

The Wrecker

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by

Robert Louis Stevenson

and

Lloyd Osbourne

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PROLOGUE. IN THE MARQUESAS

IT was about three o'clock of a winter's afternoon in Tai-o-hae, the French capital and port of entry of the Marquesas Islands. The trades blew strong and squally; the surf roared loud on the shingle beach; and the fifty-ton schooner of war, that carries the flag and influence of France about the islands of the cannibal group, rolled at her moorings under Prison Hill. The clouds hung low and black on the surrounding amphitheatre of mountains; rain had fallen earlier in the day, real tropic rain, a waterspout for violence; and the green and gloomy brow of the mountain was still seamed with many silver threads of torrent.

In these hot and healthy islands winter is but a name. The rain had not refreshed, nor could the wind invigorate, the dwellers of Tai-o-hae: away at one end, indeed, the commandant was directing some changes in the residency garden beyond Prison Hill; and the gardeners, being all convicts, had no choice but to continue to obey. All other folks slumbered and took their rest: Vaekehu, the native queen, in her trim house under the rustling palms; the Tahitian commissary, in his beflagged official residence; the merchants, in their deserted stores; and even the club-servant in the club, his head fallen forward on the bottle-counter, under the map of the world and the cards of navy officers. In the whole length of the single shoreside street, with its scattered board houses looking to the sea, its grateful shade of palms and green jungle of puraos, no moving figure could be seen. Only, at the end of the rickety pier, that once (in the prosperous days of the American rebellion) was used to groan under the cotton of John Hart, there might have been spied upon a pile of lumber the famous tattooed white man, the living curiosity of Tai-o-hae.

His eyes were open, staring down the bay. He saw the mountains droop, as they approached the entrance, and break down in cliffs; the surf boil white round the two sentinel islets; and between, on the narrow bight of blue horizon, Ua-pu upraise the ghost of her pinnacled mountain tops. But his mind would take no account of these familiar features; as he dodged in and out along the frontier line of sleep and waking, memory would serve him with broken fragments of the past: brown faces and white, of skipper and shipmate, king and chief, would arise before his mind and vanish; he would recall old voyages, old landfalls in the hour of dawn; he would hear again the drums beat for a man-eating festival; perhaps he would summon up the form of that island princess for the love of whom he had submitted his body to the cruel hands of the tattooer, and now sat on the lumber, at the pier-end of Tai-o-hae, so strange a figure of a European. Or perhaps from yet further back, sounds and scents of England and his childhood might assail him: the

merry clamour of cathedral bells, the broom upon the foreland, the song of the river on the weir.

It is bold water at the mouth of the bay; you can steer a ship about either sentinel, close enough to toss a biscuit on the rocks. Thus it chanced that, as the tattooed man sat dozing and dreaming, he was startled into wakefulness and animation by the appearance of a flying jib beyond the western islet. Two more headsails followed; and before the tattooed man had scrambled to his feet, a topsail schooner, of some hundred tons, had luffed about the sentinel and was standing up the bay, close-hauled.

The sleeping city awakened by enchantment. Natives appeared upon all sides, hailing each other with the magic cry "Ehippy"—ship; the Queen stepped forth on her verandah, shading her eyes under a hand that was a miracle of the fine art of tattooing; the commandant broke from his domestic convicts and ran into the residency for his glass; the harbour master, who was also the gaoler, came speeding down the Prison Hill; the seventeen brown Kanakas and the French boatswain's mate, that make up the complement of the war-schooner, crowded on the forward deck; and the various English, Americans, Germans, Poles, Corsicans, and Scots—the merchants and the clerks of Tai-o-hae—deserted their places of business, and gathered, according to invariable custom, on the road before the club.

So quickly did these dozen whites collect, so short are the distances in Tai-o-hae, that they were already exchanging guesses as to the nationality and business of the strange vessel, before she had gone about upon her second board towards the anchorage. A moment after, English colours were broken out at the main truck.

"I told you she was a Johnny Bull—knew it by her headsails," said an evergreen old salt, still qualified (if he could anywhere have found an owner unacquainted with his story) to adorn another quarter-deck and lose another ship.

"She has American lines, anyway," said the astute Scots engineer of the gin-mill; "it's my belief she's a yacht."

"That's it," said the old salt, "a yacht! look at her davits, and the boat over the stern."

"A yacht in your eye!" said a Glasgow voice. "Look at her red ensign! A yacht! not much she isn't!"

"You can close the store, anyway, Tom," observed a gentlemanly German. "*Bon jour, mon Prince!*" he added, as a dark, intelligent native cantered by on a neat chestnut. "*Vous allez boire une verre de bière?*"

But Prince Stanilas Moanatini, the only reasonably busy human creature on the island, was riding hot-spur to view this morning's landslip on the mountain road: the sun already visibly declined; night was imminent; and if he would avoid the perils of darkness and precipice, and the fear of the dead, the haunters of the

jungle, he must for once decline a hospitable invitation. Even had he been minded to alight, it presently appeared there would be difficulty as to the refreshment offered.

"Beer!" cried the Glasgow voice. "No such a thing; I tell you there's only eight bottles in the club! Here's the first time I've seen British colours in this port! and the man that sails under them has got to drink that beer."

The proposal struck the public mind as fair, though far from cheering; for some time back, indeed, the very name of beer had been a sound of sorrow in the club, and the evenings had passed in dolorous computation.

"Here is Havens," said one as if welcoming a fresh topic. "What do you think of her, Havens?"

"I don't think," replied Havens, a tall, bland, cool-looking, leisurely Englishman, attired in spotless duck, and deliberately dealing with a cigarette. "I may say I know. She's consigned to me from Auckland by Donald and Edenborough. I am on my way aboard."

"What ship is she?" asked the ancient mariner.

"Haven't an idea," returned Havens. "Some tramp they have chartered."

With that, he placidly resumed his walk, and was soon seated in the stern-sheets of a whale-boat manned by uproarious Kanakas, himself daintily perched out of the way of the least maculation, giving his commands in an unobtrusive, dinner-table tone of voice, and sweeping neatly enough alongside the schooner.

A weather-beaten captain received him at the gangway.

"You are consigned to us, I think," said he. "I am Mr. Havens."

"That is right, sir," replied the captain, shaking hands. "You will find the owner, Mr. Dodd, below. Mind the fresh paint on the house."

Havens stepped along the alley-way, and descended the ladder into the main cabin.

"Mr. Dodd, I believe," said he, addressing a smallish, bearded gentleman, who sat writing at the table. "Why," he cried, "it isn't Loudon Dodd?"

