THE LION AND THE MOUSE BY CHARLES KLEIN AND ARTHUR HORNBLOW

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CHAPTER I.

THERE was unwonted bustle in the usually sleepy and dignified New York offices of the Southern and Transcontinental Railroad Company in lower Broadway. The supercilious, well-groomed clerks who, on ordinary days, are far too preoccupied with their own personal affairs to betray the slightest interest in anything not immediately concerning them, now condescended to bestir themselves and, gathered in little groups, conversed in subdued, eager tones. The slim, nervous fingers of half a dozen haughty stenographers, representing as many different types of business femininity, were busily rattling the keys of clicking typewriters, each of their owners intent on reducing with all possible dispatch the mass of letters which lay piled up in front of her. Through the heavy plate-glass swinging doors, leading to the elevators and thence to the street, came and went an army of messengers and telegraph boys, noisy and insolent.

Through the open windows the hoarse shouting of news-venders, the rushing of elevated trains, the clanging of street cars, with the occasional feverish dash of an ambulance—all these familiar noises of a great city had the far-away sound peculiar to top floors of the modern sky-scraper. The day was warm and sticky, as is not uncommon in early May, and the overcast sky and a distant rumbling of thunder promised rain before night.

The big express elevators, running smoothly and swiftly, unloaded every few moments a number of prosperous-looking men who, chatting volubly and affably, made their way immediately through the outer offices toward another and larger inner office on the glass door of which was the legend "Directors Room. Private." Each comer gave a patronizing nod in recognition of the deferential salutation of the clerks. Earlier arrivals had preceded them, and as they opened the door there issued from the Directors Room a confused murmur of voices, each different in pitch and tone, some deep and deliberate, others shrill and nervous, but all talking earnestly and with animation as men do when the subject under discussion is of common interest. Now and again a voice was heard high above the others, denoting anger in the speaker, followed by the pleading accents of the peacemaker, who was arguing his irate colleague into calmness. At intervals the door opened to admit other arrivals, and through the crack was caught a glimpse of a dozen directors, some seated, some standing near a long table covered with green baize.

It was the regular quarterly meeting of the directors of the Southern and Transcontinental Railroad Company, but it was something more than mere routine that had called out a quorum of such strength and which made today's gathering one of extraordinary importance in the history of the road. That the business on hand was of the greatest significance was easily to be inferred from the concerned and anxious expression on the directors' faces and the eagerness of the employes as they plied each other with questions.

"Suppose the injunction is sustained?" asked a clerk in a whisper. "Is not the road rich enough to bear the loss?"

The man he addressed turned impatiently to the questioner:

"That's all you know about railroading. Don't you understand that this suit we have lost will be the entering wedge for hundreds of others. The very existence of the road may be at stake. And between you and me," he added in a lower key, "with Judge Rossmore on the bench we never stood much show. It's Judge Rossmore that scares 'em, not the injunction. They've found it easy to corrupt most of the supreme court judges, but Judge Rossmore is one too many for them. You could no more bribe him than you could have bribed Abraham Lincoln."

"But the newspapers say that he, too, has been caught accepting $50,000 worth of stock for that decision he rendered in the Great Northwestern case."

"Lies! All those stories are lies!" replied the other emphatically. Then looking cautiously around to make sure no one overheard, he added contemptuously: "The big interests fear him, and they're inventing these lies to try and injure him. They might as well try to blow up Gibraltar. The fact is the public is seriously aroused this time and the railroads are in a panic."

It was true. The railroad, which heretofore had considered itself superior to law, had found itself checked in its career of outlawry and oppression. The railroad, this modern octopus of steam and steel, which stretches its greedy tentacles out over the land, had at last been brought to book.

At first, when the country was in the earlier stages of its development, the railroad appeared in the guise of a public benefactor. It brought to the markets of the East the produce of the South and West. It opened up new and inaccessible territory and made oases of waste places. It brought to the city coal, lumber, food and other prime necessaries of life, taking back to the farmer and the woodsman in exchange, clothes and other manufactured goods. Thus, little by little, the railroad wormed itself into the affections of the people and gradually became an indispensable part of the life it had itself created. Tear up the railroad and life itself is extinguished.

