old Mr. Chance went right off and left you, that's what. I tell you, what some folks need is a breed of chances that'll stand without hitchin'."

Percival braced himself and began on his soup.

"Never you mind, Uncle Peter. You remember what I told you."

"That takes a different man from what you are. If your pa was alive now—"

"But what are we going to do?" cried Psyche.

"First thing you'll do," said Uncle Peter, promptly, "you go write a letter to that beau of your'n, tellin' him it's all off. You don't want to let him be the one to break it because you lost your money, do you? You sign his release right this minute."

"Yes—you're right, Uncle Peter—I suppose it must be done—but the poor fellow really cares for me."

"Oh, of course," answered the old man. "It'll fairly break his heart. You do it just the same!"

She withdrew, and presently came back with a note which she despatched to Mauburn.

Percival and his mother had continued their dinner, the former shaking his head between the intervals of the old man's lashings, and appearing to hold silent converse with himself.

This was an encouraging sign. It is a curious fact that people never talk to themselves except triumphantly. In moments of real despair we are inwardly dumb. But observe the holders of imaginary conversations. They are conquerors to the last one. They administer stinging rebukes that leave the adversary writhing. They rise to Alpine heights of pure wisdom and power, leaving him to flounder ignobly in the mire of his own fatuity. They achieve repartee the brilliance of which dazzles him to contemptible silence. If statistics were at hand we should doubtless learn that no man has ever talked to himself save by way of demonstrating his own godlike superiority, and the tawdry impotence of all obstacles and opponents. Percival talked to himself and mentally lived the next five years in a style that reduced Uncle Peter to grudging but imperative awe for his superb gifts of administration. He bathed in this imaginary future as in the waters of omnipotence. As time went on he foresaw the shafts of Uncle Peter being turned back upon him with such deadliness that, by the time the roast came, his breast was swelling with pity for that senile scoffer.

Uncle Peter had first declared that the thought of food sickened him. Prevailed upon at last by Mrs. Bines to taste the soup, he was soon eating as those present had of late rarely seen him eat.

"'Tain't a natural appetite, though," he warned them. "It's a kind of a mania before I go all to pieces, I s'pose."

"Nonsense! We'll have you all right in a week," said Percival. "Just remember that I'm going to take care of you."

"My son can do anything he makes up his mind to," declared Mrs. Bines—"just anything he lays out to do."

They talked until late into the night of what he should "lay out" to do.

Meantime the stronghold of Mauburn's optimism was being desperately stormed.

In an evening paper he had read of Percival's losses. The afternoon press of New York is not apt to understate the facts of a given case. The account Mauburn read stated that the young Western millionaire had beggared his family.

Mauburn had gone to his room to be alone with this bitter news. He had begun to face it when Psyche's note of release came. While he was adjusting this development another knock came on his door. It was the same maid who had brought Psyche's note. This time she brought what he saw to be a cablegram.

"Excuse me, Mr. Mauburn,—now this came early to-day and you wasn't in your room, and when you came in Mrs. Ferguson forgot it till just now."

He tore open the envelope and read:

"Male twins born to Lady Casselthorpe. Mother and sons doing finely.

"HINKIE."

Mauburn felt the rock foundations of Manhattan Island to be crumbling to dust. For an hour he sat staring at the message. He did not talk to himself once.

Then he hurriedly dressed, took the note and the cablegram, and sought Mrs. Drelmer.

He found that capable lady gowned for the opera. She received his bit of news with the aplomb of a resourceful commander.

"Now, don't go seedy all at once—you've a chance."

"Hang it all, Mrs. Drelmer, I've not. Life isn't worth living—"

"Tut, tut! Death isn't, either!"

"But we'd have been so nicely set up, even without the title, and now Bines, the clumsy ass, has come this infernal cropper and knocked everything on the head. I say, you know it's beastly!"

"Hush, and let me think!"

He paced the floor while his matrimonial adviser tapped a white kidded foot on the floor and appeared to read plans of a new battle in a mother-of-pearl paper-knife which she held between the tips of her fingers.

"I have it—and we'll do it quickly!—Mrs. Wybert!"

Mauburn's eyes opened widely.