"Myself, my dear fellow," replied Mr. Dodd, springing to his feet with companionable alacrity. "I had a half-hope it might be you, when I found your name on the papers. Well, there's no change in you; still the same placid, fresh-looking Britisher."

"I can't return the compliment; for you seem to have become a Britisher yourself," said Havens.

"I promise you, I am quite unchanged," returned Dodd. "The red tablecloth at the top of the stick is not my flag; it's my partner's. He is not dead, but sleepeth. There

he is," he added, pointing to a bust which formed one of the numerous unexpected ornaments of that unusual cabin.

Havens politely studied it. "A fine bust," said he; "and a very nice-looking fellow."

"Yes; he's a good fellow," said Dodd. "He runs me now. It's all his money."

"He doesn't seem to be particularly short of it," added the other, peering with growing wonder round the cabin.

"His money, my taste," said Dodd. "The black walnut bookshelves are Old English; the books all mine,—mostly Renaissance French. You should see how the beachcombers wilt away when they go round them looking for a change of Seaside Library novels. The mirrors are genuine Venice; that's a good piece in the corner. The daubs are mine—and his; the mudding mine."

"Mudding? What is that?" asked Havens.

"These bronzes," replied Dodd. "I began life as a sculptor."

"Yes; I remember something about that," said the other. "I think, too, you said you were interested in Californian real estate."

"Surely, I never went so far as that," said Dodd. "Interested? I guess not. Involved, perhaps. I was born an artist; I never took an interest in anything but art. If I were to pile up this old schooner to-morrow," he added, "I declare I believe I would try the thing again!"

"Insured?" inquired Havens.

"Yes," responded Dodd. "There's some fool in 'Frisco who insures us, and comes down like a wolf on the fold on the profits; but we'll get even with him some day."

"Well, I suppose it's all right about the cargo," said Havens.

"Oh, I suppose so!" replied Dodd. "Shall we go into the papers?"

"We'll have all to-morrow, you know," said Havens; "and they'll be rather expecting you at the club. *C'est l'heure de l'absinthe*. Of course, Loudon, you'll dine with me later on."

Mr. Dodd signified his acquiescence; drew on his white coat, not without a trifling difficulty, for he was a man of middle age, and well-to-do; arranged his beard and moustaches at one of the Venetian mirrors; and, taking a broad felt hat, led the way through the trade-room into the ship's waist.

The stern boat was waiting alongside,—a boat of an elegant model, with cushions and polished hard-wood fittings.

"You steer," observed Loudon. "You know the best place to land."

"I never like to steer another man's boat," replied Havens.

"Call it my partner's, and cry quits," returned Loudon, getting nonchalantly down the side.

Havens followed and took the yoke-lines without further protest. "I am sure I don't know how you make this pay," he said. "To begin with, she is too big for the trade, to my taste; and then you carry so much style."

"I don't know that she does pay," returned Loudon. "I never pretend to be a business man. My partner appears happy; and the money is all his, as I told you—I only bring the want of business habits."

"You rather like the berth, I suppose?" suggested Havens.

"Yes," said Loudon; "it seems odd, but I rather do."

While they were yet on board, the sun had dipped; the sunset gun (a rifle) cracked from the war-schooner, and the colours had been handed down. Dusk was deepening as they came ashore; and the *Cercle Internationale* (as the club is officially and significantly named) began to shine, from under its low verandahs, with the light of many lamps. The good hours of the twenty-four drew on; the hateful, poisonous day-fly of Nukahiva was beginning to desist from its activity; the land-breeze came in refreshing draughts; and the club men gathered together for the hour of absinthe. To the commandant himself, to the man whom he was then contending with at billiards—a trader from the next island, honorary member of the club, and once carpenter's mate on board a Yankee war-ship—to the doctor of the port, to the Brigadier of Gendarmerie, to the opium farmer, and to all the white men whom the tide of commerce, or the chances of shipwreck and desertion, had stranded on the beach of Tai-o-hae, Mr. Loudon Dodd was formally presented; by all (since he was a man of pleasing exterior, smooth ways, and an unexceptionable flow of talk, whether in French or English) he was excellently well received; and presently, with one of the last eight bottles of beer on a table at his elbow, found himself the rather silent centre-piece of a voluble group on the verandah.

Talk in the South Seas is all upon one pattern; it is a wide ocean, indeed, but a narrow world: you shall never talk long and not hear the name of Bully Hayes, a naval hero whose exploits and deserved extinction left Europe cold; commerce will be touched on, copra, shell, perhaps cotton or fungus; but in a far-away dilettante fashion, as by men not deeply interested; through all, the names of schooners and their captains will keep coming and going, thick as May-flies; and news of the last shipwreck will be placidly exchanged and debated. To a stranger, this conversation will at first seem scarcely brilliant; but he will soon catch the tone; and by the time he shall have moved a year or so in the island world, and come across a good number of the schooners, so that every captain's name calls up a figure in pyjamas or white duck, and becomes used to a certain laxity of moral tone which prevails (as in memory of Mr. Hayes) on smuggling, ship-scuttling, barratry, piracy, the

labour trade, and other kindred fields of human activity, he will find Polynesia no less amusing and no less instructive than Pall Mall or Paris.

Mr. Loudon Dodd, though he was new to the group of the Marquesas, was already an old, salted trader; he knew the ships and the captains; he had assisted, in other islands, at the first steps of some career of which he now heard the culmination, or (*vice versa*) he had brought with him from further south the end of some story which had begun in Tai-o-hae. Among other matter of interest, like other arrivals in the South Seas, he had a wreck to announce. The *John T. Richards*, it appeared, had met the fate of other island schooners.

"Dickinson piled her up on Palmerston Island," Dodd announced.

"Who were the owners?" inquired one of the club men.

"O, the usual parties!" returned Loudon,—"*Capsicum and Co.*"

A smile and a glance of intelligence went round the group; and perhaps Loudon gave voice to the general sentiment by remarking, "Talk of good business! I know nothing better than a schooner, a competent captain, and a sound, reliable reef."

"Good business! There's no such a thing!" said the Glasgow man. "Nobody makes anything but the missionaries—dash it!"

"I don't know," said another. "There's a good deal in opium."

"It's a good job to strike a tabooed pearl-island, say, about the fourth year," remarked a third; "skim the whole lagoon on the sly, and up stick and away before the French get wind of you."

"A pig nokket of cold is good," observed a German.

"There's something in wrecks, too," said Havens. "Look at that man in Honolulu, and the ship that went ashore on Waikiki Reef; it was blowing a kona, hard; and she began to break up as soon as she touched. Lloyd's agent had her sold inside an hour; and before dark, when she went to pieces in earnest, the man that bought her had feathered his nest. Three more hours of daylight, and he might have retired from business. As it was, he built a house on Beretania Street, and called it after the ship."