So when the railroad found it could not be dispensed with, it grew dissatisfied with the size of its earnings. Legitimate profits were not enough. Its directors cried out for bigger dividends, and from then on the railroad became a conscienceless tyrant, fawning on those it feared and crushing without mercy those who were defenseless. It raised its rates for hauling freight, discriminating against certain localities without reason or justice, and favoring other points where its own interests lay. By corrupting Government officials and other unlawful methods it appropriated lands, and there was no escape from its exactions and brigandage. Other roads were built, and for a brief period there was held out the hope of relief that invariably comes from honest competition. But the railroad either absorbed its rivals or pooled interests with them, and thereafter there were several masters instead of one.

Soon the railroads began to war among themselves, and in a mad scramble to secure business at any price they cut each other's rates and unlawfully entered into secret compacts with certain big shippers, permitting the latter to enjoy lower freight rates than their competitors. The smaller shippers were soon crushed out of existence in this way. Competition was throttled and prices went up, making the railroad barons richer and the people poorer. That was the beginning of the giant trusts, the greatest evil American civilization has yet produced, and one which, unless checked, will inevitably drag this country into the throes of civil strife.

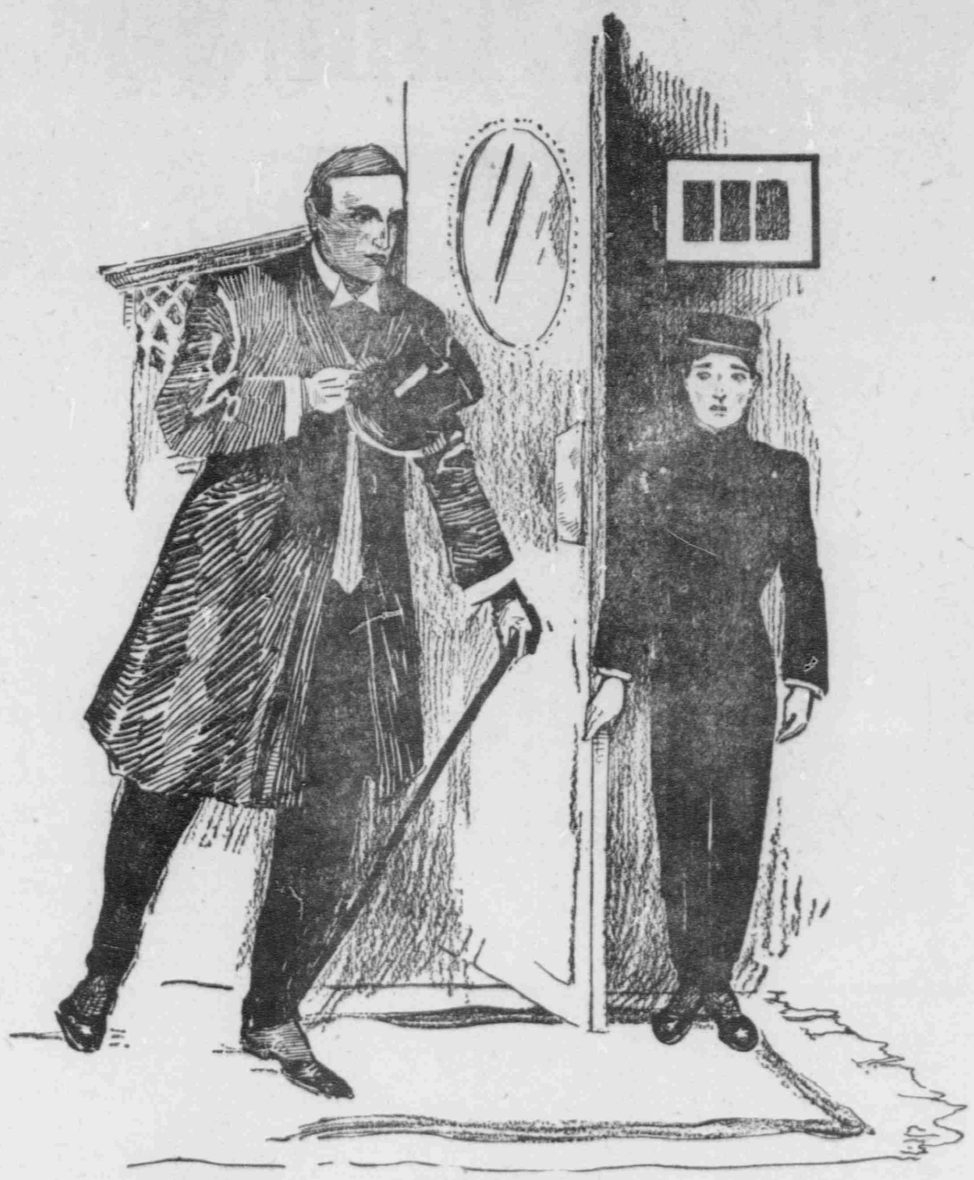
From out this quagmire of corruption and rascality emerged the Colossus, a man so stupendously rich and with such unlimited powers for evil that the world has never looked upon his like. The famous Croesus, whose fortune was estimated at only $5,000,000 in our money, was a pauper compared with John Burkett Ryder, whose holdings no man could count, but which were approximately estimated at a thousand millions of dollars. The railroads had created the trust, the ogre of corporate greed, of which Ryder was the incarnation, and in time the trust became master of the railroads, which after all seemed but retributive justice.

