CHAPTER VI. IN WHICH I GO WEST.

I reached my uncle's door next morning in time to sit down with the family to breakfast. More than three years had intervened almost without mutation in that stationary household, since I had sat there first, a young American freshman, bewildered among unfamiliar dainties, Finnan haddock, kippered salmon, baps and mutton ham, and had wearied my mind in vain to guess what should be under the tea-cosey. If there were any change at all, it seemed that I had risen in the family esteem. My father's death once fittingly referred to, with a ceremonial lengthening of Scotch upper lips and wagging of the female head, the party launched at once (God help me) into the more cheerful topic of my own successes. They had been so pleased to hear such good accounts of me; I was quite a great man now; where was that beautiful statue of the Genius of Something or other? "You haven't it here? not here? Really?" asks the sprightliest of my cousins, shaking curls at me; as though it were likely I had brought it in a cab, or kept it concealed about my person like a birthday surprise. In the bosom of this family, unaccustomed to the tropical nonsense of the West, it became plain the _Sunday Herald_ and poor, blethering Pinkerton had been accepted for their face. It is not possible to invent a circumstance that could have more depressed me; and I am conscious that I behaved all through that breakfast like a whipt schoolboy.

At length, the meal and family prayers being both happily over, I requested the favour of an interview with Uncle Adam on "the state of my affairs." At sound of this ominous expression, the good man's face conspicuously lengthened; and when my grandfather, having had the proposition repeated to him (for he was hard of hearing) announced his intention of being present at the interview, I could not but think that Uncle Adam's sorrow kindled into momentary irritation. Nothing, however, but the usual grim cordiality appeared upon the surface; and we all three passed ceremoniously to the adjoining library, a gloomy theatre for a depressing piece of business. My grandfather charged a clay pipe, and sat tremulously smoking in a corner of the fireless chimney; behind him, although the morning was both chill and dark, the window was partly open and the blind partly down: I cannot depict what an air he had of being out of place, like a man shipwrecked there. Uncle Adam had his station at the business table in the midst. Valuable rows of books looked down upon the place of torture; and I could hear sparrows chirping in the garden, and my sprightly cousin already banging the piano and pouring forth an acid stream of song from the drawing-room overhead.

It was in these circumstances that, with all brevity of speech and a certain boyish sullenness of manner, looking the while upon the floor, I informed my relatives of my financial situation: the amount I owed Pinkerton; the hopelessness of any maintenance from sculpture; the career offered me in the States; and how, before becoming more beholden to a stranger, I had judged it right to lay the case before my family.

"I am only sorry you did not come to me at first," said Uncle Adam. "I take the liberty to say it would have been more decent."

"I think so too, Uncle Adam," I replied; "but you must bear in mind I was ignorant in what light you might regard my application."

"I hope I would never turn my back on my own flesh and blood," he returned with emphasis; but to my anxious ear, with more of temper than affection. "I could never forget you were my sister's son. I regard this as a manifest duty. I have no choice but to accept the entire responsibility of the position you have made."

I did not know what else to do but murmur "thank you."

"Yes," he pursued, "and there is something providential in the circumstance that you come at the right time. In my old firm there is a vacancy; they call themselves Italian Warehousemen now," he continued, regarding me with a twinkle of humour; "so you may think yourself in luck: we were only grocers in my day. I shall place you there to-morrow."

"Stop a moment, Uncle Adam," I broke in. "This is not at all what I am asking. I ask you to pay Pinkerton, who is a poor man. I ask you to clear my feet of debt, not to arrange my life or any part of it."

"If I wished to be harsh, I might remind you that beggars cannot be choosers," said my uncle; "and as to managing your life, you have tried your own way already, and you see what you have made of it. You must now accept the guidance of those older and (whatever you may think of it) wiser than yourself. All these schemes of your friend (of whom I know nothing, by the by) and talk of openings in the West, I simply disregard. I have no idea whatever of your going troking across a continent on a wild-goose chase. In this situation, which I am fortunately able to place at your disposal, and which many a well-conducted young man would be glad to jump at, you will receive, to begin with, eighteen shillings a week."