"Yes, there's something in wrecks sometimes," said the Glasgow voice; "but not often."

"As a general rule, there's deuced little in anything," said Havens.

"Well, I believe that's a Christian fact," cried the other. "What I want is a secret; get hold of a rich man by the right place, and make him squeal."

"I suppose you know it's not thought to be the ticket," returned Havens.

"I don't care for that; it's good enough for me," cried the man from Glasgow, stoutly. "The only devil of it is, a fellow can never find a secret in a place like the South Seas: only in London and Paris."

"McGibbon's been reading some dime-novel, I suppose," said one club man.

"He's been reading *Aurora Floyd*," remarked another.

"And what if I have?" cried McGibbon. "It's all true. Look at the newspapers! It's just your confounded ignorance that sets you snickering. I tell you, it's as much a trade as underwriting, and a dashed sight more honest."

The sudden acrimony of these remarks called Loudon (who was a man of peace) from his reserve. "It's rather singular," said he, "but I seem to have practised about all these means of livelihood."

"Tit you effer vind a nokket?" inquired the inarticulate German, eagerly.

"No. I have been most kinds of fool in my time," returned Loudon, "but not the gold-digging variety. Every man has a sane spot somewhere."

"Well, then," suggested some one, "did you ever smuggle opium?"

"Yes, I did," said Loudon.

"Was there money in that?"

"All the way," responded Loudon.

"And perhaps you bought a wreck?" asked another.

"Yes, sir," said Loudon.

"How did that pan out?" pursued the questioner.

"Well, mine was a peculiar kind of wreck," replied Loudon. "I don't know, on the whole, that I can recommend that branch of industry."

"Did she break up?" asked some one.

"I guess it was rather I that broke down," says Loudon. "Head not big enough."

"Ever try the blackmail?" inquired Havens.

"Simple as you see me sitting here!" responded Dodd.

"Good business?"

"Well, I'm not a lucky man, you see," returned the stranger. "It ought to have been good."

"You had a secret?" asked the Glasgow man. "As big as the State of Texas."

"And the other man was rich?"

"He wasn't exactly Jay Gould, but I guess he could buy these islands if he wanted."

"Why, what was wrong then? Couldn't you get hands on him?"

"It took time, but I had him cornered at last: and then—"

"What then?"

"The speculation turned bottom up. I became the man's bosom friend."

"The deuce you did!"

"He couldn't have been particular, you mean?" asked Dodd, pleasantly. "Well, no; he's a man of rather large sympathies."

"If you're done talking nonsense, Loudon," said Havens, "let's be getting to my place for dinner."

Outside, the night was full of the roaring of the surf. Scattered lights glowed in the green thicket. Native women came by twos and three out of the darkness, smiled and ogled the two whites, perhaps wooed them with a strain of laughter, and went by again, bequeathing to the air a heady perfume of palm-oil and frangipani blossom. From the club to Mr. Haven's residence was but a step or two, and to any dweller in Europe they must have seemed steps in fairyland. If such an one could but have followed our two friends into the wide-verandahed house, sat down with them in the cool trellised room, where the wine shone on the lamp-lighted tablecloth; tasted of their exotic food—the raw fish, the breadfruit, the cooked bananas, the roast pig served with the inimitable miti, and that king of delicacies, palm-tree salad; seen and heard by fits and starts, now peering round the corner of the door, now railing within against invisible assistants, a certain comely young native lady in a sacque, who seemed too modest to be a member of the family, and too imperious to be less; and then if such an one were whisked again through space to Upper Tooting, or wherever else he honoured the domestic gods, "I have had a dream," I think he would say, as he sat up, rubbing his eyes, in the familiar chimney-corner chair, "I have had a dream of a place, and I declare I believe it must be heaven." But to Dodd and his entertainer, all this amenity of the tropic night and all these dainties of the island table, were grown things of custom; and they fell to meat like men who were hungry, and drifted into idle talk like men who were a trifle bored.

The scene in the club was referred to.

"I never heard you talk so much nonsense, Loudon," said the host.

"Well, it seemed to me there was sulphur in the air, so I talked for talking," returned the other. "But it was none of it nonsense."

"Do you mean to say it was true?" cried Havens,—"that about the opium and the wreck, and the blackmailing, and the man who became your friend?"

"Every last word of it," said Loudon.

"You seem to have been seeing life," returned the other.

"Yes, it's a queer yarn," said his friend; "if you think you would like, I'll tell it you."

Here follows the yarn of Loudon Dodd, not as he told it to his friend, but as he subsequently wrote it.

THE YARN

CHAPTER I. A SOUND COMMERCIAL EDUCATION

THE beginning of this yarn is my poor father's character. There never was a better man, nor a handsomer, nor (in my view) a more unhappy—unhappy in his business, in his pleasures, in his place of residence, and (I am sorry to say it) in his son. He had begun life as a land-surveyor, soon became interested in real estate, branched off into many other speculations, and had the name of one of the smartest men in the State of Muskegon. "Dodd has a big head," people used to say; but I was never so sure of his capacity. His luck, at least, was beyond doubt for long; his assiduity, always. He fought in that daily battle of money-grubbing, with a kind of sad-eyed loyalty like a martyr's; rose early, ate fast, came home dispirited and overweary, even from success; grudged himself all pleasure, if his nature was capable of taking any, which I sometimes wondered; and laid out, upon some deal in wheat or corner in aluminium, the essence of which was little better than highway robbery, treasures of conscientiousness and self-denial.

Unluckily, I never cared a cent for anything but art, and never shall. My idea of man's chief end was to enrich the world with things of beauty and have a fairly good time myself while doing so. I do not think I mentioned that second part, which is the only one I have managed to carry out; but my father must have suspected the suppression, for he branded the whole affair as self-indulgence.

"Well," I remember crying once, "and what is your life? You are only trying to get money, and to get it from other people at that."

He sighed bitterly (which was very much his habit), and shook his poor head at me. "Ah, Loudon, Loudon!" said he, "you boys think yourselves very smart. But struggle as you please, a man has to work in this world. He must be an honest man or a thief, Loudon."

You can see for yourself how vain it was to argue with my father. The despair that seized upon me after such an interview was, besides, embittered by remorse; for I was at times petulant, but he invariably gentle; and I was fighting, after all, for my own liberty and pleasure, he singly for what he thought to be my good. And all the time he never despaired. "There is good stuff in you, Loudon," he would say; "there is the right stuff in you. Blood will tell, and you will come right in time. I am not afraid my boy will ever disgrace me; I am only vexed he should sometimes talk nonsense." And then he would pat my shoulder or my hand with a kind of motherly way he had, very affecting in a man so strong and beautiful.

