exaggerated idea of my services, Mrs. Reisling especially. She was a good sort, although not always discreet. Now, she wanted me to advise her. No doubt Jimmy increased her confidence. But what was Jimmy doing with the Reislings? I asked him.

"He threw back his chin with the dimple in it, and laughed his old, ringing, jolly laugh. He had the sweetest laugh, confound him!

"Well you may laugh, says he; I am no longer a waiter. I am a moral constable and amateur guardian of the family altar, good luck to it! I'm keeping Reisling straight.

"'How did you get the job?' said I.

"'Most natural thing in the world,' said he. 'The Reislings came to our hotel, and I had to steer Reisling up stairs. One time I saved him from taking a good tumble. They were there a month; he wouldn't go home, and she wouldn't go without him, and so she got into the way of rather depending on me. She thinks I am a good young man, because I take off my hat to women and amuse children, and once she saw me going to church. I assured her it wasn't a habit, and that I was not a particularly good young man; but she took all that for my modesty, so, finally, as she came to need me, and as I couldn't get my time when I was a waiter, she induced me to resign and become a gentleman detective. I keep Reisling out of all the mischief I can, and keep the track of him generally, if I can't restrain him. I have a very liberal salary, and I am to have something very handsome should I succeed in reforming him.'

"Do you think it safe for you?' said I, rather dryly, I imagine.

"Jimmy was not offended; he answered more seriously. 'Well, yes, Roger, I do. In the first place, I haven't any present inclination for the wild birds; in the second, I rather take to Mrs. Reisling, who is an awfully good little woman, and so plain you can't help but be sorry for her, and so nice you have to like her; and there is a kid, a nice little fellow with something the matter with his hip—that's why they are here, you know—and in the third place, I'm interested in the case itself. I think you may depend I shall not run crooked, Roger; and I'd a little rather you wouldn't show me up to the Reislings. It is a new sensation being respected, morally, I give you my word; I'd relish it and take myself off to the dogs alone if I feel the bad fit coming.'

"It struck me there was something different about Jimmy; I couldn't put my finger on it; but I felt it, just as you feel when your witness is telling you the truth. I promised, and into had an amazingly pleasant half hour. Then Jimmy had to betake himself to Reisling.

"'He has been drinking very hard,' said Jimmy, 'but now we have corralled him in his room and taken all his clothes away except pajamas