"Eighteen shillings a week!" I cried. "Why, my poor friend gave me more than that for nothing!"

"And I think it is this very friend you are now trying to repay?" observed my uncle, with an air of one advancing a strong argument.

"Aadam!" said my grandfather.

"I'm vexed you should be present at this business," quoth Uncle Adam, swinging rather obsequiously towards the stonemason; "but I must remind you it is of your own seeking."

"Aadam!" repeated the old man.

"Well, sir, I am listening," says my uncle.

My grandfather took a puff or two in silence; and then, "Ye're makin' an awfu' poor appearance, Aadam," said he.

My uncle visibly reared at the affront. "I'm sorry you should think so," said he, "and still more sorry you should say so before present company."

"A believe that; A ken that, Aadam," returned old Loudon, dryly; "and the curiis thing is, I'm no very carin'. See here, ma man," he continued, addressing himself to me. "A'm your grandfaither, amn't I not? Never you mind what Aadam says. A'll see justice din ye. A'm rich."

"Father," said Uncle Adam, "I would like one word with you in private."

I rose to go.

"Set down upon your hinderlands," cried my grandfather, almost savagely. "If Aadam has anything to say, let him say it. It's me that has the money here; and by Gravy! I'm goin' to be obeyed."

Upon this scurvy encouragement, it appeared that my uncle had no remark to offer: twice challenged to "speak out and be done with it," he twice sullenly declined; and I may mention that about this period of the

engagement, I began to be sorry for him.

"See here, then, Jeannie's yin!" resumed my grandfather. "A'm goin' to give ye a set-off. Your mither was always my fav'rite, for A never could agree with Aadam. A like ye fine yoursel'; there's nae noansense aboot ye; ye've a fine nayteral idee of builder's work; ye've been to France, where they tell me they're grand at the stuccy. A splendid thing for ceilin's, the stuccy! and it's a vailyable disguise, too; A don't believe there's a builder in Scotland has used more stuccy than me. But as A was sayin', if ye'll follie that trade, with the capital that A'm goin' to give ye, ye may live yet to be as rich as mysel'. Ye see, ye would have always had a share of it when A was gone; it appears ye're needin' it now; well, ye'll get the less, as is only just and proper."

Uncle Adam cleared his throat. "This is very handsome, father," said he; "and I am sure Loudon feels it so. Very handsome, and as you say, very just; but will you allow me to say that it had better, perhaps, be put in black and white?"

The enmity always smouldering between the two men at this ill-judged interruption almost burst in flame. The stonemason turned upon his offspring, his long upper lip pulled down, for all the world, like a monkey's. He stared a while in virulent silence; and then "Get Gregg!" said he.

The effect of these words was very visible. "He will be gone to his

office," stammered my uncle.

"Get Gregg!" repeated my grandfather.

"I tell you, he will be gone to his office," reiterated Adam.

"And I tell ye, he's takin' his smoke," retorted the old man.

"Very well, then," cried my uncle, getting to his feet with some alacrity, as upon a sudden change of thought, "I will get him myself."

"Ye will not!" cried my grandfather. "Ye will sit there upon your hinderland."

"Then how the devil am I to get him?" my uncle broke forth, with not unnatural petulance.

My grandfather (having no possible answer) grinned at his son with the malice of a schoolboy; then he rang the bell.

"Take the garden key," said Uncle Adam to the servant; "go over to the garden, and if Mr. Gregg the lawyer is there (he generally sits under the red hawthorn), give him old Mr. Loudon's compliments, and will he step in here for a moment?"

"Mr. Gregg the lawyer!" At once I understood (what had been puzzling me)

the significance of my grandfather and the alarm of my poor uncle: the stonemason's will, it was supposed, hung trembling in the balance.

"Look here, grandfather," I said, "I didn't want any of this. All I wanted was a loan of (say) two hundred pounds. I can take care of myself; I have prospects and opportunities, good friends in the States----"

The old man waved me down. "It's me that speaks here," he said curtly; and we waited the coming of the lawyer in a triple silence. He appeared at last, the maid ushering him in--a spectacled, dry, but not ungenial looking man.