As soon as I had graduated from the high school, he packed me off to the Muskegon Commercial Academy. You are a foreigner, and you will have a difficulty in accepting the reality of this seat of education. I assure you before I begin that I am wholly serious. The place really existed, possibly exists to-day: we were proud of it in the State, as something exceptionally nineteenth century and civilised; and my father, when he saw me to the cars, no doubt considered he was putting me in a straight line for the Presidency and the New Jerusalem.

"Loudon," said he, "I am now giving you a chance that Julius Cæsar could not have given to his son—a chance to see life as it is, before your own turn comes to start in earnest. Avoid rash speculation, try to behave like a gentleman; and if you will take my advice, confine yourself to a safe, conservative business in railroads. Bread-stuffs are tempting, but very dangerous; I would not try breadstuffs at your time of life; but you may feel your way a little in other commodities. Take a pride to keep your books posted, and never throw good money after bad. There, my dear boy, kiss me good-bye; and never forget that you are an only chick, and that your dad watches your career with fond suspense."

The commercial college was a fine, roomy establishment, pleasantly situated among woods. The air was healthy, the food excellent, the premium high. Electric wires connected it (to use the words of the prospectus) with "the various world centres." The reading-room was well supplied with "commercial organs." The talk was that of Wall Street; and the pupils (from fifty to a hundred lads) were principally engaged in rooking or trying to rook one another for nominal sums in what was called "college paper." We had class hours, indeed, in the morning, when we studied German, French, book-keeping, and the like goodly matters; but the bulk of our day and the gist of the education centred in the exchange, where we were taught to gamble in produce and securities. Since not one of the participants possessed a bushel of wheat or a dollar's worth of stock, legitimate business was of course impossible from the beginning. It was cold-drawn gambling, without colour or disguise. Just that which is the impediment and destruction of all genuine commercial enterprise, just that we were taught with every luxury of stage effect. Our simulacrum of a market was ruled by the real markets outside, so that we might experience the course and vicissitude of prices. We must keep books, and our ledgers were overhauled at the month's end by the principal or his assistants. To add a spice of verisimilitude, "college paper" (like poker chips) had an actual marketable value. It was bought for each pupil by anxious parents and guardians at the rate of one cent for the dollar. The same pupil, when his education was complete, resold, at the same figure, so much as was left him to the college; and even in the midst of his curriculum, a successful operator would sometimes realise a proportion of his holding, and stand a supper on the sly in the neighbouring hamlet. In short, if there was ever a worse education, it must have been in that academy where Oliver met Charlie Bates.

When I was first guided into the exchange to have my desk pointed out by one of the assistant teachers I was overwhelmed by the clamour and confusion. Certain blackboards at the other end of the building were covered with figures continually replaced. As each new set appeared, the pupils swayed to and fro, and roared out aloud with a formidable and to me quite meaningless vociferation; leaping at the same time upon the desks and benches, signalling with arms and heads, and scribbling briskly in note-books. I thought I had never beheld a scene more disagreeable; and when I considered that the whole traffic was illusory, and all the money then upon the market would scarce have sufficed to buy a pair of skates, I was at first astonished, although not for long. Indeed, I had no sooner called to mind how grown-up men and women of considerable estate will lose their temper about half-penny points, than (making an immediate allowance for my fellow-students) I transferred the whole of my astonishment to the assistant teacher, who—poor gentleman—had quite forgot to show me to my desk, and stood in the midst of this hurly-burly, absorbed and seemingly transported.

"Look, look," he shouted in my ear; "a falling market! The bears have had it all their own way since yesterday."

"It can't matter," I replied, making him hear with difficulty, for I was unused to speak in such a babel, "since it is all fun."

"True," said he; "and you must always bear in mind that the real profit is in the book-keeping. I trust, Dodd, to be able to congratulate you upon your books. You are to start in with ten thousand dollars of college paper, a very liberal figure, which should see you through the whole curriculum, if you keep to a safe, conservative business....Why, what's that?" he broke off, once more attracted by the changing figures on the board. "Seven, four, three! Dodd, you are in luck: this is the most spirited rally we have had this term. And to think that the same scene is now transpiring in New York, Chicago, St. Louis, and rival business centres! For two cents, I would try a flutter with the boys myself," he cried, rubbing his hands; "only it's against the regulations."

"What would you do, sir?" I asked.

"Do?" he cried, with glittering eyes. "Buy for all I was worth!"

"Would that be a safe, conservative business?" I inquired, as innocent as a lamb.

He looked daggers at me. "See that sandy-haired man in glasses?" he asked, as if to change the subject. "That's Billson, our most prominent undergraduate. We build confidently on Billson's future. You could not do better, Dodd, than follow Billson."

Presently after, in the midst of a still-growing tumult, the figures coming and going more busily than ever on the board, and the hall resounding like Pandemonium with the howls of operators, the assistant teacher left me to my own resources at my desk. The next boy was posting up his ledger, figuring his morning's loss, as I

discovered later on; and from this ungenial task he was readily diverted by the sight of a new face.

"Say, Freshman," he said, "what's your name? What? Son of Big Head Dodd? What's your figure? Ten thousand? O, you're away up! What a soft-headed clam you must be to touch your books!" I asked him what else I could do, since the books were to be examined once a month.

"Why, you galoot, you get a clerk!" cries he. "One of our dead beats—that's all they're here for. If you're a successful operator, you need never do a stroke of work in this old college."

The noise had now become deafening; and my new friend, telling me that some one had certainly "gone down," that he must know the news, and that he would bring me a clerk when he returned, buttoned his coat and plunged into the tossing throng. It proved that he was right: some one had gone down; a prince had fallen in Israel; the corner in lard had proved fatal to the mighty; and the clerk who was brought back to keep my books, spared me all work, and get all my share of the education, at a thousand dollars a month, college paper (ten dollars, United States currency), was no other than the prominent Billson whom I could do no better than follow. The poor lad was very unhappy. It's the only good thing I have to say for Muskegon Commercial College, that we were all, even the small fry, deeply mortified to be posted as defaulters; and the collapse of a merchant prince like Billson, who had ridden pretty high in his days of prosperity, was, of course, particularly hard to bear. But the spirit of make-believe conquered even the bitterness of recent shame; and my clerk took his orders, and fell to his new duties, with decorum and civility.

