

CHAPTER VII. IRONS IN THE FIRE.

Opes Strepitumque.

The food of the body differs not so greatly for the fool or the sage, the elephant or the cock-sparrow; and similar chemical elements, variously disguised, support all mortals. A brief study of Pinkerton in his new setting convinced me of a kindred truth about that other and mental digestion, by which we extract what is called "fun for our money" out of life. In the same spirit as a schoolboy, deep in Mayne Reid, handles a dummy gun and crawls among imaginary forests, Pinkerton sped through Kearney Street upon his daily business, representing to himself a highly coloured part in life's performance, and happy for hours if he should have chanced to brush against a millionaire. Reality was his romance; he gloried to be thus engaged; he wallowed in his business. Suppose a man to dig up a galleon on the Coromandel coast, his rakish schooner keeping the while an offing under easy sail, and he, by the blaze of a great fire of wreckwood, to measure ingots by the bucketful on the uproarious beach: such an one might realise a greater material spoil; he should have no more profit of romance than Pinkerton when he cast up his weekly balance-sheet in a bald office. Every dollar gained was like something brought ashore from a mysterious deep; every venture made was like a diver's plunge; and as he thrust his bold hand into the plexus of the money-market, he was delightedly aware of how he shook the pillars of existence, turned out men (as at a battle-cry) to labour

in far countries, and set the gold twitching in the drawers of millionnaires.

I could never fathom the full extent of his speculations; but there were five separate businesses which he avowed and carried like a banner. The Thirteen Star Golden State Brandy, Warranted Entire (a very flagrant distillation) filled a great part of his thoughts, and was kept before the public in an eloquent but misleading treatise: *_Why Drink French Brandy? A Word to the Wise._* He kept an office for advertisers, counselling, designing, acting as middleman with printers and bill-stickers, for the inexperienced or the uninspired: the dull haberdasher came to him for ideas, the smart theatrical agent for his local knowledge; and one and all departed with a copy of his pamphlet: *_How, When, and Where; or, the Advertiser's Vade-Mecum._* He had a tug chartered every Saturday afternoon and night, carried people outside the Heads, and provided them with lines and bait for six hours' fishing, at the rate of five dollars a person. I am told that some of them (doubtless adroit anglers) made a profit on the transaction. Occasionally he bought wrecks and condemned vessels; these latter (I cannot tell you how) found their way to sea again under aliases, and continued to stem the waves triumphantly enough under the colours of Bolivia or Nicaragua. Lastly, there was a certain agricultural engine, glorying in a great deal of vermilion and blue paint, and filling (it appeared) a "long-felt want," in which his interest was something like a tenth.

This for the face or front of his concerns. "On the outside," as he phrased it, he was variously and mysteriously engaged. No dollar slept in his possession; rather he kept all simultaneously flying like a conjurer with oranges. My own earnings, when I began to have a share, he would but show me for a moment, and disperse again, like those illusive money gifts which are flashed in the eyes of childhood only to be entombed in the missionary box. And he would come down radiant from a weekly balance-sheet, clap me on the shoulder, declare himself a winner by Gargantuan figures, and prove destitute of a quarter for a drink.

"What on earth have you done with it?" I would ask.

"Into the mill again; all re-invested!" he would cry, with infinite delight. Investment was ever his word. He could not bear what he called gambling. "Never touch stocks, Loudon," he would say; "nothing but legitimate business." And yet, Heaven knows, many an indurated gambler might have drawn back appalled at the first hint of some of Pinkerton's investments! One, which I succeeded in tracking home, and instance for a specimen, was a seventh share in the charter of a certain ill-starred schooner bound for Mexico, to smuggle weapons on the one trip, and cigars upon the other. The latter end of this enterprise, involving (as it did) shipwreck, confiscation, and a lawsuit with the underwriters, was too painful to be dwelt upon at length. "It's proved a disappointment," was as far as my friend would go with me in words; but I knew, from observation, that the fabric of his fortunes tottered. For the rest, it was only by accident I got wind of the transaction; for

Pinkerton, after a time, was shy of introducing me to his arcana: the reason you are to hear presently.