John Burkett Ryder, the richest man in the world—the man whose name had spread to the farthest corners of the earth because of the wealth, and whose money, instead of being a blessing, promised to become not only a curse to himself but a source of dire peril to all mankind—was a genius born of the railroad age. No other age could have brought him forth; his peculiar talents fitted exactly the conditions of his time. Attracted early in life to the newly discovered oil fields of Pennsylvania, he became a dealer in the raw product and later a refiner, acquiring with capital, laboriously saved, first one refinery, then another. The railroads were cutting each other's throats to secure the freight business of the oil men, and John Burkett Ryder saw his opportunity. He made secret overtures to the road, guaranteeing a vast amount of business if he could get exceptionally low rates, and the illegal compact was made. His competitors, undersold in the market, stood no chance, and one by one they were crushed out of existence. Ryder called these maneuvers "business;" the world called them brigandige. But the Colossus prospered and slowly built up the foundations of the extraordinary fortune which is the talk and the wonder of the world today. Master now of the oil situation, Ryder succeeded in his ambition of organizing the Empire Trading Company, the most powerful, the most secretive, and the most wealthy business institution the commercial world has yet known.

Yet with all this success John Burkett Ryder was still not content. He was now a rich man, richer by many millions that he had dreamed he could ever be, but still he was unsatisfied. He became money mad. He wanted to be richer still, to be the richest man in the world, the richest man the world had ever known. And the richer he got the stronger the idea grew upon him with all the force of a morb'd obsession. He thought of money by day, he dreamt of it at night. No matter by what questionable device it was to be procured, more gold and more must flow into his already overflowing coffers. So each day, instead of spending the rest of his years in peace, in the enjoyment of the wealth he had accumulated, he went downtown like any twenty-dollar-a-week clerk to the tall building in lower Broadway and, closeted with his associates, toiled and plotted to make more money.

He acquired vast copper mines and secured control of this and that railroad. He had invested heavily in the Southern and Transcontinental road and was chairman of its board of directors. Then he and his fellow-conspirators planned a great financial coup. The millions were not coming in fast enough. They must make a hundred millions at one stroke. They floated a great mining company to which the public was invited to subscribe. The scheme having the indorsement of the Empire Trading Company, no one suspected a snare, and such was the magic of John Ryder's name that gold flowed in from every point of the compass. The stock sold away above par the day it was issued. Men deemed themselves fortunate if they were even granted an allotment. What matter if, a few days later, the house of cards came tumbling down, and a dozen suicides were strewn along Wall Street, that sinister thoroughfare which, as a wit has said, has a graveyard at one end and the river at the other! Had Ryder any twinges of conscience? Hardly. Had he not made a cool twenty millions by the deal?