Such were my first impressions in this absurd place of education; and, to be frank, they were far from disagreeable. As long as I was rich, my evenings and afternoons would be my own; the clerk must keep my books, the clerk could do the jostling and bawling in the exchange; and I could turn my mind to landscape-painting and Balzac's novels, which were then my two preoccupations. To remain rich, then, became my problem; or, in other words, to do a safe, conservative line of business. I am looking for that line still; and I believe the nearest thing to it in this imperfect world is the sort of speculation sometimes insidiously proposed to childhood, in the formula, "Heads, I win; tails, you lose." Mindful of my father's parting words, I turned my attention timidly to railroads; and for a month or so maintained a position of inglorious security, dealing for small amounts in the most inert stocks, and bearing (as best I could) the scorn of my hired clerk. One day I had ventured a little further by way of experiment; and, in the sure expectation they would continue to go down, sold several thousand dollars of Pan-Handle Preference (I think it was). I had no sooner made this venture, than some fools in New York began to bull the market; Pan-Handles rose like a balloon; and in the inside of half an hour I saw my position compromised. Blood will tell, as my father said; and I stuck to it gallantly: all afternoon I continued selling that infernal stock, all

afternoon it continued skying. I suppose I had come (a frail cockleshell) athwart the hawse of Jay Gould; and, indeed, I think I remember that this vagary in the market proved subsequently to be the first move in a considerable deal. That evening, at least, the name of H. Loudon Dodd held the first rank in our collegiate gazette, and I and Billson (once more thrown upon the world) were competing for the same clerkship. The present object takes the present eye. My disaster, for the moment, was the more conspicuous; and it was I that got the situation. So you see, even in Muskegon Commercial College, there were lessons to be learned.

For my own part, I cared very little whether I lost or won at a game so random, so complex, and so dull; but it was sorry news to write to my poor father, and I employed all the resources of my eloquence. I told him (what was the truth) that the successful boys had none of the education; so that if he wished me to learn, he should rejoice at my misfortune. I went on (not very consistently) to beg him to set me up again, when I would solemnly promise to do a safe business in reliable railroads. Lastly (becoming somewhat carried away), I assured him I was totally unfit for business, and implored him to take me away from this abominable place, and let me go to Paris to study art. He answered briefly, gently, and sadly, telling me the vacation was near at hand, when we would talk things over.

When the time came, he met me at the depot, and I was shocked to see him looking older. He seemed to have no thought but to console me and restore (what he supposed I had lost) my courage. I must not be down-hearted; many of the best men had made a failure in the beginning. I told him I had no head for business, and his kind face darkened. "You must not say that, Loudon," he replied; "I will never believe my son to be a coward."

"But I don't like it," I pleaded. "It hasn't got any interest for me, and art has. I know I could do more in art," and I reminded him that a successful painter gains large sums; that a picture of Meissonier's would sell for many thousand dollars.

"And do you think, Loudon," he replied, "that a man who can paint a thousand dollar picture has not grit enough to keep his end up in the stock market? No, sir, this Mason (of whom you speak) or our own American Bierstadt—if you were to put them down in a wheat pit tomorrow, they would show their mettle. Come, Loudon, my dear; Heaven knows I have no thought but your own good, and I will offer you a bargain. I start you again next term with ten thousand dollars; show yourself a man, and double it, and then (if you still wish to go to Paris, which I know you won't) I'll let you go. But to let you run away as if you were whipped, is what I am too proud to do."

My heart leaped at this proposal, and then sank again. It seemed easier to paint a Meissonier on the spot than to win ten thousand dollars on that mimic stock exchange. Nor could I help reflecting on the singularity of such a test for a man's capacity to be a painter. I ventured even to comment on this.

He sighed deeply. "You forget, my dear," said he, "I am a judge of the one, and not of the other. You might have the genius of Bierstadt himself, and I would be none the wiser."

"And then," I continued, "it's scarcely fair. The other boys are helped by their people, who telegraph and give them pointers. There's Jim Costello, who never budges without a word from his father in New York. And then, don't you see, if anybody is to win, somebody must lose?"

"I'll keep you posted," cried my father, with unusual animation; "I did not know it was allowed. I'll wire you in the office cipher, and we'll make it a kind of partnership business, Loudon:—Dodd and Son, eh?" and he patted my shoulder and repeated, "Dodd and Son, Dodd and Son," with the kindest amusement.

If my father was to give me pointers, and the commercial college was to be a stepping-stone to Paris, I could look my future in the face. The old boy, too, was so pleased at the idea of our association in this foolery that he immediately plucked up spirit. Thus it befell that those who had met at the depot like a pair of mutes, sat down to table with holiday faces.

And now I have to introduce a new character that never said a word nor wagged a finger, and yet shaped my whole subsequent career. You have crossed the States, so that in all likelihood you have seen the head of it, parcel-gilt and curiously fluted, rising among trees from a wide plain; for this new character was no other than the State capitol of Muskegon, then first projected. My father had embraced the idea with a mixture of patriotism and commercial greed both perfectly genuine. He was of all the committees, he had subscribed a great deal of money, and he was making arrangements to have a finger in most of the contracts. Competitive plans had been sent in; at the time of my return from college my father was deep in their consideration; and as the idea entirely occupied his mind, the first evening did not pass away before he had called me into council. Here was a subject at last into which I could throw myself with pleasurable zeal. Architecture was new to me, indeed; but it was at least an art; and for all the arts I had a taste naturally classical and that capacity to take delighted pains which some famous idiot has supposed to be synonymous with genius. I threw myself headlong into my father's work, acquainted myself with all the plans, their merits and defects, read besides in special books, made myself a master of the theory of strains, studied the current prices of materials, and (in one word) "devilled" the whole business so thoroughly, that when the plans came up for consideration, Big Head Dodd was supposed to have earned fresh laurels. His arguments carried the day, his choice was approved by the committee, and I had the anonymous satisfaction to know that arguments and choice were wholly mine. In the recasting of the plan which followed, my part was even larger; for I designed and cast with my own hand a hot-air grating for the offices, which had the luck or merit to be accepted. The energy and aptitude which I displayed throughout delighted and surprised my father, and I believe, although I

say it whose tongue should be tied, that they alone prevented Muskegon capitol from being the eyesore of my native State.