"Here, Gregg," cried my grandfather. "Just a question: What has Aadam got to do with my will?"

"I'm afraid I don't quite understand," said the lawyer, staring.

"What has he got to do with it?" repeated the old man, smiting with his fist upon the arm of his chair. "Is my money mine's, or is it Aadam's? Can Aadam interfere?"

"O, I see," said Mr. Gregg. "Certainly not. On the marriage of both of your children a certain sum was paid down and accepted in full of legitim. You have surely not forgotten the circumstance, Mr. Loudon?"

"So that, if I like," concluded my grandfather, hammering out his words, "I can leave every doit I die possessed of to the Great Magunn?"--meaning probably the Great Mogul.

"No doubt of it," replied Gregg, with a shadow of a smile.

"Ye hear that, Aadam?" asked my grandfather.

"I may be allowed to say I had no need to hear it," said my uncle.

"Very well," says my grandfather. "You and Jeannie's yin can go for a bit walk. Me and Gregg has business."

When once I was in the hall alone with Uncle Adam, I turned to him, sick at heart. "Uncle Adam," I said, "you can understand, better than I can say, how very painful all this is to me."

"Yes, I am sorry you have seen your grandfather in so unamiable a light," replied this extraordinary man. "You shouldn't allow it to affect your mind though. He has sterling qualities, quite an extraordinary character; and I have no fear but he means to behave handsomely to you."

His composure was beyond my imitation: the house could not contain me, nor could I even promise to return to it: in concession to which

weakness, it was agreed that I should call in about an hour at the office of the lawyer, whom (as he left the library) Uncle Adam should waylay and inform of the arrangement. I suppose there was never a more topsy-turvy situation: you would have thought it was I who had suffered some rebuff, and that iron-sided Adam was a generous conqueror who scorned to take advantage.

It was plain enough that I was to be endowed: to what extent and upon what conditions I was now left for an hour to meditate in the wide and solitary thoroughfares of the new town, taking counsel with street-corner statues of George IV. and William Pitt, improving my mind with the pictures in the window of a music-shop, and renewing my acquaintance with Edinburgh east wind. By the end of the hour I made my way to Mr. Gregg's office, where I was placed, with a few appropriate words, in possession of a cheque for two thousand pounds and a small parcel of architectural works.

"Mr. Loudon bids me add," continued the lawyer, consulting a little sheet of notes, "that although these volumes are very valuable to the practical builder, you must be careful not to lose originality. He tells you also not to be 'hadden doun'--his own expression--by the theory of strains, and that Portland cement, properly sanded, will go a long way."

I smiled, and remarked that I supposed it would.

"I once lived in one of my excellent client's houses," observed the

lawyer; "and I was tempted, in that case, to think it had gone far enough."

"Under these circumstances, sir," said I, "you will be rather relieved to hear that I have no intention of becoming a builder."

At this, he fairly laughed; and, the ice being broken, I was able to consult him as to my conduct. He insisted I must return to the house, at least, for luncheon, and one of my walks with Mr. Loudon. "For the evening, I will furnish you with an excuse, if you please," said he, "by asking you to a bachelor dinner with myself. But the luncheon and the walk are unavoidable. He is an old man, and, I believe, really fond of you; he would naturally feel aggrieved if there were any appearance of avoiding him; and as for Mr. Adam, do you know, I think your delicacy out of place.... And now, Mr. Dodd, what are you to do with this money?"

Ay, there was the question. With two thousand pounds--fifty thousand francs--I might return to Paris and the arts, and be a prince and millionaire in that thrifty Latin Quarter. I think I had the grace, with one corner of my mind, to be glad that I had sent the London letter: I know very well that with the rest and worst of me, I repented bitterly of that precipitate act. On one point, however, my whole multiplex estate of man was unanimous: the letter being gone, there was no help but I must follow. The money was accordingly divided in two unequal shares: for the first, Mr. Gregg got me a bill in the name of Dijon to meet my liabilities in Paris; for the second, as I had already cash in

hand for the expenses of my journey, he supplied me with drafts on San Francisco.