The office which was (or should have been) the point of rest for so many evolving dollars stood in the heart of the city: a high and spacious room, with many plate-glass windows. A glazed cabinet of polished redwood offered to the eye a regiment of some two hundred bottles, conspicuously labelled. These were all charged with Pinkerton's Thirteen Star, although from across the room it would have required an expert to distinguish them from the same number of bottles of Courvoisier. I used to twit my friend with this resemblance, and propose a new edition of the pamphlet, with the title thus improved: _Why Drink French Brandy, when we give you the same labels?_ The doors of the cabinet revolved all day upon their hinges; and if there entered any one who was a stranger to the merits of the brand, he departed laden with a bottle. When I used to protest at this extravagance, "My dear Loudon," Pinkerton would cry, "you don't seem to catch on to business principles! The prime cost of the spirit is literally nothing. I couldn't find a cheaper advertisement if I tried." Against the side post of the cabinet there leaned a gaudy umbrella, preserved there as a relic. It appears that when Pinkerton was about to place Thirteen Star upon the market, the rainy season was at hand. He lay dark, almost in penury, awaiting the first shower, at which, as upon a signal, the main thoroughfares became dotted with his agents, vendors of advertisements; and the whole world of San Francisco, from the businessman fleeing for the ferry-boat, to the lady waiting at the corner for her car, sheltered itself under umbrellas with this

strange device: Are you wet? Try Thirteen Star. "It was a mammoth boom," said Pinkerton, with a sigh of delighted recollection. "There wasn't another umbrella to be seen. I stood at this window, Loudon, feasting my eyes; and I declare, I felt like Vanderbilt." And it was to this neat application of the local climate that he owed, not only much of the sale of Thirteen Star, but the whole business of his advertising agency.

The large desk (to resume our survey of the office) stood about the middle, knee-deep in stacks of handbills and posters, of *_Why Drink French Brandy?_* and *_The Advertiser's Vade-Mecum._* It was flanked upon the one hand by two female type-writers, who rested not between the hours of nine and four, and upon the other by a model of the agricultural machine. The walls, where they were not broken by telephone boxes and a couple of photographs--one representing the wreck of the James L. Moody on a bold and broken coast, the other the Saturday tug alive with amateur fishers--almost disappeared under oil-paintings gaudily framed. Many of these were relics of the Latin Quarter, and I must do Pinkerton the justice to say that none of them were bad, and some had remarkable merit. They went off slowly but for handsome figures; and their places were progressively supplied with the work of local artists. These last it was one of my first duties to review and criticise. Some of them were villainous, yet all were saleable. I said so; and the next moment saw myself, the figure of a miserable renegade, bearing arms in the wrong camp. I was to look at pictures thenceforward, not with the eye of the artist, but the dealer; and I saw the stream widen that divided me from all I loved.

"Now, Loudon," Pinkerton had said, the morning after the lecture, "now Loudon, we can go at it shoulder to shoulder. This is what I have longed for: I wanted two heads and four arms; and now I have 'em. You'll find it's just the same as art--all observation and imagination; only more movement. Just wait till you begin to feel the charm!"

I might have waited long. Perhaps I lack a sense; for our whole existence seemed to me one dreary bustle, and the place we bustled in fitly to be called the Place of Yawning. I slept in a little den behind the office; Pinkerton, in the office itself, stretched on a patent sofa which sometimes collapsed, his slumbers still further menaced by an imminent clock with an alarm. Roused by this diabolical contrivance, we rose early, went forth early to breakfast, and returned by nine to what Pinkerton called work, and I distraction. Masses of letters must be opened, read, and answered; some by me at a subsidiary desk which had been introduced on the morning of my arrival; others by my bright-eyed friend, pacing the room like a caged lion as he dictated to the tinkling type-writers. Masses of wet proof had to be overhauled and scrawled upon with a blue pencil--"rustic"--"six-inch caps"--"bold spacing here"--or sometimes terms more fervid, as for instance this, which I remember Pinkerton to have spirted on the margin of an advertisement of Soothing Syrup: "Throw this all down. Have you never printed an advertisement? I'll be round in half an hour." The ledger and sale-book, besides, we had always with us. Such was the backbone of our occupation, and tolerable enough; but the far greater proportion of our time was

consumed by visitors, whole-souled, grand fellows no doubt, and as sharp as a needle, but to me unfortunately not diverting. Some were apparently half-witted, and must be talked over by the hour before they could reach the humblest decision, which they only left the office to return again (ten minutes later) and rescind. Others came with a vast show of hurry and despatch, but I observed it to be principally show. The agricultural model for instance, which was practicable, proved a kind of flypaper for these busybodies. I have seen them blankly turn the crank of it for five minutes at a time, simulating (to nobody's deception) business interest: "Good thing this, Pinkerton? Sell much of it? Ha! Couldn't use it, I suppose, as a medium of advertisement for my article?"--which was perhaps toilet soap. Others (a still worse variety) carried us to neighbouring saloons to dice for cocktails and (after the cocktails were paid) for dollars on a corner of the counter. The attraction of dice for all these people was indeed extraordinary: at a certain club, where I once dined in the character of "my partner, Mr. Dodd," the dice-box came on the table with the wine, an artless substitute for after-dinner wit.