"That absurd old Peter Bines has spoken to me of her three times lately. She's made a lot more money than she had in this same copper deal, and she'd a lot to begin with. I wondered why he spoke so enthusiastically of her, and I don't see now, but—"

"Well?"

"She'll take you, and you'll be as well set up as you were before. Listen. I met her last week at the Critchleys. She spoke of having seen you. I could see she was dead set to make a good marriage. You know she wanted to marry Fred Milbrey, but Horace and his mother wouldn't hear of it after Avice became engaged to Rulon Shepler. I'm in the Critchleys' box to-night, and I understand she's to be there. Leave it to me. Now it's after nine, so run along."

"But, Mrs. Drelmer, there's that poor girl; she cares for me, and I like her immensely, you know—truly I do—and she's a trump—see where she says here she couldn't possibly leave her people now they've come down—even if matters were not otherwise impossible."

"Well, you see they're not only otherwise impossible, but very wise impossible. What could you do? Go to Montana with them and learn to be an Indian? Don't, for heaven's sake, sentimentalize! Go home and sleep like a rational creature. Come in by eleven to-morrow. Even without the title you'll be a splendid match for Mrs. Wybert, and she must have a tidy lot of millions after this deal."

Sorely distressed, he walked back to his lodgings on Thirty-second street. Wild, Quixotic notions of sacrifice flooded his mood of dejection. If the worst came he could go West with the family and learn how to do something. And yet—Mrs. Wybert. Of course it must be that. The other idea was absurd—too wild for serious consideration. He was thirty years old, and there was only one way for an English gentleman to live—even if it must break the heart of a poor girl who had loved him devotedly and for whom he had felt a steady and genuine affection. He passed a troubled night.

Down at the hotel of Peter Bines was an intimation from Mrs. Wybert herself, bearing upon this same fortuity. When Uncle Peter reached there at 2 a. m. he found in his box a small scented envelope which he opened with wonder.

Two inclosures fell out. One was a clipping from an evening paper announcing the birth of twin sons to Lord Casselthorpe. The other was the card he had left with Mrs. Wybert on the day of his call; his name on one side, announcing him; on the other the words he had written:

"Sell Consolidated Copper all you can until it goes down to 65. Do this up to the limit of your capital and I will make good anything you lose.

"PETER BINES."

He read the note:

"Arlington Hotel—7:30.

"Mr. Peter Bines:

"Dear Sir—You funny old man, you. I don't pretend to understand your game, but you may rely on my secrecy. I am more grateful to you than words can utter—and I will always be glad to do anything for you. Yours very truly,

"BLANCHE CATHERTON WYBERT.

"P. S.—About that other matter—him you know—you will see from this notice I cut from the paper that the party won't get any title at all now, so a dead swell New York man is in every way more eligible. In fact, the other party is not to be thought of for one moment, as I am positive you would agree with me."

He tore the note and the card to fine bits.

"It does beat all," he complained later to Billy Brue. "Put a beggar on horseback and they begin right away to fuss around because the bridle ain't set with diamonds—give 'em a little and they want the whole ball of wax!"

"That's right," said Billy Brue, with the quick sympathy of the experienced. "That guy that doped me, he wa'n't satisfied with my good thirty-dollar wad. Not by no means! He had to go take my breastpin nugget from the Early Bird."

At 11 o'clock the next morning Mauburn waited in Mrs. Drelmer's drawing-room for the news she might have.

When that competent person sailed in, he saw temporary defeat written on her brow. His heart sank to its low level of the night before.

"Well, I saw the creature," she began, "and it required no time at all to reach a very definite understanding with her. I had feared it might be rather a delicate matter, talking to her at once, you know—and we needed to hurry—but she's a woman one can talk to. She's made heaps of money, and the poor thing is society-mad—so afraid the modish world won't take her at her true value—but she talked very frankly about marriage—really she's cool-headed for all the fire she seems to have—and the short of it is that she's determined to marry some one of the smart men here in New York. The creature's fascinated by the very idea."

"Did you mention me?"

"You may be sure I did, but she'd read the papers, and, like so many of these people, she has no use at all for an Englishman without a title. Of course I couldn't be too definite with her, but she understood perfectly, and she let me see she wouldn't hear of it at all. So she's off the list. But don't give up. Now, there's—"

But Mauburn was determinedly downcast.