Yet this commercial pirate, this Napoleon of finance, was not a wholly bad man. He had his redeeming qualities, like most bad men. His most pronounced weakness, and the one that had made him the most conspicuous man of his time, was an entire lack of moral principle. No honest or honorable man could have amassed such stupendous wealth. In other words, John Ryder had not been equipped by nature with a conscience. He had no sense of right, or wrong, or justice where his own interests were concerned. He was the prince of egoists. On the other hand, he possessed qualities which, with some people, count as virtues. He was pious and regular in his attendance at church, and, while he had done but little for charity, he was known to have encouraged the giving of alms by the members of his family, which consisted of a wife, whose timid voice was rarely heard, and a son, Jefferson, who was the destined successor to his gigantic estate.



* * * "The big swinging doors from the street were thrown open and there entered a tall, thin man, gray-headed, with slight stoop, but keen and alert."

Such was the man who was the real power behind the Southern and Transcontinental railroad. More than anyone else Ryder had been aroused by the present legal action, not so much for the money interest at stake as that anyone should dare to thwart his will. It had been a pet scheme of his, this purchase for a song, when the land was cheap, of some thousand acres along the line, and it is true that at the time of the purchase there had been some idea of laying the land out as a park. But real estate values had increased in astonishing fashion, the road could no longer afford to carry out the original scheme, and had attempted to dispose of the property for building purposes, including a right of way for a branch road. The news, made public in the newspapers, had raised a storm of protest. The people in the vicinity claimed that the railroad secured the land on the express condition of a park being laid out, and in order to make a legal test they had secured an injunction, which had been sustained by Judge Rossmore of the United States circuit court.

These details were hastily told and re-told by one clerk to another as the babel of voices in the inner room grew louder, and more directors kept arriving from the ever-busy elevators. The meeting was called for three o'clock. Another five minutes and the chairman would rap for order. A tall, strongly built man with white mustache and kindly smile emerged from the directors' room and, addressing one of the clerks, asked:

"Has Mr. Ryder arrived yet?"

The alacrity with which the employe hastened forward to reply would indicate that his interlocutor was a person of more than ordinary importance.

"No, Senator, not yet. We expect him any minute." Then with a deferential smile he added: "Mr. Ryder usually arrives on the stroke, sir."

The Senator gave a nod of acquiescence and, turning on his heel, greeted with a grasp of the hand and affable smile his fellow-directors as they passed in by two and threes.

Senator Roberts was in the world of politics what his friend John Burkett Ryder was in the world of finance—a leader of men. He started life in Wisconsin as an errand boy, was educated in the public schools, and later became clerk in a dry goods store, finally going into business for his own account on a large scale. He was elected to the Legislature, where his ability as an organizer soon gained the friendship of the men in power, and later was sent to Congress, where he was quickly initiated in the game of corrupt politics. In 1885 he entered the United States Senate. He soon became the acknowledged leader of a considerable majority of the Republican Senators, and from then on he was a figure to be reckoned with. A very ambitious man, with a great love of power and few scruples, it is little wonder that only the practical or dishonest side of politics appealed to him. He was in politics for all there was in it, and he saw in his lofty position only a splendid opportunity for easy graft.

He did not hesitate to make such alliances with corporate interests seeking influence at Washington as would enable him to accomplish this purpose, and in this way he had met and formed a strong friendship with John Burkett Ryder. Each being a master in his own field was useful to the other.

Neither was troubled with qualms of conscience, so they never quarreled. If the Ryder interests needed anything in the Senate, Roberts and his followers were there to attend to it. Just now the cohort was marshaled in defense of the railroads against the attacks of the new rebate bill. In fact, Ryder managed to keep the Senate busy all the time. When, on the other hand, the Senators wanted anything—and they often did—Ryder saw that they got it, lower rates for this one, a fat job for that one, not forgetting themselves. Senator Roberts was already a very rich man, and although the world often wondered where he got it, no one had the courage to ask him.