Of all our visitors, I believe I preferred Emperor Norton; the very mention of whose name reminds me I am doing scanty justice to the folks of San Francisco. In what other city would a harmless madman who supposed himself emperor of the two Americas have been so fostered and encouraged? Where else would even the people of the streets have respected the poor soul's illusion? Where else would bankers and merchants have received his visits, cashed his cheques, and submitted to his small assessments? Where else would he have been suffered to attend

and address the exhibition days of schools and colleges? where else, in God's green earth, have taken his pick of restaurants, ransacked the bill of fare, and departed scathless? They tell me he was even an exacting patron, threatening to withdraw his custom when dissatisfied; and I can believe it, for his face wore an expression distinctly gastronomical. Pinkerton had received from this monarch a cabinet appointment; I have seen the brevet, wondering mainly at the good nature of the printer who had executed the forms, and I think my friend was at the head either of foreign affairs or education: it mattered, indeed, nothing, the presentation being in all offices identical. It was at a comparatively early date that I saw Jim in the exercise of his public functions. His Majesty entered the office--a portly, rather flabby man, with the face of a gentleman, rendered unspeakably pathetic and absurd by the great sabre at his side and the peacock's feather in his hat.

"I have called to remind you, Mr. Pinkerton, that you are somewhat in arrear of taxes," he said, with old-fashioned, stately courtesy.

"Well, your Majesty, what is the amount?" asked Jim; and when the figure was named (it was generally two or three dollars), paid upon the nail and offered a bonus in the shape of Thirteen Star.

"I am always delighted to patronise native industries," said Norton the First. "San Francisco is public-spirited in what concerns its Emperor; and indeed, sir, of all my domains, it is my favourite city."

"Come," said I, when he was gone, "I prefer that customer to the lot."

"It's really rather a distinction," Jim admitted. "I think it must have been the umbrella racket that attracted him."

We were distinguished under the rose by the notice of other and greater men. There were days when Jim wore an air of unusual capacity and resolve, spoke with more brevity like one pressed for time, and took often on his tongue such phrases as "Longhurst told me so this morning," or "I had it straight from Longhurst himself." It was no wonder, I used to think, that Pinkerton was called to council with such Titans; for the creature's quickness and resource were beyond praise. In the early days when he consulted me without reserve, pacing the room, projecting, ciphering, extending hypothetical interests, trebling imaginary capital, his "engine" (to renew an excellent old word) labouring full steam ahead, I could never decide whether my sense of respect or entertainment were the stronger. But these good hours were destined to curtailment.

"Yes, it's smart enough," I once observed. "But, Pinkerton, do you think it's honest?"

"You don't think it's honest!" he wailed. "O dear me, that ever I should have heard such an expression on your lips!"

At sight of his distress, I plagiarised unblushingly from Myner. "You

seem to think honesty as simple as Blind Man's Buff," said I. "It's a more delicate affair than that: delicate as any art."

"O well! at that rate!" he exclaimed, with complete relief. "That's casuistry."

"I am perfectly certain of one thing: that what you propose is dishonest," I returned.

"Well, say no more about it. That's settled," he replied.

Thus, almost at a word, my point was carried. But the trouble was that such differences continued to recur, until we began to regard each other with alarm. If there were one thing Pinkerton valued himself upon, it was his honesty; if there were one thing he clung to, it was my good opinion; and when both were involved, as was the case in these commercial cruces, the man was on the rack. My own position, if you consider how much I owed him, how hateful is the trade of fault-finder, and that yet I lived and fattened on these questionable operations, was perhaps equally distressing. If I had been more sterling or more combative things might have gone extremely far. But, in truth, I was just base enough to profit by what was not forced on my attention, rather than seek scenes: Pinkerton quite cunning enough to avail himself of my weakness; and it was a relief to both when he began to involve his proceedings in a decent mystery.

Our last dispute, which had a most unlooked-for consequence, turned on the refitting of condemned ships. He had bought a miserable hulk, and came, rubbing his hands, to inform me she was already on the slip, under a new name, to be repaired. When first I had heard of this industry I suppose I scarcely comprehended; but much discussion had sharpened my faculties, and now my brow became heavy.

"I can be no party to that, Pinkerton," said I.

He leaped like a man shot. "What next?" he cried. "What ails you, anyway? You seem to me to dislike everything that's profitable."

"This ship has been condemned by Lloyd's agent," said I.

"But I tell you it's a deal. The ship's in splendid condition; there's next to nothing wrong with her but the garboard streak and the sternpost. I tell you Lloyd's is a ring like everybody else; only it's an English ring, and that's what deceives you. If it was American, you would be crying it down all day. It's Anglomania, common Anglomania," he cried, with growing irritation.

"I will not make money by risking men's lives," was my ultimatum.

"Great Caesar! isn't all speculation a risk? Isn't the fairest kind of shipowning to risk men's lives? And mining--how's that for risk? And look at the elevator business--there's danger, if you like! Didn't I

take my risk when I bought her? She might have been too far gone; and where would I have been? Loudon," he cried, "I tell you the truth: you're too full of refinement for this world!"