"It's uncommon handsome of you, Mrs Drelmer, really, but we'll have to leave off that, you know. If a chap isn't heir to a peerage or a city fortune there's no getting on that way."

"Why, the man is actually discouraged. Now you need some American pluck, old chap. An American of your age wouldn't give up."

"But, hang it all! an American knows how to do things, you know, and like as not he'd nothing to begin with, by Jove! Now I'd a lot to begin with, and here it's all taken away."

"Look at young Bines. He's had a lot taken away, but I'll wager he makes it all back again and more too before he's 40."

"He might in this country; he'd never do it at home, you know."

"This country is for you as much as for him. Now, there's Augusta Hartong—those mixed-pickle millionaires, you know. I was chatting with Augusta's mother only the other day, and if I'd only suspected this—"

"Awfully kind of you, Mrs. Drelmer, but it's no use. I'm fairly played out I shall go to see Miss Bines and have a chat with her people, you know."

"Now, for heaven's sake, don't make a silly of yourself, whatever you do! Mind, the girl released you of her own accord!"

"Awfully obliged. I'll think about it jolly well, first. See you soon. Good-by!" And Mauburn was off.

He was reproaching himself. "That poor girl has been eating her heart out for a word from me. I'm a brute!"

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE GOD IN THE MACHINE.

Uncle Peter next morning was up to a late breakfast with the stricken family. Percival found him a trifle less bitter, but not less convinced in his despair. The young man himself had recovered his spirits wonderfully. The utter collapse of the old man, always so reliant before, had served to fire all his latent energy. He was now voluble with plans for the future; not only determined to reassure Uncle Peter that the family would be provided for, but not a little anxious to justify the old man's earlier praise and refute his calumnies of the night before.

"You're right, Uncle Peter. It certainly wasn't my game. Will you come down with me?"

"Me? Shucks, no! I'm jest a poor, broken old man, now. I'm goin' down to the square if I can walk that fur, and set on a bench in the sun."

Uncle Peter did succeed in walking as far as Madison Square. He walked, indeed, with a step of amazing springiness for a man of his years. But there, instead of reposing in the sun, he entered a cab and was driven to the Vandevere building, where he sent in his name to Rulon Shepler.

He was ushered into Shepler's office after a little delay. The two men shook hands warmly. Uncle Peter was grinning now with rare enjoyment—he who had in the presence of the family shown naught but broken age and utter despondency.

"You rough-housed the boy considerable yesterday."

"I never believed the fellow would hold on," said Shepler. "I'm sure you're right in a way about the West. There isn't another man in this section who'd have plunged as he did. Really, Mr. Bines, the Street's never known anything like it. Here are those matters."

He handed the old man a dozen or so certified checks on as many different banks. Each check had many figures on it. Uncle Peter placed them in his old leather wallet.

"I knew he'd plunge," he said, taking the chair proffered him, near Shepler's desk. "I knew he was a natural born plunger, and I knew that once he gets an idea in his head you can't blast it out; makes no difference what he starts on he'll play the string out. His pa was jest that way. Then, of course, he wasn't used to money and he was ignorant of this game, and he didn't realize what he was doing. He sort of distrusted himself along toward the last—but I kept him swelled up good and plenty."

"Well, I'm glad it's over, Mr. Bines. Of course, I concede the relative significance of money to a young man of his qualities—"

"Not its relative significance, Mr. Shepler—it's plain damned insignificance, if you'll excuse the word. If that boy'd gone on he'd 'a' been one of what Billy Brue calls them high-collared Clarences—no good fur anything but to spend money and get apoplexy or worse by 40. As it is now, he'll be a man. He's got his health turned on like a steam radiator, he's full of responsibility and he's really long-headed."

"How did he take the loss?"

"He acted jest like a healthy baby does when you take one toy away from him. He cries a minute, then forgets all about it and grabs up something else to play with. His other toy was bad. What he's playin' with now will do him a lot of good."

"He's not discouraged then—he's really hopeful?"

"That ain't any name fur it. Why, he's actin' this mornin' jest like the world's his oyster—and every month had an 'r' in it at that."