But the Republican leader was stirred with an ambition greater than that of controlling a majority in the Senate. He had a daughter, a marriageable young woman who, at least in her father's opinion, would make a desirable wife for any man. His friend Ryder had a son, and this son was the only heir to the greatest fortune ever amassed by one man, a fortune which, at its present rate of increase, by the time the father died and the young couple were ready to inherit, would probably amount to over six billions of dollars. Could the human mind grasp the possibilities of such a colossal fortune? It staggered the imagination. Its owner, or the man who controlled it, would be master of the world! Was not this a prize any man might well set himself out to to win? The Senator was thinking of it now as he stood exchanging banal remarks with the men who accosted him. If he could only bring off that marriage he would be content. The ambition of his life would be attained. There was no difficulty as far as John Ryder was concerned. He favored the match and had often spoken of it. Indeed, Ryder desired it, for such an alliance would naturally further his business interests in every way. Roberts knew that his daughter Kate had more than a liking for Ryder's handsome young son. Moreover, Kate was practical, like her father, and had sense enough to realize what it would mean to be the mistress of the Ryder fortune. No, Kate was all right, but there was young Ryder to reckon with. It would take two in this case to make a bargain.

Jefferson Ryder was, in truth, an entirely different man from his father. It was difficult to realize that both had sprung from the same stock. A college-bred boy with all the advantages his father's wealth could give him, he had inherited from the parent only those characteristics which would have made him successful even if born poor—activity, pluck, application, dogged obstinacy, alert mentality. To these qualities he added what his father sorely lacked—a high notion of honor, a keen sense of right and wrong. He had the honest man's contempt for meanness of any description, and he had little patience with the lax so-called business morals of the day. For him a dishonorable or dishonest action could have no apologies and he could see no difference between the crime of the hungry wretch who stole a loaf of bread and the coal baron who systematically robbed both his employes and the public. In fact, had he been on the bench he would probably have acquitted the human derelict who, in despair, had appropriated the prime necessary of life, and sent the overrid, conscienceless coal baron to jail.

"Do unto others as you would have other do unto you." This simple and fundamental axiom Jefferson Ryder had adopted early in life, and it had become his religion—the only one, in fact, that he had. He was never pious like his father, a fact much regretted by his mother, who could see nothing but eternal damnation in store for her son because he never went to church and professed no orthodox creed. She knew him to be a good lad, but to her simple mind a conduct of life based merely on a system of moral philosophy was the worst kind of paganism. There could, she argued, be no religion, and assuredly no salvation, outside the dogmatic teachings of the church. But otherwise Jefferson was a model son and, with the exception this bad habit of thinking for himself on religious matters, really gave her no anxiety. When Jefferson left college his father took him into the Empire Trading Company with the idea of his eventually succeeding him as head of the concern, but the different views held by father and son on almost every subject soon led to stormy scenes that made the continuation of the arrangement impossible. Senator Roberts was well aware of these unfortunate independent tendencies in John Ryder's son, and while he devoutly desired the consummation of Jefferson's union with his daughter, he quite realized that the young man was a nut which was going to be exceedingly hard to crack.

"Hello, Senator, you're always on time!"

Disturbed in his reflections, Senator Roberts looked up and saw the extended hand of a red-faced, corpulent man, one of the directors. He was no favorite with the Senator, but the latter was too keen a man of the world to make enemies uselessly, so he condescended to place two fingers in the outstretched fat palm.

"How are you, Mr. Grimsby? Well, what are we going to do about this injunction? The case has gone against us. I knew Judge Rossmore's decision would be for the other side. Public opinion is aroused. The press——"

Mr. Grimsby's red face grew more apoplectic as he blurted out:

"Public opinion and the press be d——d. Who cares for public opinion? What is public opinion, anyway? This road can manage its own affairs or it can't. If it can't I for one quit railroading. The press! Pshaw! It's all graft, I tell you. It's nothing but a strike! I never knew one of these virtuous outbursts that wasn't. First the newspapers bark ferociously to advertise themselves; then they crawl round and whine like a cur. And it usually costs something to fix matters."

The Senator smiled grimly.