"I condemn you out of your own lips," I replied. "'The fairest kind of shipowning,' says you. If you please, let us only do the fairest kind of business."

The shot told; the Irrepressible was silenced; and I profited by the chance to pour in a broadside of another sort. He was all sunk in money-getting, I pointed out; he never dreamed of anything but dollars. Where were all his generous, progressive sentiments? Where was his culture? I asked. And where was the American Type?

"It's true, Loudon," he cried, striding up and down the room, and wildly scouring at his hair. "You're perfectly right. I'm becoming materialised. O, what a thing to have to say, what a confession to make! Materialised! Me! Loudon, this must go on no longer. You've been a loyal friend to me once more; give me your hand!--you've saved me again. I must do something to rouse the spiritual side; something desperate; study something, something dry and tough. What shall it be? Theology? Algebra? What's Algebra?"

"It's dry and tough enough," said I; " $a^2 + 2ab + b^2$."

"It's stimulating, though?" he inquired.

I told him I believed so, and that it was considered fortifying to Types.

"Then that's the thing for me. I'll study Algebra," he concluded.

The next day, by application to one of his type-writing women, he got word of a young lady, one Miss Mamie McBride, who was willing and able to conduct him in these bloomless meadows; and, her circumstances being lean, and terms consequently moderate, he and Mamie were soon in agreement for two lessons in the week. He took fire with unexampled rapidity; he seemed unable to tear himself away from the symbolic art; an hour's lesson occupied the whole evening; and the original two was soon increased to four, and then to five. I bade him beware of female blandishments. "The first thing you know, you'll be falling in love with the algebraist," said I.

"Don't say it even in jest," he cried. "She's a lady I revere. I could no more lay a hand upon her than I could upon a spirit. Loudon, I don't believe God ever made a purer-minded woman."

Which appeared to me too fervent to be reassuring.

Meanwhile I had been long expostulating with my friend upon a different matter. "I'm the fifth wheel," I kept telling him. "For any use I am, I might as well be in Senegambia. The letters you give me to attend

to might be answered by a sucking child. And I tell you what it is, Pinkerton: either you've got to find me some employment, or I'll have to start in and find it for myself."

This I said with a corner of my eye in the usual quarter, toward the arts, little dreaming what destiny was to provide.

"I've got it, Loudon," Pinkerton at last replied. "Got the idea on the Potrero cars. Found I hadn't a pencil, borrowed one from the conductor, and figured on it roughly all the way in town. I saw it was the thing at last; gives you a real show. All your talents and accomplishments come in. Here's a sketch advertisement. Just run your eye over it. 'Sun, Ozone, and Music! PINKERTON'S HEBDOMADARY PICNICS!' (That's a good, catching phrase, 'hebdomadary,' though it's hard to say. I made a note of it when I was looking in the dictionary how to spell hexagonal. 'Well, you're a boss word,' I said. 'Before you're very much older, I'll have you in type as long as yourself.' And here it is, you see.) 'Five dollars a head, and ladies free. MONSTER OLIO OF ATTRACTIONS.' (How does that strike you?) 'Free luncheon under the greenwood tree. Dance on the elastic sward. Home again in the Bright Evening Hours. Manager and Honorary Steward, H. Loudon Dodd, Esq., the well-known connoisseur.'"

Singular how a man runs from Scylla to Charybdis! I was so intent on securing the disappearance of a single epithet that I accepted the rest

of the advertisement and all that it involved without discussion. So it befell that the words "well-known connoisseur" were deleted; but that H. Loudon Dodd became manager and honorary steward of Pinkerton's Hebdomadary Picnics, soon shortened, by popular consent, to the Dromedary.

By eight o'clock, any Sunday morning, I was to be observed by an admiring public on the wharf. The garb and attributes of sacrifice consisted of a black frock coat, rosetted, its pockets bulging with sweetmeats and inferior cigars, trousers of light blue, a silk hat like a reflector, and a varnished wand. A goodly steamer guarded my one flank, panting and throbbing, flags fluttering fore and aft of her, illustrative of the Dromedary and patriotism. My other flank was covered by the ticket-office, strongly held by a trusty character of the Scots persuasion, rosetted like his superior and smoking a cigar to mark the occasion festive. At half-past, having assured myself that all was well with the free luncheons, I lit a cigar myself, and awaited the strains of the "Pioneer Band." I had never to wait long--they were German and punctual--and by a few minutes after the half-hour, I would hear them booming down street with a long military roll of drums, some score of gratuitous asses prancing at the head in bearskin hats and buckskin aprons, and conspicuous with resplendent axes. The band, of course, we paid for; but so strong is the San Franciscan passion for public masquerade, that the asses (as I say) were all gratuitous, pranced for the love of it, and cost us nothing but their luncheon.