The rest of my business in Edinburgh, not to dwell on a very agreeable dinner with the lawyer or the horrors of the family luncheon, took the form of an excursion with the stonemason, who led me this time to no suburb or work of his old hands, but with an impulse both natural and pretty, to that more enduring home which he had chosen for his clay. It was in a cemetery, by some strange chance, immured within the bulwarks of a prison; standing, besides, on the margin of a cliff, crowded with elderly stone memorials, and green with turf and ivy. The east wind (which I thought too harsh for the old man) continually shook the boughs, and the thin sun of a Scottish summer drew their dancing shadows.

"I wanted ye to see the place," said he. "Yon's the stane. Euphemia Ross: that was my goodwife, your grandmither--hoots! I'm wrong; that was my first yin; I had no bairns by her;--yours is the second, Mary Murray, Born 1819, Died 1850: that's her--a fine, plain, decent sort of a creature, tak' her athegether. Alexander Loudon, Born Seventeen Ninety-Twa, Died--and then a hole in the ballant: that's me. Alexander's my name. They ca'd me Ecky when I was a boy. Eh, Ecky! ye're an awfu' auld man!"

I had a second and sadder experience of graveyards at my next alighting-place, the city of Muskegon, now rendered conspicuous by

the dome of the new capitol encaged in scaffolding. It was late in the afternoon when I arrived, and raining; and as I walked in great streets, of the very name of which I was quite ignorant--double, treble, and quadruple lines of horse-cars jingling by--hundred-fold wires of telegraph and telephone matting heaven above my head--huge, staring houses, garish and gloomy, flanking me from either hand--the thought of the Rue Racine, ay, and of the cabman's eating-house, brought tears to my eyes. The whole monotonous Babel had grown, or I should rather say swelled, with such a leap since my departure, that I must continually inquire my way; and the very cemetery was brand new. Death, however, had been active; the graves were already numerous, and I must pick my way in the rain, among the tawdry sepulchres of millionnaires, and past the plain black crosses of Hungarian labourers, till chance or instinct led me to the place that was my father's. The stone had been erected (I knew already) "by admiring friends"; I could now judge their taste in monuments; their taste in literature, methought, I could imagine, and I refrained from drawing near enough to read the terms of the inscription. But the name was in larger letters and stared at me--JAMES K. DODD. What a singular thing is a name, I thought; how it clings to a man, and continually misrepresents, and then survives him; and it flashed across my mind, with a mixture of regret and bitter mirth, that I had never known, and now probably never should know, what the K had represented. King, Kilter, Kay, Kaiser, I went, running over names at random, and then stumbled with ludicrous misspelling on Kornelius, and had nearly laughed aloud. I have never been more childish; I suppose (although the deeper voices of my nature seemed all dumb) because I have never been

more moved. And at this last incongruous antic of my nerves, I was seized with a panic of remorse and fled the cemetery.

Scarce less funereal was the rest of my experience in Muskegon, where, nevertheless, I lingered, visiting my father's circle, for some days. It was in piety to him I lingered; and I might have spared myself the pain. His memory was already quite gone out. For his sake, indeed, I was made welcome; and for mine the conversation rolled awhile with laborious effort on the virtues of the deceased. His former comrades dwelt, in my company, upon his business talents or his generosity for public purposes; when my back was turned, they remembered him no more. My father had loved me; I had left him alone to live and die among the indifferent; now I returned to find him dead and buried and forgotten. Unavailing penitence translated itself in my thoughts to fresh resolve. There was another poor soul who loved me: Pinkerton. I must not be guilty twice of the same error.