Altogether, I was in a cheery frame of mind when I returned to the commercial college; and my earlier operations were crowned with a full measure of success. My father wrote and wired to me continually. "You are to exercise your own judgment, Loudon," he would say. "All that I do is to give you the figures; but whatever operation you take up must be upon your own responsibility and whatever you earn will be entirely due to your own dash and forethought." For all that, it was always clear what he intended me to do, and I was always careful to do it. Inside of a month I was at the head of seventeen or eighteen thousand dollars, college paper. And here I fell a victim to one of the vices of the system. The paper (I have already explained) had a real value of one per cent.; and cost, and could be sold, for currency. Unsuccessful speculators were thus always selling clothes, books, banjos, and sleeve-links, in order to pay their differences; the successful, on the other hand, were often tempted to realise and enjoy some return upon their profits. Now I wanted thirty dollars' worth of artist-truck, for I was always sketching in the woods; my allowance was for the time exhausted; I had begun to regard the exchange (with my father's help) as a place where money was to be got for stooping; and in an evil hour I realised three thousand dollars of the college paper and bought my easel.

It was a Wednesday morning when the things arrived, and set me in the seventh heaven of satisfaction. My father (for I can scarcely say myself) was trying at this time a "straddle" in wheat between Chicago and New York; the operation so called is, as you know, one of the most tempting and least safe upon the chess-board of finance. On the Thursday, luck began to turn against my father's calculations; and by the Friday evening, I was posted on the boards as a defaulter for the second time. Here was a rude blow: my father would have taken it ill enough in any case; for however much a man may resent the incapacity of an only son, he will feel his own more sensibly. But it chanced that in our bitter cup of failure there was one ingredient that might truly be called poisonous. He had been keeping the run of my position; he missed the three thousand dollars, paper; and in his view, I had stolen thirty dollars, currency. It was an extreme view perhaps; but in some senses, it was just; and my father, although (to my judgment) quite reckless of honesty in the essence of his operations, was the soul of honour as to their details. I had one grieved letter from him, dignified and tender; and during the rest of that wretched term, working as a clerk, selling my clothes and sketches to make futile speculations, my dream of Paris quite vanished, I was cheered by no word of kindness and helped by no hint of counsel from my father.

All the time he was no doubt thinking of little else but his son, and what to do with him. I believe he had been really appalled by what he regarded as my laxity of principle and began to think it might be well to preserve me from temptation; the architect of the capitol had, besides, spoken obligingly of my design; and while he

was thus hanging between two minds, Fortune suddenly stepped in, and Muskegon State capitol reversed my destiny.

"Loudon," said my father, as he met me at the depot, with a smiling countenance, "if you were to go to Paris, how long would it take you to become an experienced sculptor?"

"How do you mean, father?" I cried. "Experienced?"

"A man that could be entrusted with the highest styles," he answered: "the nude, for instance; and the patriotic and emblematical styles."

"It might take three years," I replied.

"You think Paris necessary?" he asked. "There are great advantages in our own country; and that man Prodgers appears to be a very clever sculptor, though I suppose he stands too high to go around giving lessons."

"Paris is the only place," I assured him.

"Well, I think myself, it will sound better," he admitted. "A Young Man, a Native of this State, Son of a Leading Citizen, Studies Prosecuted under the most Experienced Masters in Paris," he added, relishingly.

"But, my dear dad, what is it all about?" I interrupted. "I never even dreamed of being a sculptor."

"Well, here it is," said he. "I took up the statuary contract on our new capitol; I took it up at first as a deal; and then it occurred to me it would be better to keep it in the family. It meets your idea; there's considerable money in the thing; and it's patriotic. So, if you say the word, you shall go to Paris, and come back in three years to decorate the capitol of your native State. It's a big chance for you, Loudon; and I'll tell you what—every dollar you earn, I'll put another alongside of it. But the sooner you go, and the harder you work, the better; for if the first half-dozen statues aren't on a line with public taste in Muskegon, there will be trouble."

CHAPTER II. ROUSSILLON WINE

MY mother's family was Scottish, and it was judged fitting I should pay a visit on my way Paris-ward to my Uncle Adam Loudon, a wealthy retired grocer of Edinburgh. He was very stiff and very ironical; he fed me well, lodged me sumptuously, and seemed to take it out of me all the time, cent. per cent., in secret entertainment which caused his spectacles to glitter and his mouth to twitch. The ground of this ill-suppressed mirth (as well as I could make out) was simply the fact that I was an American. "Well," he would say, drawing out the word to infinity, "and I suppose now in your country, things will be so and so." And the whole group of my cousins would titter joyously. Repeated receptions of this sort must be at the root, I suppose, of what they call the Great American Jest; and I know I was myself goaded into saying that my friends went naked in the summer months, and that the Second Methodist Episcopal Church in Muskegon was decorated with scalps. I cannot say that these flights had any great success; they seemed to awaken little more surprise than the fact that my father was a Republican or that I had been taught in school to spell *colour* without the *u*. If I had told them (what was after all the truth) that my father had paid a considerable annual sum to have me brought up in a gambling-hell, the tittering and grinning of this dreadful family might perhaps have been excused.

I cannot deny but I was sometimes tempted to knock my Uncle Adam down; and indeed I believe it must have come to a rupture at last, if they had not given a dinner-party at which I was the lion. On this occasion, I learned (to my surprise and relief) that the incivility to which I had been subjected was a matter for the family circle and might be regarded almost in the light of an endearment. To strangers, I was presented with consideration; and the account given of "my American brother-in-law, poor Janie's man, James K. Dodd, the well-known millionaire of Muskegon," was calculated to enlarge the heart of a proud son.

An aged assistant of my grandfather's, a pleasant, humble creature with a taste for whisky, was at first deputed to be my guide about the city. With this harmless but hardly aristocratic companion, I went to Arthur's Seat and the Calton Hill, heard the band play in the Princes Street Gardens, inspected the regalia and the blood of Rizzio, and fell in love with the great castle on its cliff, the innumerable spires of churches, the stately buildings, the broad prospects, and those narrow and crowded lanes of the old town where my ancestors had lived and died in the days before Columbus.

But there was another curiosity that interested me more deeply—my grandfather, Alexander Loudon. In his time, the old gentleman had been a working mason, and

had risen from the ranks more, I think, by shrewdness than by merit. In his appearance, speech, and manners, he bore broad marks of his origin, which were gall and wormwood to my uncle Adam. His nails, in spite of anxious supervision, were often in conspicuous mourning; his clothes hung about him in bags and wrinkles like a ploughman's Sunday coat; his accent was rude, broad, and dragging: take him at his best, and even when he could be induced to hold his tongue, his mere presence in a corner of the drawing-room, with his open-air wrinkles, his scanty hair, his battered hands, and the cheerful craftiness of his expression, advertised the whole gang of us for a self-made family. My aunt might mince and my cousins bridle; but there was no getting over the solid physical fact of the stonemason in the chimney-corner.