The musicians formed up in the bows of my steamer, and struck into a skittish polka; the asses mounted guard upon the gangway and the ticket-office; and presently after, in family parties of father, mother, and children, in the form of duplicate lovers or in that of solitary youth, the public began to descend upon us by the carful at a time; four to six hundred perhaps, with a strong German flavour, and all merry as children. When these had been shepherded on board, and the inevitable belated two or three had gained the deck amidst the cheering of the public, the hawser was cast off, and we plunged into the bay.

And now behold the honorary steward in hour of duty and glory; see me circulate amid crowd, radiating affability and laughter, liberal with my sweetmeats and cigars. I say unblushing things to hobbledehoy girls, tell shy young persons this is the married people's boat, roguishly ask the abstracted if they are thinking of their sweethearts, offer Paterfamilias a cigar, am struck with the beauty and grow curious about the age of mamma's youngest who (I assure her gaily) will be a man before his mother; or perhaps it may occur to me, from the sensible expression of her face, that she is a person of good counsel, and I ask her earnestly if she knows any particularly pleasant place on the Saucelito or San Rafael coast, for the scene of our picnic is always supposed to be uncertain. The next moment I am back at my giddy badinage with the young ladies, wakening laughter as I go, and leaving in my wake applausive comments of "Isn't Mr. Dodd a funny gentleman?" and "O, I think he's just too nice!"

An hour having passed in this airy manner, I start upon my rounds afresh, with a bag full of coloured tickets, all with pins attached, and all with legible inscriptions: "Old Germany," "California," "True Love," "Old Fogies," "La Belle France," "Green Erin," "The Land of Cakes," "Washington," "Blue Jay," "Robin Red-Breast,"--twenty of each denomination; for when it comes to the luncheon, we sit down by twenties. These are distributed with anxious tact--for, indeed, this is the most delicate part of my functions--but outwardly with reckless unconcern, amidst the gayest flutter and confusion; and are immediately after sported upon hats and bonnets, to the extreme diffusion of cordiality, total strangers hailing each other by "the number of their mess"--so we humorously name it--and the deck ringing with cries of, "Here, all Blue Jays to the rescue!" or, "I say, am I alone in this blame' ship? Ain't there no more Californians?"

By this time we are drawing near to the appointed spot. I mount upon the bridge, the observed of all observers.

"Captain," I say, in clear, emphatic tones, heard far and wide, "the majority of the company appear to be in favour of the little cove beyond One Tree Point."

"All right, Mr. Dodd," responds the captain, heartily; "all one to me. I am not exactly sure of the place you mean; but just you stay here and pilot me."

I do, pointing with my wand. I do pilot him, to the inexpressible entertainment of the picnic; for I am (why should I deny it?) the popular man. We slow down off the mouth of a grassy valley, watered by a brook, and set in pines and redwoods. The anchor is let go; the boats are lowered, two of them already packed with the materials of an impromptu bar; and the Pioneer Band, accompanied by the resplendent asses, fill the other, and move shoreward to the inviting strains of Buffalo Gals, won't you come out to-night? It is a part of our programme that one of the asses shall, from sheer clumsiness, in the course of this embarkation, drop a dummy axe into the water, whereupon the mirth of the picnic can hardly be assuaged. Upon one occasion, the dummy axe floated, and the laugh turned rather the wrong way.

In from ten to twenty minutes the boats are along-side again, the messes are marshalled separately on the deck, and the picnic goes ashore, to find the band and the impromptu bar awaiting them. Then come the hampers, which are piled upon the beach, and surrounded by a stern guard of stalwart asses, axe on shoulder. It is here I take my place, note-book in hand, under a banner bearing the legend, "Come here for hampers." Each hamper contains a complete outfit for a separate twenty, cold provender, plates, glasses, knives, forks, and spoons: an agonized printed appeal from the fevered pen of Pinkerton, pasted on the inside of the lid, beseeches that care be taken of the glass and silver. Beer, wine, and lemonade are flowing already from the bar, and the various clans of twenty file away into the woods, with bottles under their arms, and the hampers strung upon a stick. Till one they feast there, in a

very moderate seclusion, all being within earshot of the band. From one till four, dancing takes place upon the grass; the bar does a roaring business; and the honorary steward, who has already exhausted himself to bring life into the dulllest of the messes, must now indefatigably dance with the plainest of the women. At four a bugle-call is sounded; and by half-past behold us on board again, pioneers, corrugated iron bar, empty bottles, and all; while the honorary steward, free at last, subsides into the captain's cabin over a brandy and soda and a book. Free at last, I say; yet there remains before him the frantic leave-takings at the pier, and a sober journey up to Pinkerton's office with two policemen and the day's takings in a bag.