A week perhaps had been thus wasted, nor had I prepared my friend for the delay. Accordingly, when I had changed trains at Council Bluffs, I was aware of a man appearing at the end of the car with a telegram in his hand and inquiring whether there were any one aboard "of the name of LONDON Dodd?" I thought the name near enough, claimed the despatch, and found it was from Pinkerton: "What day do you arrive? Awfully important." I sent him an answer giving day and hour, and at Ogden found a fresh despatch awaiting me: "That will do. Unspeakable relief. Meet you at Sacramento." In Paris days I had a private name for Pinkerton:

"The Irrepressible" was what I had called him in hours of bitterness, and the name rose once more on my lips. What mischief was he up to now? What new bowl was my benignant monster brewing for his Frankenstein? In what new imbroglio should I alight on the Pacific coast? My trust in the man was entire, and my distrust perfect. I knew he would never mean amiss; but I was convinced he would almost never (in my sense) do aright.

I suppose these vague anticipations added a shade of gloom to that already gloomy place of travel: Nebraska, Wyoming, Utah, Nevada, scowled in my face at least, and seemed to point me back again to that other native land of mine, the Latin Quarter. But when the Sierras had been climbed, and the train, after so long beating and panting, stretched itself upon the downward track--when I beheld that vast extent of prosperous country rolling seaward from the woods and the blue mountains, that illimitable spread of rippling corn, the trees growing and blowing in the merry weather, the country boys thronging aboard the train with figs and peaches, and the conductors, and the very darky stewards, visibly exulting in the change--up went my soul like a balloon; Care fell from his perch upon my shoulders; and when I spied my Pinkerton among the crowd at Sacramento, I thought of nothing but to shout and wave for him, and grasp him by the hand, like what he was--my dearest friend.

"O Loudon!" he cried. "Man, how I've pined for you! And you haven't come an hour too soon. You're known here and waited for; I've been booming

you already; you're billed for a lecture to-morrow night: _Student Life in Paris, Grave and Gay_: twelve hundred places booked at the last stock! Tut, man, you're looking thin! Here, try a drop of this." And he produced a case bottle, staringly labelled PINKERTON'S THIRTEEN STAR GOLDEN STATE BRANDY, WARRANTED ENTIRE.

"God bless me!" said I, gasping and winking after my first plunge into this fiery fluid. "And what does 'Warranted Entire' mean?"

"Why, Loudon! you ought to know that!" cried Pinkerton. "It's real, copper-bottomed English; you see it on all the old-time wayside hostelries over there."

"But if I'm not mistaken, it means something Warranted Entirely different," said I, "and applies to the public house, and not the beverages sold."

"It's very possible," said Jim, quite unabashed. "It's effective, anyway; and I can tell you, sir, it has boomed that spirit: it goes now by the gross of cases. By the way, I hope you won't mind; I've got your portrait all over San Francisco for the lecture, enlarged from that carte de visite: H. Loudon Dodd, the Americo-Parisienne Sculptor. Here's a proof of the small handbills; the posters are the same, only in red and blue, and the letters fourteen by one."

I looked at the handbill, and my head turned. What was the use of

words? why seek to explain to Pinkerton the knotted horrors of "Americo-Parisienne"? He took an early occasion to point it out as "rather a good phrase; gives the two sides at a glance: I wanted the lecture written up to that." Even after we had reached San Francisco, and at the actual physical shock of my own effigy placarded on the streets I had broken forth in petulant words, he never comprehended in the least the ground of my aversion.

"If I had only known you disliked red lettering!" was as high as he could rise. "You are perfectly right: a clear-cut black is preferable, and shows a great deal further. The only thing that pains me is the portrait: I own I thought that a success. I'm dreadfully and truly sorry, my dear fellow: I see now it's not what you had a right to expect; but I did it, Loudon, for the best; and the press is all delighted."

At the moment, sweeping through green tule swamps, I fell direct on the essential. "But, Pinkerton," I cried, "this lecture is the maddest of your madnesses. How can I prepare a lecture in thirty hours?"

"All done, Loudon!" he exclaimed in triumph. "All ready. Trust me to pull a piece of business through. You'll find it all type-written in my desk at home. I put the best talent of San Francisco on the job: Harry Miller, the brightest pressman in the city."

And so he rattled on, beyond reach of my modest protestations, blurting

out his complicated interests, crying up his new acquaintances, and ever and again hungering to introduce me to some "whole-souled, grand fellow, as sharp as a needle," from whom, and the very thought of whom, my spirit shrank instinctively.