"No, no, Grimsby—not this time. It's more serious than that. Hitherto the road has been unusually lucky in its bench decisions——"

The Senator gave a covert glance round to see if any long ears were listening. Then he added:

"We can't expect always to get a favorable decision like that in the Cartwright case, when franchise rights valued at nearly five millions were at stake. Judge Pollmann proved himself a true friend in that affair."

Grimsby made a wry grimace as he retorted:

"Yes, and it was worth it to him. A Supreme Court Judge don't get a cheque for $20,000 every day. That represents two years' pay."

"It might represent two years in jail if it were found out," said the Senator with a forced laugh.

Grimsby saw an opportunity, and he could not resist the temptation. Bluntly he said:

"As far as jail's concerned, others might be getting their deserts there too."

The Senator looked keenly at Grimsby from under his white eyebrows. Then in a calm, decisive tone he replied:

"It's no question of a cheque this time. The road could not buy Judge Rossmore with $200,000. He is absolutely unapproachable in that way."

The apoplectic face of Mr. Grimsby looked incredulous.

It was hard for these men who plotted in the dark, and cheated the widow and the orphan for love of the dollar, to understand that there were in the world, breathing the same air as they, men who put honor, truth and justice above mere money getting. With a slight tinge of sarcasm he asked:

"Is there any man in our public life who is unapproachable from some direction or other?"

"Yes, Judge Rossmore is such a man. He is one of the few men in American public life who takes his duties seriously. In the strictest sense of the term, he serves his country instead of serving himself. I am no friend of his, but I must do him that justice."

He spoke sharply, in an irritated tone, as if resenting the insinuation of this vulgarian that every man in public life had his price. Roberts knew that the charge was true as far as he and the men he consorted with were concerned, but sometimes the truth hurts. That was why he had for a moment seemed to champion Judge Rossmore which, seeing that the judge himself was at that very moment under a cloud, was an absurd thing for him to do.

He had known Rossmore years before, when the latter was a city magistrate in New York. That was before he, Roberts, had become a political grafter and when the decent things in life still appealed to him. The two men, although having few interests in common, had seen a good deal of one another until Roberts went to Washington when their relations were completely severed. But he had always watched Rossmore's career, and when he was made a judge of the supreme court at a comparatively early age he was sincerely glad. If anything could have convinced Roberts that success can come in public life to a man who pursues it by honest methods it was the sucess of James Rossmore. He could never help feeling that Rossmore had been endowed by nature with certain qualities which had been denied to him, above all that ability to walk straight through life with skirts clean, which he had found impossible himself. Today Judge Rossmore was one of the most celebrated judges in the country. He was a brilliant jurist and a splendid after-dinner speaker. He was considered the most learned and able of all the members of the judiciary, and his decisions were noted as much for their fearlessness as for their wisdom. But what was far more, he enjoyed a reputation for absolute integrity. Until now no breath of slander, no suspicion of corruption, had ever touched him. Even his enemies acknowledge that. And that is why there was a panic today among the directors of the Southern and Transcontinental railroad. This honest, upright man had been called upon in the course of his duty to decide matters of vital importance to the road, and the directors were ready to stampede because, in their hearts, they knew the weakness of their case and the strength of the judge.

Grimsby, unconvinced, returned to the charge.

"What about these newspaper charges? Did Judge Rossmore take a bribe from the Great Northwestern or didn't he? You ought to know."

"I do not know," answered the Senator cautiously and somewhat curtly, "but until Mr. Ryder arrives I can say nothing. I believe he has been inquiring into the matter. He will tell us when he comes."

The hands of the large clock in the outer room pointed to three. An active, dapper little man with glasses and with books under his arm passed hurriedly from another office into the directors' room.

"There goes Mr. Lane with the minutes. The meeting is called. Where's Mr. Ryder?"

There was a general move of the scattered groups of directors toward the committee room. The clock overhead began to strike. The last stroke had not quite died away when the big swinging doors from the street were thrown open and there entered a tall, thin man, gray-headed, and with a slight stoop, but keen eyed and alert. He was carefully dressed in a well-fitting frock coat, white waistcoat, black tie and silk hat.