"I'm delighted to hear it. I've always been taken with the chap; and I'm really glad you read him correctly. It seemed to me you were taking a risk. It would have broken the spirit of most men."

"Well, you see, I knew the stock. It's pushin', fightin' stock. My grandfather fought his way west to Pennsylvania when that country was wilder'n Africa, and my father fought his way to Ohio when that was the frontier. I seen some hard times myself, and this boy's father was a fighter, too. So I knew the boy had it in him, all right. He's got his faults, but they don't hurt him none."

"Will he return West?"

"He will that—and the West is the only place fur him. He was gettin' bad notions about his own country here from them folks that's always crackin' up the 'other side' 'sif there wa'n't any 'this side' worth speakin' of in company. This was no place fur him. Mr. Shepler, this whole country is God's country. I don't talk much about them things, but I believe in God—a man has to if he lives so much alone in them wild places as I have—and I believe this country is his favorite. I believe he set it apart fur great works. The history of the United States bears me out so fur. And I didn't want any of my stock growin' up without feelin' that he had the best native land on earth, and without bein' ready to fight fur it at the drop of the hat. And jest between you and me, I believe we can raise that kind in the West better'n you can here in New York. You got a fine, handsome town here; it's a corkin' good place to see—and get out of—but it ain't any breedin' place—there ain't the room to grow. Now we produce everything in the West, includin' men. Here you don't do anything but consume, includin' men. If the West stopped producin' men fur you you'd be as bad off as if it stopped producin' food. You can't grow a big man on this island any more than you can grow wheat out there on Broadway. You're all right. You folks have your uses. I ain't like one of these crazy Populists that thinks you're rascals and all like that; but my point is that you don't get the fun out of life. You don't get the big feelin's. Out in the West they're the flesh and blood and bone; and you people here, meanin' no disrespect—you're the dimples and wrinkles and—the warts. You spend and gamble back and forth with that money we raise and dig out of the ground, and you think you're gettin' the best end of it, but you ain't. I found that out thirty-two years ago this spring. I had a crazy fool notion then to go back there even when I hadn't gone broke—and I done well to go. And that's why I wanted that boy back there. And that's why I'm mighty proud of him, to see he's so hot to go and take hold, like I knew he would be."

"That's excellent. Now, Mr. Bines, I like him and I dare say you've done the best thing for him, unusual as it was. But don't grind him. Might it not be well to ease up a little after he's out there? You might let it be understood that I am willing to finance any of those propositions there liberally—"

"No, no—that ain't the way to handle him. Say, I don't expect to quit cussin' him fur another thirty days yet. I want him to think he ain't got a friend on earth but himself. Why, I'd have made this play just as I have done, Mr. Shepler, if there hadn't been a chance to get back a cent of it—if we'd had to go plumb broke—back to the West in an emigrant car, with bologna and crackers to eat, that's what I'd have done. No, sir; no help fur him!"

"Aren't you a little hard on him?"

"Not a bit; don't I know the stock, and know just what he needs? Most men you couldn't treat as I'm treating him; but with him, the harder you bear down on him the more you'll get out of him. That was the way with his pa—he was a different man after things got to comin' too easy fur him. This fellow, the way I'm treatin' him, will keep his head even after he gets things comin' easy again, or I miss my guess. He thinks I despise him now. If you told him I was proud of him I almost believe you could get a bet out of him, sick as he is of gamblin'."

"Has he suspected anything?"

"Sure not! Why, he just thanked me about an hour ago fur savin' him—made me shake hands with him—and I could see the tears back in his eyes."

The old man chuckled.

"It was like Len Carey's Nigger Jim. Len had Jim set apart on the plantation fur his own nigger. They fished and went huntin' and swimmin' together. One day they'd been swimmin' and was lyin' up on the bank. Len got thinkin' he'd never seen any one drown. He knew Jim couldn't swim a lick, so he thought he'd have Jim go drown. He says to him, 'Jim, go jump off that rock there.' That was where the deep hole was. Jim was scar't, but he had to go. After he'd gone down once Len says to him, 'Drown now, you damn nigger!' and Jim come up and went down twice more. Then Len begun to think Jim was worth a good bit of money, and mebbe he'd be almighty waloped if the truth come out, so he dives in after Jim and gets him to shore, and after while he brought him to. Anyway, he said Jim had already sure-enough drowned as fur as there was any fun in it. Well, Len Carey is an old man now, and Jim is an old white-headed nigger still hangin' around the old place, and when Len goes back there to visit his relatives old Nigger Jim hunts him up with tears in his eyes and thanks Mister Leonard fur savin' his life that time. Say, I felt this mornin' like Len Carey must feel them times when Jim's thankih' him."