Well, I was in for it: in for Pinkerton, in for the portrait, in for the type-written lecture. One promise I extorted--that I was never again to be committed in ignorance; even for that, when I saw how its extortion puzzled and depressed the Irrepressible, my soul repented me; and in all else I suffered myself to be led uncomplaining at his chariot wheels. The Irrepressible, did I say? The Irresistible were nigher truth.

But the time to have seen me was when I sat down to Harry Miller's lecture. He was a facetious dog, this Harry Miller; he had a gallant way of skirting the indecent which (in my case) produced physical nausea; and he could be sentimental and even melodramatic about grisettes and starving genius. I found he had enjoyed the benefit of my correspondence with Pinkerton: adventures of my own were here and there horridly misrepresented, sentiments of my own echoed and exaggerated till I blushed to recognise them. I will do Harry Miller justice: he must have had a kind of talent, almost of genius; all attempts to lower his tone proving fruitless, and the Harry-Millerism ineradicable. Nay, the monster had a certain key of style, or want of style, so that certain milder passages, which I sought to introduce, discorded horribly, and impoverished (if that were possible) the general effect.

By an early hour of the numbered evening I might have been observed at the sign of the Poodle Dog, dining with my agent: so Pinkerton delighted to describe himself. Thence, like an ox to the slaughter, he led me to the hall, where I stood presently alone, confronting assembled San Francisco, with no better allies than a table, a glass of water, and a mass of manuscript and typework, representing Harry Miller and myself. I read the lecture; for I had lacked both time and will to get the trash by heart--read it hurriedly, humbly, and with visible shame. Now and then I would catch in the auditorium an eye of some intelligence, now and then, in the manuscript, would stumble on a richer vein of Harry Miller, and my heart would fail me, and I gabbled. The audience yawned, it stirred uneasily, it muttered, grumbled, and broke forth at last in articulate cries of "Speak up!" and "Nobody can hear!" I took to skipping, and being extremely ill-acquainted with the country, almost invariably cut in again in the unintelligible midst of some new topic. What struck me as extremely ominous, these misfortunes were allowed to pass without a laugh. Indeed, I was beginning to fear the worst, and even personal indignity, when all at once the humour of the thing broke upon me strongly. I could have laughed aloud; and being again summoned to speak up, I faced my patrons for the first time with a smile. "Very well," I said, "I will try, though I don't suppose anybody wants to hear, and I can't see why anybody should." Audience and lecturer laughed together till the tears ran down; vociferous and repeated applause hailed my impromptu sally. Another hit which I made but a little after, as I turned three pages of the copy: "You see, I am leaving out as much as I possibly can," increased the esteem with which my patrons had begun

to regard me; and when I left the stage at last, my departing form was cheered with laughter, stamping, shouting, and the waving of hats.

Pinkerton was in the waiting-room, feverishly jotting in his pocket-book. As he saw me enter, he sprang up, and I declare the tears were trickling on his cheeks.

"My dear boy," he cried, "I can never forgive myself, and you can never forgive me. Never mind: I did it for the best. And how nobly you clung on! I dreaded we should have had to return the money at the doors."

"It would have been more honest if we had," said I.

The pressmen followed me, Harry Miller in the front ranks; and I was amazed to find them, on the whole, a pleasant set of lads, probably more sinned against than sinning, and even Harry Miller apparently a gentleman. I had in oysters and champagne--for the receipts were excellent--and being in a high state of nervous tension, kept the table in a roar. Indeed, I was never in my life so well inspired as when I described my vigil over Harry Miller's literature or the series of my emotions as I faced the audience. The lads vowed I was the soul of good company and the prince of lecturers; and--so wonderful an institution is the popular press--if you had seen the notices next day in all the papers, you must have supposed my evening's entertainment an unqualified success.

I was in excellent spirits when I returned home that night, but the miserable Pinkerton sorrowed for us both.

"O, Loudon," he said, "I shall never forgive myself. When I saw you didn't catch on to the idea of the lecture, I should have given it myself!"