What I have here sketched was the routine. But we appealed to the taste of San Francisco more distinctly in particular fetes. "Ye Olde Time Pycke-Nycke," largely advertised in hand-bills beginning "Oyez, Oyez!" and largely frequented by knights, monks, and cavaliers, was drowned out by unseasonable rain, and returned to the city one of the saddest spectacles I ever remember to have witnessed. In pleasing contrast, and certainly our chief success, was "The Gathering of the Clans," or Scottish picnic. So many milk-white knees were never before simultaneously exhibited in public, and to judge by the prevalence of "Royal Stewart" and the number of eagle's feathers, we were a high-born company. I threw forward the Scottish flank of my own ancestry, and passed muster as a clansman with applause. There was, indeed, but one small cloud on this red-letter day. I had laid in a large supply of the national beverage, in the shape of The "Rob Roy MacGregor O" Blend,

Warranted Old and Vatted; and this must certainly have been a generous spirit, for I had some anxious work between four and half-past, conveying on board the inanimate forms of chieftains.

To one of our ordinary festivities, where he was the life and soul of his own mess, Pinkerton himself came incognito, bringing the algebraist on his arm. Miss Mamie proved to be a well-enough-looking mouse, with a large, limpid eye, very good manners, and a flow of the most correct expressions I have ever heard upon the human lip. As Pinkerton's incognito was strict, I had little opportunity to cultivate the lady's acquaintance; but I was informed afterwards that she considered me "the wittiest gentleman she had ever met." "The Lord mend your taste in wit!" thought I; but I cannot conceal that such was the general impression. One of my pleasantries even went the round of San Francisco, and I have heard it (myself all unknown) bandied in saloons. To be unknown began at last to be a rare experience; a bustle woke upon my passage; above all, in humble neighbourhoods. "Who's that?" one would ask, and the other would cry, "That! Why, Dromedary Dodd!" or, with withering scorn, "Not know Mr. Dodd of the Picnics? Well!" and indeed I think it marked a rather barren destiny; for our picnics, if a trifle vulgar, were as gay and innocent as the age of gold; I am sure no people divert themselves so easily and so well: and even with the cares of my stewardship, I was often happy to be there.

Indeed, there were but two drawbacks in the least considerable. The first was my terror of the hobbledehoy girls, to whom (from the demands

of my situation) I was obliged to lay myself so open. The other, if less momentous, was more mortifying. In early days, at my mother's knee, as a man may say, I had acquired the unenviable accomplishment (which I have never since been able to lose) of singing _Just before the Battle._ I have what the French call a fillet of voice, my best notes scarce audible about a dinner-table, and the upper register rather to be regarded as a higher power of silence: experts tell me besides that I sing flat; nor, if I were the best singer in the world, does _Just before the Battle_ occur to my mature taste as the song that I would choose to sing. In spite of all which considerations, at one picnic, memorably dull, and after I had exhausted every other art of pleasing, I gave, in desperation, my one song. From that hour my doom was gone forth. Either we had a chronic passenger (though I could never detect him), or the very wood and iron of the steamer must have retained the tradition. At every successive picnic word went round that Mr. Dodd was a singer; that Mr. Dodd sang _Just before the Battle_, and finally that now was the time when Mr. Dodd sang _Just before the Battle;_ so that the thing became a fixture like the dropping of the dummy axe, and you are to conceive me, Sunday after Sunday, piping up my lamentable ditty and covered, when it was done, with gratuitous applause. It is a beautiful trait in human nature that I was invariably offered an encore.

I was well paid, however, even to sing. Pinkerton and I, after an average Sunday, had five hundred dollars to divide. Nay, and the picnics were the means, although indirectly, of bringing me a singular windfall. This was at the end of the season, after the "Grand Farewell Fancy Dress

Gala." Many of the hampers had suffered severely; and it was judged wiser to save storage, dispose of them, and lay in a fresh stock when the campaign re-opened. Among my purchasers was a workingman of the name of Speedy, to whose house, after several unavailing letters, I must proceed in person, wondering to find myself once again on the wrong side, and playing the creditor to some one else's debtor. Speedy was in the belligerent stage of fear. He could not pay. It appeared he had already resold the hampers, and he defied me to do my worst. I did not like to lose my own money; I hated to lose Pinkerton's; and the bearing of my creditor incensed me.

"Do you know, Mr. Speedy, that I can send you to the penitentiary?" said I, willing to read him a lesson.