Shepler laughed.

"You're a rare man, Mr. Bines. I'll hope to have your cheerful, easy views of life if I ever lose my hold here in the Street. I hope I'll have the old Bines philosophy and the young Bines spirit. That reminds me," he continued as Uncle Peter rose to go, "we've been pretty confidential, Mr. Bines, and I don't mind telling you I was a bit afraid of that young man until yesterday. Oh, not on the stock proposition. On another matter. You may have noticed that night at the Oldakers'—well, women, Mr. Bines, are uncertain. I know something about markets and the ways of a dollar, but all I know about women is that they're good to have. You can't know any more about them, because they don't know any more themselves. Just between us, now, I never felt any too sure of a certain young woman's state of mind until copper reached 51 and Union Cordage had been blown up from inside."

They parted with warm expressions of good will, and Uncle Peter, in high spirits at the success of his machinations, had himself driven up town.

The only point where his plans had failed was in Mrs. Wybert's refusal to consider Mauburn after the birth of the Casselthorpe twins. Yet he felt that matters, in spite of this happening, must go as he wished them to. The Englishman—Uncle Peter cherished the strong anti-British sentiment peculiar to his generation—would surely never marry a girl who was all but penniless, and the consideration of an alliance with Mrs. Wybert, when the fortunte should be lost, had, after all, been an incident—a means of showing the girl, if she should prove to be too deeply infatuated with Mauburn for her own peace of mind—how unworthy and mercenary he was; for he had meant, in that event, to disillusion her by disclosing something of Mrs. Wybert's history—the woman Mauburn should prefer to her. He still counted confidently on the loss of the fortune sufficing to break the match.

When he reached the Hightower that night for dinner, he found Percival downstairs in great glee over what he conceived to be a funny situation.

"Don't ask me, Uncle Peter. I couldn't get it straight; but as near as I could make out, Mauburn came up here afraid the blow of losing him was going to kill sis with a broken heart, and sis was afraid the blow was going to kill Mauburn, because she wouldn't have married him anyway, rich or poor, after he'd lost the title. They found each other out some way and then Mauburn accused her of being heartless, of caring only for his title, and she accused him of caring only for her money, and he insisted she ought to marry him anyway, but she wouldn't have it because of the twins—"

Uncle Peter rubbed his big brown hands with the first signs of cheerfulness he had permitted Percival to detect in him.

"Good fur Pish—that's the way to take down them conceited Britishers—"

"But then they went at matters again from a new standpoint and the result is they've made it up."

"What? Has them precious twin Casselthorpes perished?"

"Not at all, both doing finely—haven't even had colic—growing fast—probably learned to say 'fancy, now,' by this time. But Mauburn's going West with us if we'll take him."

"Get out!"

"Fact! Say, it must have been an awful blow to him when he found sis wouldn't think of him at all without his title, even if she was broke. They had a stormy time of it from all I can hear. He said he was strong enough to work and all that, and since he'd cared for her and not for her money it was low down of her to throw him over; then she said she wouldn't leave her mother and us, now that we might need her, not for him or any other man—and he said that only made him love her all the more, and then he got chesty and said he was just as good as any American, even if he never would have a title; so pretty soon they got kind of interested in each other again and by the time I came home it was all over. They ratified the preliminary agreement for a merger."

"Well, I snum!"

"That's right, go ahead and snum. I'd snum myself if I knew how—it knocked me. Better come upstairs and congratulate the happy couple."

"Shoo, now! I certainly am mighty disappointed in that fellow. Still he is well spotted, and them freckles mean iron in the blood. Maybe we can develop him along with the other properties."