That is one advantage of being an American: it never occurred to me to be ashamed of my grandfather, and the old gentleman was quick to mark the difference. He held my mother in tender memory, perhaps because he was in the habit of daily contrasting her with Uncle Adam, whom he detested to the point of frenzy; and he set down to inheritance from his favourite my own becoming treatment of himself. On our walks abroad, which soon became daily, he would sometimes (after duly warning me to keep the matter dark from "Aadam") skulk into some old familiar pot-house; and there (if he had the luck to encounter any of his veteran cronies) he would present me to the company with manifest pride, casting at the same time a covert slur on the rest of his descendants. "This is my Jeannie's yin," he would say. "He's a fine fallow, him." The purpose of our excursions was not to seek antiquities or to enjoy famous prospects, but to visit one after another a series of doleful suburbs, for which it was the old gentleman's chief claim to renown that he had been the sole contractor, and too often the architect besides. I have rarely seen a more shocking exhibition: the bricks seemed to be blushing in the walls, and the slates on the roof to have turned pale with shame; but I was careful not to communicate these impressions to the aged artificer at my side; and when he would direct my attention to some fresh monstrosity—perhaps with the comment, "There's an idee of mine's: it's cheap and tasty, and had a grand run; the idee was soon stole, and there's whole deestrics near Glesgie with the goathic adeetion and that plunth,"—I would civilly make haste to admire and (what I found particularly delighted him) to inquire into the cost of each adornment. It will be conceived that Muskegon capitol was a frequent and a welcome ground of talk; I drew him all the plans from memory; and he, with the aid of a narrow volume full of figures and tables, which answered (I believe) to the name of Molesworth, and was his constant pocket-companion, would draw up rough estimates and make imaginary offers on the various contracts. Our Muskegon builders he pronounced a pack of cormorants; and the congenial subject, together with my knowledge of architectural terms, the theory of strains, and the prices of materials in the States, formed a strong bond of union between what might have been otherwise an ill-assorted pair, and led my grandfather to pronounce me, with emphasis, "a real intelligent kind of a cheild." Thus a second time, as you will

presently see, the capitol of my native State had influentially affected the current of my life.

I left Edinburgh, however, with not the least idea that I had done a stroke of excellent business for myself, and singly delighted to escape out of a somewhat dreary house and plunge instead into the rainbow city of Paris. Every man has his own romance; mine clustered exclusively about the practice of the arts, the life of Latin Quarter students, and the world of Paris as depicted by that grimy wizard, the author of the *Comédie Humaine*. I was not disappointed—I could not have been; for I did not see the facts, I brought them with me ready-made. Z. Marcas lived next door to me in my ungainly, ill-smelling hotel of the Rue Racine; I dined at my villainous restaurant with Lousteau and with Rastignac: if a curriole nearly ran me down at a street-crossing, Maxime de Trailles would be the driver. I dined, I say, at a poor restaurant and lived in a poor hotel; and this was not from need, but sentiment. My father gave me a profuse allowance, and I might have lived (had I chosen) in the Quartier de l'Étoile and driven to my studies daily. Had I done so, the glamour must have fled: I should still have been but Loudon Dodd; whereas now I was a Latin Quarter student, Murger's successor, living in flesh and blood the life of one of those romances I had loved to read, to re-read, and to dream over, among the woods of Muskegon.

At this time we were all a little Murger-mad in the Latin Quarter. The play of the *Vie de Bohème* (a dreary, snivelling piece) had been produced at the Odéon, had run an unconscionable time—for Paris, and revived the freshness of the legend. The same business, you may say, or there and thereabout, was being privately enacted in consequence in every garret of the neighbourhood, and a good third of the students were consciously impersonating Rodolphe or Schaubard to their own incommunicable satisfaction. Some of us went far, and some farther. I always looked with awful envy (for instance) on a certain countryman of my own, who had a studio in the Rue Monsieur le Prince, wore boots, and long hair in a net, and could be seen tramping off, in this guise, to the worst eating-house of the quarter, followed by a Corsican model, his mistress, in the conspicuous costume of her race and calling. It takes some greatness of soul to carry even folly to such heights as these; and for my own part, I had to content myself by pretending very arduously to be poor, by wearing a smoking-cap on the streets, and by pursuing, through a series of misadventures, that extinct mammal, the grisette. The most grievous part was the eating and drinking. I was born with a dainty tooth and a palate for wine; and only a genuine devotion to romance could have supported me under the cat-civets that I had to swallow, and the red ink of Bercy I must wash them down withal. Every now and again, after a hard day at the studio, where I was steadily and far from unsuccessfully industrious, a wave of distaste would overbear me; I would slink away from my haunts and companions, indemnify myself for weeks of self-denial with fine wines and dainty dishes; seated perhaps on a terrace, perhaps in an arbour in a garden, with a volume of one of my favourite authors propped open in front of me, and now consulted awhile, and now forgotten:—so remain,

relishing my situation, till night fell and the lights of the city kindled; and thence stroll homeward by the riverside, under the moon or stars, in a heaven of poetry and digestion.

One such indulgence led me in the course of my second year into an adventure which I must relate: indeed, it is the very point I have been aiming for, since that was what brought me in acquaintance with Jim Pinkerton. I sat down alone to dinner one October day when the rusty leaves were falling and scuttling on the boulevard, and the minds of impressionable men inclined in about an equal degree towards sadness and conviviality. The restaurant was no great place, but boasted a considerable cellar and a long printed list of vintages. This I was perusing with the double zest of a man who is fond of wine and a lover of beautiful names, when my eye fell (near the end of the card) on that not very famous or familiar brand, Roussillon. I remember it was a wine I had never tasted, ordered a bottle, found it excellent, and when I had discussed the contents, called (according to my habit) for a final pint. It appears they did not keep Roussillon in half-bottles. "All right," said I. "Another bottle." The tables at this eating-house are close together; and the next thing I can remember, I was in somewhat loud conversation with my nearest neighbours. From these I must have gradually extended my attentions; for I have a clear recollection of gazing about a room in which every chair was half turned round and every face turned smilingly to mine. I can even remember what I was saying at the moment; but after twenty years, the embers of shame are still alive; and I prefer to give your imagination the cue, by simply mentioning that my muse was the patriotic. It had been my design to adjourn for coffee in the company of some of these new friends; but I was no sooner on the sidewalk than I found myself unaccountably alone. The circumstance scarce surprised me at the time, much less now; but I was somewhat chagrined a little after to find I had walked into a kiosk. I began to wonder if I were any the worse for my last bottle, and decided to steady myself with coffee and brandy. In the Café de la Source, where I went for this restorative, the fountain was playing, and (what greatly surprised me) the mill and the various mechanical figures on the rockery appeared to have been freshly repaired and performed the most enchanting antics. The café was extraordinarily hot and bright, with every detail of a conspicuous clearness, from the faces of the guests to the type of the newspapers on the tables, and the whole apartment swang to and fro like a hammock, with an exhilarating motion. For some while I was so extremely pleased with these particulars that I thought I could never be weary of beholding them: then dropped of a sudden into a causeless sadness; and then, with the same swiftness and spontaneity, arrived at the conclusion that I was drunk and had better get to bed.