The dire expression was overheard in the next room. A large, fresh, motherly Irishwoman ran forth upon the instant, and fell to besiege me with caresses and appeals. "Sure now, and ye couldn't have the heart to ut, Mr. Dodd, you, that's so well known to be a pleasant gentleman; and it's a pleasant face ye have, and the picture of me own brother that's dead and gone. It's a truth that he's been drinking. Ye can smell it off of him, more blame to him. But, indade, and there's nothing in the house beyont the furnicher, and Thim Stock. It's the stock that ye'll be taking, dear. A sore penny it has cost me, first and last, and by all tales, not worth an owld tobacco pipe." Thus adjured, and somewhat embarrassed by the stern attitude I had adopted, I suffered myself to be invested with a considerable quantity of what is called wild-cat stock,

in which this excellent if illogical female had been squandering her hard-earned gold. It could scarce be said to better my position, but the step quieted the woman; and, on the other hand, I could not think I was taking much risk, for the shares in question (they were those of what I will call the Catamount Silver Mine) had fallen some time before to the bed-rock quotation, and now lay perfectly inert, or were only kicked (like other waste paper) about the kennel of the exchange by bankrupt speculators.

A month or two after, I perceived by the stock-list that Catamount had taken a bound; before afternoon, "thim stock" were worth a quite considerable pot of money; and I learned, upon inquiry, that a bonanza had been found in a condemned lead, and the mine was now expected to do wonders. Remarkable to philosophers how bonanzas are found in condemned leads, and how the stock is always at freezing-point immediately before! By some stroke of chance the, Speedys had held on to the right thing; they had escaped the syndicate; yet a little more, if I had not come to dun them, and Mrs. Speedy would have been buying a silk dress. I could not bear, of course, to profit by the accident, and returned to offer restitution. The house was in a bustle; the neighbours (all stock-gamblers themselves) had crowded to condole; and Mrs. Speedy sat with streaming tears, the centre of a sympathetic group. "For fifteen year I've been at ut," she was lamenting, as I entered, "and grudging the babes the very milk, more shame to me! to pay their dhirty assessments. And now, my dears, I should be a lady, and driving in my

coach, if all had their rights; and a sorrow on that man Dodd! As soon as I set eyes on him, I seen the divil was in the house."

It was upon these words that I made my entrance, which was therefore dramatic enough, though nothing to what followed. For when it appeared that I was come to restore the lost fortune, and when Mrs. Speedy (after copiously weeping on my bosom) had refused the restitution, and when Mr. Speedy (summoned to that end from a camp of the Grand Army of the Republic) had added his refusal, and when I had insisted, and they had insisted, and the neighbours had applauded and supported each of us in turn; and when at last it was agreed we were to hold the stock together, and share the proceeds in three parts--one for me, one for Mr. Speedy, and one for his spouse--I will leave you to conceive the enthusiasm that reigned in that small, bare apartment, with the sewing-machine in the one corner, and the babes asleep in the other, and pictures of Garfield and the Battle of Gettysburg on the yellow walls. Port wine was had in by a sympathiser, and we drank it mingled with tears.

"And I dhrink to your health, my dear," sobbed Mrs. Speedy, especially affected by my gallantry in the matter of the third share; "and I'm sure we all dhrink to his health--Mr. Dodd of the picnics, no gentleman better known than him; and it's my prayer, dear, the good God may be long spared to see ye in health and happiness!"

In the end I was the chief gainer; for I sold my third while it was worth five thousand dollars, but the Speedys more adventurously held on

until the syndicate reversed the process, when they were happy to escape with perhaps a quarter of that sum. It was just as well; for the bulk of the money was (in Pinkerton's phrase) reinvested; and when next I saw Mrs. Speedy, she was still gorgeously dressed from the proceeds of the late success, but was already moist with tears over the new catastrophe. "We're froze out, me darlin'! All the money we had, dear, and the sewing-machine, and Jim's uniform, was in the Golden West; and the vipers has put on a new assessment."

By the end of the year, therefore, this is how I stood. I had made

By Catamount Silver Mine.....	\$5,000
By the picnics.....	3,000
By the lecture.....	600
By profit and loss on capital in Pinkerton's business.....	1,350

	\$9,950

to which must be added

What remained of my grandfather's donation.....	8,500

	\$18,450

It appears, on the other hand, that

I had spent..... 4,000

Which thus left me to the good..... \$14,450

A result on which I am not ashamed to say I looked with gratitude and pride. Some eight thousand (being late conquest) was liquid and actually tractile in the bank; the rest whirled beyond reach and even sight (save in the mirror of a balance-sheet) under the compelling spell of wizard Pinkerton. Dollars of mine were tacking off the shores of Mexico, in peril of the deep and the guarda-costas; they rang on saloon-counters in the city of Tombstone, Arizona; they shone in faro-tents among the mountain diggings; the imagination flagged in following them, so wide were they diffused, so briskly they span to the turning of the wizard's crank. But here, there, or everywhere I could still tell myself it was all mine, and what was more convincing, draw substantial dividends. My fortune, I called it; and it represented, when expressed in dollars, or even British pounds, an honest pot of money; when extended into francs, a veritable fortune. Perhaps I have let the cat out of the bag; perhaps you see already where my hopes were pointing, and begin to blame my inconsistency. But I must first tell you my excuse, and the change that had befallen Pinkerton.