They found Psyche already radiant, though showing about her eyes traces of the storm's devastations. Mauburn was looking happy; also defiant and stubborn.

"Mr. Bines," he said to Uncle Peter, "I hope you'll side with me. I know something about horses, and I've nearly a thousand pounds that I'll be glad to put in with you out there if you can make a place for me."

The old man looked him over quizzically. Psyche put her arm through Mauburn's.

"I'd have to marry some one, you know, Uncle Peter!"

"Don't apologize. Pish. There's room for men that can work out there, Mr. Mauburn, but there ain't any vintages or trouserings to speak of, and the hours is long."

"Try me, Mr. Bines!"

"Well, come on! If you can't skin yourself you can hold a leg while somebody else skins. But you ain't met my expectations, I'll say that." And he shook hands cordially with the Englishman.

"I say, you know," said Mauburn later to Psyche, "why should I skin myself? Why should I be skinned at all, you know?"

"You shouldn't," she reassured him. "That's only Uncle Peter's way of saying you can help the others, even if you can't do much yourself at first. And won't Mrs. Drelmer be delighted to know it's all settled?"

"Well," said Uncle Peter to Percival later in the evening, "Pish has done better than you have here. It's a pity you didn't pick out some good sensible girl and marry her in the midst of your other doings."

"I couldn't find one that licked cats. I saw a lot that suited every other way, but I always said to myself, 'Remember Uncle Peter's warning!' so I'd go to an animal store and get a basket of kittens and take them around, and not one of the dozen stood your test. Of course, I'd never disregard your advice."

"Hum," remarked Uncle Peter, in a tone to be noticed for its extreme dryness. "Too bad, though—you certainly need a wife to take the conceit out of you."

"I lost in the Street, along with the rest."

"Well, son, I ain't no ways alarmed but what you'll soon be on your feet again in that respect—say by next Tuesday or Wednesday. I wish the money was comin' back as easy."

"Well, there are girls in Montana City."

"You could no worse. That reminds me—I happened to meet Shepler to-day and he got kind of confidential—talkin' over matters. He said he'd never really felt sure about the affections of a certain young woman, especially after that night at the Oldakers'—he'd never felt sure of her until you went broke. He said you never could know anything about a woman—not really."

"He knows something about that one, all right, if he knows she wouldn't have any use for me now. Shepler's coming on with the ladies. I feel quite hopeful about him."

CHAPTER XXXVII.

The Bineses, with the exception of Psyche, were at breakfast a week later. Miss Bines had been missing since the day that Mr. and Mrs. Cecil G. H. Mauburn had left for Montana City to put the Bines home in order.

Uncle Peter and Mrs. Bines had now determined to go, leaving Percival to follow when he had closed his business affairs.

"It's like starting West again to make our fortune," said Uncle Peter. He had suffered himself to regaain something of his old cheerfulness of manner.

"I wish you two would wait until they can get the car here, and go back with me," said Percival. "We can go back in style even if we didn't save much more than a getaway stake."

But his persuasions were unavailing.

"I can't stand it another day," said Mrs. Bines, "and those letters keep coming in from poor suffering people that haven't heard the news."

"I'm too restless to stay," declared Uncle Peter. "I declare, with spring all greenin' up this way I'd be found camp-in' up in Central Park some night and took off right to the calaboose. I just got to get out again where you can feel the wind blow and see a hundred miles and don't have to dodge horseless horse cars every minute. It's a wonder one of 'em ain't got me in this town. You come on in the car, and do the style fur the family. One of them common Pullmans is good enough fur Marthy and me. And besides, I got to get Billy Brue back. He's goin' plumb daft lookin' night and day fur that man that got his thirty dollars and his breastpin. He says there'll be an ambulance backed up at the spot where he meets him—makes no difference if it's right on Fifth avenue. Billy's kind of near-sighted at that, so I'm mortal afraid he'll make a mistake one of these nights and take some honest man's money and trinkets away from him."

Percival saw them to the train.

"Take care of yourself," said Uncle Peter at parting. "You know I ain't any good any more, and you got a whole family, includin' an Englishman, dependin' on you—we'll throw him on the town, though, if he don't take out his first papers the minute I get there."