It was John Burkett Ryder, the Colossus.

(To Be Continued Next Sunday.)

The Resurrection of Mr. Wiggett

By W. W. JACOBS

(Continued from Eighth Page)

brought the conversation from pig-killing to nieces, Mr. Wiggett deftly transferred it to uncles and discoursed on pawn-broking.

The helpless Mr. Ketchmaid suffered in silence, with his eye on the clock, and almost danced with impatience at the tardiness of his departing guests. He accompanied the last man to the door, and then, crimson with rage, returned to the bar to talk to Mr. Wiggett.

"Wot d'y'r mean by it?" he thundered.

"Mean by what, Sol?" inquired Mr. Wiggett, looking up in surprise.

"Don't you call me Sol, 'cos I won't have it," vociferated the landlord, standing over him with his fist clenched. "First thing tomorrow morning off you go."

"Off?" repeated the other in amazement. "Off? Where to?"

"Anywhere," said the overwrought landlord; "so long as you get out of here, I don't care where you go."

Mr. Wiggett, who was smoking a cigar, the third that evening, laid it carefully on the table by his side, and regarded him with tender reproach.

"You ain't yourself, Sol," he said, with conviction; "don't say another word else you might say things you'll be sorry for."

His forebodings were more than justified, Mr. Ketchmaid indulging in a few remarks about his birth, parentage and character which would have shocked an east-end policeman.

"First thing tomorrow morning you go," he concluded, fiercely. "I've a good mind to turn you out now. You know the arrangement I made with you."

"Arrangement!" said the mystified Mr. Wiggett; "what arrangements? Why, I ain't seen you for ten years and more. If it 'adn't been for meeting Cap'n Peters——"

He was interrupted by frenzied and incoherant exclamations from Mr. Ketchmaid.

"Sol Ketchmaid," he said, with dignity, "I 'ope you're drunk. I 'ope it's the drink and not Sol Ketchmaid, wot I saved from the shark by 'aving my leg bit off, talking. I saved your life, Sol, an' I 'ave come into your little harbor and let go my little anchor to stay there till I go aloft to join poor Sam Jones wot died with your name on 'is lips."

He sprang suddenly erect as Mr. Ketchmaid, with a loud cry, snatched up a bottle and made as though to brain him with it.

"You rascal," said the landlord, in a stifled voice. "You infernal rascal. I never set eyes on you till I saw you the other day on the quay at Burasea, and, just for an innocent little joke like with Ned Clark, asked you to come in and pretend."

"Pretend!" repeated Mr. Wiggett, in a horror-stricken voice. "Pretend! Have you forgotten me pushing you out of the way and saying: 'Save yourself, Sol,' as the shark's jaw clashed together over my leg? Have you forgotten 'ow——?"

"Look 'ere," said Mr. Ketchmaid, thrusting an infuriated face close to his, "there never was a Henery Wiggett; there never was a shark; there never was a Sam Jones!"

"Never—was—a—Sam Jones!" said the dazed Mr. Wiggett, sinking into his chair. "Ain't you a got a spark o' proper feeling left, Sol?"

He fumbled in his pocket, and producing the remains of a dirty handkerchief, wiped his eyes to the memory of the faithful black.

"Look here," said Mr. Ketchmaid, putting down the bottle and regarding him intently, "you've got me fair. Now, will you go for a pound?"

"Got you?" said Mr. Wiggett, severely; "I'm ashamed of you, Sol. Go to bed and sleep off the drink, and in the morning you can take Henry Wiggett's 'and, but not before."

He took a box of matches from the bar and, relighting the stump of his cigar, contemplated Mr. Ketchmaid for some time in silence, and then, with a serious shake of his head, stumped off to bed. Mr. Ketchmaid remained below, and for at least an hour sat thinking of ways and means out of the dilemma into which his ingenuity has led him.

He went to bed with the puzzle still unsolved, and the morning yielded no solution. Mr. Wiggett appeared to have forgotten the previous night's proceedings altogether, and steadfastly declined to take umbrage at a manner which would have chilled a rhinoceros. He told several fresh anecdotes of himself and Sam Jones that evening, anecdotes which, at the immediate risk of choking, Mr. Ketchmaid was obliged to indorse.