About a week after the picnic to which he escorted Mamie, Pinkerton avowed the state of his affections. From what I had observed on board

the steamer, where methought Mamie waited on him with her limpid eyes, I encouraged the bashful lover to proceed; and the very next evening he was carrying me to call on his affianced.

"You must befriend her, Loudon, as you have always befriended me," he said, pathetically.

"By saying disagreeable things? I doubt if that be the way to a young lady's favour," I replied; "and since this picnicking I begin to be a man of some experience."

"Yes, you do nobly there; I can't describe how I admire you," he cried.

"Not that she will ever need it; she has had every advantage. God knows what I have done to deserve her. O man, what a responsibility this is for a rough fellow and not always truthful!"

"Brace up, old man, brace up!" said I.

But when we reached Mamie's boarding-house, it was almost with tears that he presented me. "Here is Loudon, Mamie," were his words. "I want you to love him; he has a grand nature."

"You are certainly no stranger to me, Mr. Dodd," was her gracious expression. "James is never weary of descanting on your goodness."

"My dear lady," said I, "when you know our friend a little better,

you will make a large allowance for his warm heart. My goodness has consisted in allowing him to feed and clothe and toil for me when he could ill afford it. If I am now alive, it is to him I owe it; no man had a kinder friend. You must take good care of him," I added, laying my hand on his shoulder, "and keep him in good order, for he needs it."

Pinkerton was much affected by this speech, and so, I fear, was Mamie. I admit it was a tactless performance. "When you know our friend a little better," was not happily said; and even "keep him in good order, for he needs it" might be construed into matter of offence; but I lay it before you in all confidence of your acquittal: was the general tone of it "patronising"? Even if such was the verdict of the lady, I cannot but suppose the blame was neither wholly hers nor wholly mine; I cannot but suppose that Pinkerton had already sickened the poor woman of my very name; so that if I had come with the songs of Apollo, she must still have been disgusted.

Here, however, were two finger-posts to Paris. Jim was going to be married, and so had the less need of my society. I had not pleased his bride, and so was, perhaps, better absent. Late one evening I broached the idea to my friend. It had been a great day for me; I had just banked my five thousand catamountain dollars; and as Jim had refused to lay a finger on the stock, risk and profit were both wholly mine, and I was celebrating the event with stout and crackers. I began by telling him that if it caused him any pain or any anxiety about his affairs, he had but to say the word, and he should hear no more of my proposal. He was

the truest and best friend I ever had or was ever like to have; and it would be a strange thing if I refused him any favour he was sure he wanted. At the same time I wished him to be sure; for my life was wasting in my hands. I was like one from home; all my true interests summoned me away. I must remind him, besides, that he was now about to marry and assume new interests, and that our extreme familiarity might be even painful to his wife.--"O no, Loudon; I feel you are wrong there," he interjected warmly; "she DOES appreciate your nature."--So much the better, then, I continued; and went on to point out that our separation need not be for long; that, in the way affairs were going, he might join me in two years with a fortune, small, indeed, for the States, but in France almost conspicuous; that we might unite our resources, and have one house in Paris for the winter and a second near Fontainebleau for summer, where we could be as happy as the day was long, and bring up little Pinkertons as practical artistic workmen, far from the money-hunger of the West. "Let me go then," I concluded; "not as a deserter, but as the vanguard, to lead the march of the Pinkerton men."

So I argued and pleaded, not without emotion; my friend sitting opposite, resting his chin upon his hand and (but for that single interjection) silent. "I have been looking for this, Loudon," said he, when I had done. "It does pain me, and that's the fact--I'm so miserably selfish. And I believe it's a death blow to the picnics; for it's idle to deny that you were the heart and soul of them with your wand and your gallant bearing, and wit and humour and chivalry, and throwing that kind

of society atmosphere about the thing. But for all that, you're right, and you ought to go. You may count on forty dollars a week; and if Depew City--one of nature's centres for this State--pan out the least as I expect, it may be double. But it's forty dollars anyway; and to think that two years ago you were almost reduced to beggary!"

"I WAS reduced to it," said I.

"Well, the brutes gave you nothing, and I'm glad of it now!" cried Jim. "It's the triumphant return I glory in! Think of the master, and that cold-blooded Myner too! Yes, just let the Depew City boom get on its legs, and you shall go; and two years later, day for day, I'll shake hands with you in Paris, with Mamie on my arm, God bless her!"

We talked in this vein far into the night. I was myself so exultant in my new-found liberty, and Pinkerton so proud of my triumph, so happy in my happiness, in so warm a glow about the gallant little woman of his choice, and the very room so filled with castles in the air and cottages at Fontainebleau, that it was little wonder if sleep fled our eyelids, and three had followed two upon the office clock before Pinkerton unfolded the mechanism of his patent sofa.