His last shot from the rear platform was:

"Change your name back to 'Pete,' son, when you get west of Chicago. 'Taint anything fancy, but it's a crackin' good business name fur a hustler!"

"All right, Uncle Peter—and I hope I'll have a grandson that thinks as much of it as I do of yours."

When they had gone he went back to the work of final adjustment. He had the help of Coplin, whom they had sent for. With him he was busy for a week. By lucky sales of some of the securities that had been hypothecated they managed to save a little; but, on the whole, it was what Percival described it, "a lovely autopsy."

At last the vexatious work was finished, and he was free again. At the end of the final day's work he left the office of Fouts in Wall street and walked up Broadway. He went slowly, enjoying the freedom from care. It was the afternoon of a day when the first summer heat had been felt, and as he loitered before shop windows or walked slowly through that street where all move quickly and most very hurriedly, a welcome little breeze came up.

At Union Square, when he would have taken a car to go the remainder of the distance, he saw Shepler, accompanied by Mrs. Van Geist and Miss Milbrey, alight from a victoria and enter a jeweler's.

He would have passed on, but Miss Milbrey had seen him, and stood waiting in the doorway while Shepler and Mrs. Van Geist went on into the store.

"Mr. Bines—I'm so glad!"

She stood, flushed with pleasure, radiant in stuff of flimy pink, with little flecks at her throat and waist of the first tender green of new leaves. She was unaffectedly delighted to see him.

"You are Miss Spring?" he said when she had given him her hand, "and you've come into all your mother had that was worth inheriting, haven't you?"

"Mr. Bines, shall we not see you now? I wanted so much to talk with you when I heard everything. Would it be impertinent to say I sympathized with you?"

He looked over her shoulder, in where Shepler and Mrs. Van Geist were inspecting a tray of jewels.

"Of course not impertinent—very kind—only I'm really not in need of any sympathy at all. You won't understand it; but we don't care so much for money in the West—for the loss of it—not so much as you New Yorkers would. Besides we can always make a plenty more."

The situation was, emphatically, not as he had so often dreamed it when she should marvel, perhaps regretfully, over his superiority to her husband as a money-maker. His only relief was to belittle the importance of his loss.

"Of course we've lost everything, almost—but I've not been a bit downcast about it. There's more where it came from, and no end of fun going after it. I'm looking forward to the adventures, I can tell you. And every one will be glad to see me there; they won't think the less of me, I assure you, because I've made a fluke here!"

"Surely, Mr. Bines, no one here could think less of you. Indeed, I think more of you. I think it's fine and big to go back with such courage. Do you know, I wish I were a man—I'd show them!"

"Really, Miss Milbrey—"

He looked over her shoulder again and saw that Shepler was waiting for her.

"I think your friends are impatient."

"They can wait. Mr. Bines, I wonder if you have quite a correct idea of all New York people?"

"Probably not; I've met so few, you know."

"Well, of course—but of those you've met?"

"You can't know what my ideas are."

"I wish we might have talked more—I'm sure—when are you leaving?"

"I shall leave to-morrow."

"And we're leaving for the country ourselves. Papa and mamma go to-morrow—and, Mr. Bines, I should have liked another talk with you—I wish we were dining at the Oldakers' again."

He observed Shepler strolling toward them.

"I shall be staying with Aunt Cornelia a few days after to-morrow."

Shepler came up.

"And I shall be leaving to-morrow, Miss Milbrey."

"Ah, Bines, glad to see you!"

The accepted lover looked Miss Milbrey over with rather a complacent air—with the unruffled confidence of assured possession. Percival fancied there was a look almost of regret in the girl's eyes.

"I'm afraid," said Shepler, "your aunt doesn't want to be kept waiting. And she's already in a fever for fear you won't prefer the necklace she insists you ought to prefer."

"Tell Aunt Cornelia, please, that I shall be along in just a moment."

"She's quite impatient, you know," urged Shepler.

Percival extended his hand.

"Good-by, Miss Milbrey. Don't let me detain you. Sorry I shall not see you again."

She gave him her hand uncertainly, as if she had still something to say, but could find no words for it.