It was but a step or two to my hotel, where I got my lighted candle from the porter and mounted the four flights to my own room. Although I could not deny that I was drunk, I was at the same time lucidly rational and practical. I had but one preoccupation—to be up in time on the morrow for my work; and when I observed the clock on my chimney-piece to have stopped, I decided to go down-stairs again

and give directions to the porter. Leaving the candle burning and my door open, to be a guide to me on my return, I set forth accordingly. The house was quite dark; but as there were only the three doors on each landing, it was impossible to wander, and I had nothing to do but descend the stairs until I saw the glimmer of the porter's night light. I counted four flights: no porter. It was possible, of course, that I had reckoned incorrectly; so I went down another and another, and another, still counting as I went, until I had reached the preposterous figure of nine flights. It was now quite clear that I had somehow passed the porter's lodge without remarking it; indeed, I was, at the lowest figure, five pairs of stairs below the street, and plunged in the very bowels of the earth. That my hotel should thus be founded upon catacombs was a discovery of considerable interest; and if I had not been in a frame of mind entirely businesslike, I might have continued to explore all night this subterranean empire. But I was bound I must be up betimes on the next morning, and for that end it was imperative that I should find the porter. I faced about accordingly, and, counting with painful care, remounted towards the level of the street. Five, six, and seven flights I climbed, and still there was no porter. I began to be weary of the job, and, reflecting that I was now close to my own room, decided I should go to bed. Eight, nine, ten, eleven, twelve, thirteen flights I mounted; and my open door seemed to be as wholly lost to me as the porter and his floating dip. I remembered that the house stood but six stories at its highest point, from which it appeared (on the most moderate computation) I was now three stories higher than the roof. My original sense of amusement was succeeded by a not unnatural irritation. "My room has just *got* to be here," said I, and I stepped towards the door with outspread arms. There was no door and no wall; in place of either there yawned before me a dark corridor, in which I continued to advance for some time without encountering the smallest opposition. And this in a house whose extreme area scantily contained three small rooms, a narrow landing, and the stair! The thing was manifestly nonsense; and you will scarcely be surprised to learn that I now began to lose my temper. At this juncture I perceived a filtering of light along the floor, stretched forth my hand which encountered the knob of a doorhandle, and without ceremony entered a room. A young lady was within; she was going to bed, and her toilet was far advanced, or the other way about, if you prefer.

"I hope you will pardon this intrusion," said I; "but my room is No. 12, and something has gone wrong with this blamed house."

She looked at me a moment: and then, "If you will step outside for a moment, I will take you there," says she.

Thus, with perfect composure on both sides, the matter was arranged. I waited a while outside her door. Presently she rejoined me, in a dressing-gown, took my hand, led me up another flight, which made the fourth above the level of the roof, and shut me into my own room, where (being quite weary after these extraordinary explorations) I turned in, and slumbered like a child.

I tell you the thing calmly, as it appeared to me to pass; but the next day, when I awoke and put memory in the witness-box, I could not conceal from myself that the tale presented a good many improbable features. I had no mind for the studio, after all, and went instead to the Luxembourg gardens, there, among the sparrows and the statues and the falling leaves, to cool and clear my head. It is a garden I have always loved. You sit there in a public place of history and fiction. Barras and Fouche have looked from these windows. Lousteau and de Banville (one as real as the other) have rhymed upon these benches. The city tramples by without the railings to a lively measure and within and about you, trees rustle, children and sparrows utter their small cries, and the statues look on for ever. Here, then, in a seat opposite the gallery entrance, I set to work on the events of the last night, to disengage (if it were possible) truth from fiction.

The house, by daylight, had proved to be six stories high, the same as ever. I could find, with all my architectural experience, no room in its altitude for those interminable stairways, no width between its walls for that long corridor, where I had tramped at night. And there was yet a greater difficulty. I had read somewhere an aphorism that everything may be false to itself save human nature. A house might elongate or enlarge itself—or seem to do so to a gentleman who had been dining. The ocean might dry up, the rocks melt in the sun, the stars fall from heaven like autumn apples; and there was nothing in these incidents to boggle the philosopher. But the case of the young lady stood upon a different foundation. Girls were not good enough, or not good that way, or else they were too good. I was ready to accept any of these views: all pointed to the same conclusion, which I was thus already on the point of reaching, when a fresh argument occurred, and instantly confirmed it. I could remember the exact words we had each said; and I had spoken, and she had replied in English. Plainly, then, the whole affair was an illusion: catacombs, and stairs, and charitable lady, all were equally the stuff of dreams.

I had just come to this determination, when there blew a flaw of wind through the autumnal gardens; the dead leaves showered down, and a flight of sparrows, thick as a snowfall, wheeled above my head with sudden pipings. This agreeable bustle was the affair of a moment, but it startled me from the abstraction into which I had fallen, like a summons. I sat briskly up, and as I did so, my eyes rested on the figure of a lady in a brown jacket and carrying a paint-box. By her side walked a fellow some years older than myself, with an easel under his arm; and alike by their course and cargo I might judge they were bound for the gallery, where the lady was, doubtless, engaged upon some copying. You can imagine my surprise when I recognised in her the heroine of my adventure. To put the matter beyond question, our eyes met, and she, seeing herself remembered and recalling the trim in which I had last beheld her, looked, swiftly on the ground with just a shadow of confusion.

I could not tell you to-day if she were plain or pretty; but she had behaved with so much good sense, and I had cut so poor a figure in her presence, that I became instantly fired with the desire to display myself in a more favourable light. The young man besides was possibly her brother; brothers are apt to be hasty, theirs being a part in which it is possible, at a comparatively early age, to assume the dignity of manhood; and it occurred to me it might be wise to forestall all possible complications by an apology.

On this reasoning I drew near to the gallery door, and had hardly got in position before the young man came out. Thus it was that I came face to face with my third destiny; for my career has been entirely shaped by these three elements,—my father, the capitol of Muskegon, and my friend, Jim Pinkerton. As for the young lady with whom my mind was at the moment chiefly occupied, I was never to hear more of her from that day forward: an excellent example of the Blind Man's Buff that we call life.