A week passed, and Mr. Wiggett still graced with his presence the bar of the Ship. The landlord lost flesh, and began seriously to consider the advisability of making a clean breast of the whole affair. Mr. Wiggett watched him anxiously, and with a skill born of a life-long study of humanity, realized that his visit was drawing to an end. At last one day Mr. Ketchmaid put the matter bluntly.

"I shall tell the chaps tonight that it was a joke on my part," he announced with grim decision; "then I shall take you by the collar and kick you into the road."

Mr. Wiggett sighed and snook his head.

"It'll be a terrible show-up for you," he said, softly. "You'd better make it worth my while, and I'll tell 'em this evening that I'm going to New Zealand to live with a niece of mine there, and that you've paid my passage for me. I don't like telling any more lies, but, seeing it's for you, I'll do it for a couple of pounds."

"Five shillings," snarled Mr. Ketchmaid.

Mr. Wiggett smiled comfortably and shook his head. Mr. Ketchmaid raised his offer to ten shillings, to a pound, and finally, after a few remarks which prompted Mr. Wiggett to state that hard words broke no bones, flung into the bar and fetched the money.

The news of Mr. Wiggett's departure went round the village at once, the landlord himself breaking the news to the next customer, and an overflow meeting assembled that evening to bid the emigrant farewell.

The landlord noted with pleasure that business was brisk. Several gentlemen stood drink to Mr. Wiggett, and in return he put his hand in his own pocket and ordered glasses round. Mr. Ketchmaid, in a state of some uneasiness, took the order, and then Mr. Wiggett, with the air of one conferring inestimable benefits, produced a lucky halfpenny, which had once belonged to Sam Jones, and insisted upon his keeping it.

"This is my last night, mates," he said, mournfully, as he acknowledged the drinking of his health. "In many ports I've been, and many snug pubs I 'ave visited, but I never in all my days come across a nicer, kinder-'earted lot o' men than wot you are."

"Hear, hear," said Mr. Clark.

Mr. Wiggett paused, and, taking a sip from his glass to hide his emotion, resumed.

"In my lonely pilgrimage through life, crippled and 'aving to beg my bread," he said, tearfully, "I shall think o' this 'appy bar and these friendly faces. When I am wrestlin' with the pangs of 'unger and being moved on by the 'eartless police, I shall think of you as I last saw you."

"But," said Mr. Smith, voicing the general consternation, "you're going to your niece in New Zealand?"

Mr. Wiggett shook his head and smiled a sad, sweet smile.

"I 'ave no niece," he said, simply; "I'm alone in the world."

At these touching words his audience put their glasses down and stared in amaze at Mr. Ketchmaid, while that gentleman in his turn gazed at Mr. Wiggett as though he had suddenly developed horns and a tail.

"Ketchmaid told me hisself as he'd paid your passage to New Zealand," said the shoemaker; "he said as 'e'd pressed you to stay, but that you said as blood was thicker even than friendship."

"All iles," said Mr. Wiggett, sadly. "I'll stay with pleasure if he'll give the word. I'll stay even now if 'e wishes it."

He paused a moment as though to give his bewildered victim time to accept this offer, and then addressed the scandalized Mr. Clark again.

"He don't like my being 'ere," he said, in a low voice. "He grudges the little bit I eat, I s'pose. He told me I'd got to go, and that for the look o' things 'e was going to pretend I was going to New Zealand. I was too broke-'earted at the time to care wot he said—I 'ave no wish to sponge on no man—but, seeing your 'onest faces round me, I couldn't go with a lie on my lips—Sol Ketchmaid, old shipmate—goodu-by."

He turned to the speechless landlord, made as though to shake hands with him, thought better of it, and then, with a wave of his hand full of chasened dignity, withdrew. His stump rang with pathetic insistence upon the brick-paved passage, paused at the door, and then, tapping on the hard road, died slowly away in the distance. Inside the Ship the shoemaker gave an ominous order for lemonade.