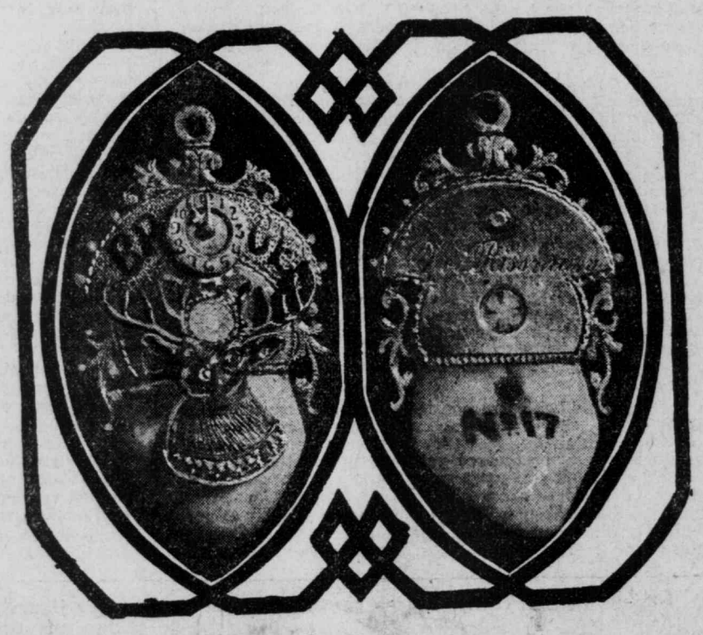
"Good-by, Mr. Bines."

"Good-by, young man," Shepler shook hands with him cordially, "and the best of luck to you out there. I shall hope to hear good reports from you. And mind, you're to look us up when you're in town again. We shall always be glad to see you. Good-by."

Percival smiled as he resumed his walk—smiled with all that bitter cynicism which only youth may feel to its full poignance. Yet, heartless as she was, he recalled that while she talked to him he had imprinted an imaginary kiss deliberately upon her full scarlet lips. And now, too, he was forced to confess that, in spite of his very uncertain knowledge about her, he would actually prefer to have communicated it through the recognized physical media. He laughed again, more cheerfully.

"The spring has got a strangle-hold on my judgment," he said to himself.

Concluded Next Week.



Lost Elk's Charm Is Strangely Recovered From Heathen's Grave

NEARLY two years ago E. G. Rissman of this city, familiarly known to his friends as "Doc," lost a valuable Elk charm in Portland, Or. It slipped off his watchchain one night when he was walking along the street. Vainly he searched for it and advertised, offering a large reward for its return. Then he looked upon it as gone for ever, and the loss of the beautiful emblem was almost forgotten until the other day, when he received it safe and sound from Wilson Benefiel, superintendent of the Lone Fir Cemetery in Portland. How the charm found its way back to its proper owner is one of those true tales that stagger credulity.

The charm was the gift of Lodge No. 17 of Elks, whose cool, green pastures are circumscribed by the boundaries of that region known as Denver, Colo. It is composed of an elk's tooth set in gold and a magnificent solitaire diamond blazed forth from the yellow metal, with smaller stones forming a crescent below. On the reverse side is Rissman's name with the number 17 stamped into the tooth.

Three months ago a Chinaman died in Portland and his remains were interred in Lone Fir Cemetery. As is the custom among Chinese the personal belongings of the dead man were spread upon the grave to be burned. An employe of the cemetery caught among the rubbish the glitter of a diamond and digging into the pile he brought forth a charm, an elk's tooth set with diamonds and the number 17 stamped into the tooth.

For eighteen months the dead heathen had kept the bauble he had found in the gutter. He knew nothing of its value, but perhaps he thought it was a talisman that might bring him good luck. It did eventually; he died.

The cemetery employe turned the charm over to Superintendent Benefiel, who began a systematic search for the owner. After ascertaining that Lodge No. 17 was located in Denver, he communicated with the officials there and ascertained the whereabouts of Rissman. After some correspondence and a complete identification of the charm it was sent by express to its owner, who was overjoyed to be in possession again of his valued testimonial from fellow lodge members. Now he has it anchored to his watchchain with an "Oregon boot." To the honest employe whose keen eye caught the glint of the bauble among the flames Rissman sent a generous remittance.