

Written for *The Flag of Our Union*

## *The Double Puzzle*

by Frances Mary Schoolcraft

GEORGE VINCENT awoke one morning with a fixed idea in his mind that “something must be done.” It was not a sudden sense of the excellence of Mr. Longfellow’s advice to be “up and doing” that had struck him, although he had no more clearly defined idea in his mind of the nature of the something than if he had been moved only by an abstract impulse to action. All he knew was that it must result in money. His pecuniary affairs had arrived at a conjuncture when *something* is inevitable, and his anxiety arose from his desire to get the innings, and be the agent, instead of the object, of the next financial operation in which his name should figure. He was on the brink of ruin, and the peculiar dizziness produced by that insecure position often makes men so insane that they plunge headforemost into it, when a little steadier nerve would show them some way to avoid the plunge altogether. He went to his office, revolving schemes in his mind to raise sums of money, all of which schemes were very ingenious but utterly impracticable, unless he had had money already. He found no comfort in his office; there was a cold and unfeeling missive from the notary public, in regard to a rash engagement made by Vincent some sixty days since, to pay a certain sum of money upon a day already elapsed; and various demands for money from various sources, all more or less expected, but none the more welcome. Vincent did very little that day but to rush frantically up and down State street, as uselessly as if he was trying to add a cubit to his stature, and trying the while to look as if he were only under an ordinary press of business—yes, and flattering himself that he succeeded, too, as if his friends and fellow-merchants did not cheerfully and phlegmatically exchange prophecies in his wake, that “Vincent would go up before long.” He believed that his ascension was only looked for by himself, or if he supposed others shared in his anticipation, he was only the more anxious to disappoint them.

The something that should work his salvation had not yet been done, when he turned his back on the city, and was transported to the bosom of his family, in the pleasant suburban village of Effingham. The bosom alluded to was rather a narrow and contracted one, being mainly represented by that which was covered by the chaste, matronly alpaca robes of Mrs. George Vincent, an irreproachable and unapproachable female who had arrived at the stage of acetous fermentation. Among Vincent’s many unprofitable speculations, his matrimonial speculations had been one of the most inauspicious. This, however, is not remarkable, it being open to demonstration that if a human being commits an act of utter fatuity on only one day in the whole threescore and ten years allotted to his life, the odds [are] about 25550 to 1 that that day is his or her wedding-day. The happily married (for such I am informed there be) probably deriving the same augmented joy from the general misery as some soft-headed divine supposed that the blessed in heaven will receive from the contemplation of their quondam friends in everlasting flames. Vincent had the less excuse because he had been married once, already; and why he married Miss Arabella Day was a question that more than once puzzled even himself, after the deed was irrevocably done. But he was a man who was apt to let himself be led away by circumstances, although not, strictly speaking, what is generally called a weak character. There were various things that made their union inharmonious. Vincent was rather hasty and blunt in

his manner, and free and generous in disposition. Mrs. Vincent was very much the reverse. For all that, they might have agreed very well, only for a few peculiarities of Mrs. Vincent's, one of which was to refuse to agree very well with anybody that she ought to agree with. There were several ways in which she manifested her independence. In the first place, Arabella was indigenous to the soil of Effingham, and Vincent was an exotic, and sometimes made some remarks on his neighbors which she invariably resented, whether *she* had ever said the same of them or not. Then a portion of the aforesaid soil of Effingham belonged to Arabella, and upon that lot of land Vincent built a house. Arabella considered the improvement to be hers, as much as the land, and whenever Vincent made any suggestion about the management of the house, or extending its hospitalities, Arabella immediately said something about "*My house.*" Mr. Vincent at first hinted at some share in the proprietorship, but he desisted, because he soon discovered that the use of the personal pronoun in the first person, and more especially in the possessive case, was a leading necessity in Mrs. Vincent's lingual constitution.

A second unsatisfactory event for Vincent was the discovery that he was to have his wife's brother permanently quartered upon him. In the early days of his marriage, Vincent had taken his brother-in-law as a clerk, and had joined in Arabella's invitation to him to "stay a few weeks" with them. He would have been glad to have seen the last of him, both as clerk and guest; but Arabella was resolute in her will to have *her* brother retained in both capacities; and, in fact, it was a grievance that he was not made a partner. But Vincent asserted that the young man's abilities did not atone for his want of capital, nor his virtues atone for his want of either the one or the other, and remained deaf to arguments and upbraidings. Mrs. Vincent was not very fondly attached to her brother, but then—he was *her* brother. Vincent did not find this an all-sufficing quality. Mr. Frederick Day's other qualities were not very striking, but he had no vices. He never drank anything but milk and water (not commingled), he frequented no places of public amusement save lectures and concerts of the most unblemished standing; he did not know the ace of hearts from the Jack of clubs; he used no inelegant or expletive language; he went to bed early and got up early; he went to church twice every Sunday, and treated "the ladies," as he was careful to designate all women, with the most gracious courtesy, unmarred by aught like levity, and fulfilled, in short, all the requirements of an estimable member of society. If all this constitutes a perfect character, Frederick Day was one; if there is anything more required, I fear he fell a trifle short.

There was another discordant element in the family, besides Mrs. Vincent's brother, and that was Mr. Vincent's son, by his first marriage, who was now between twelve and thirteen. Miss Day had been very fond of the boy, but Mrs. Vincent was not; and as he advanced in years, he became more and more objectionable to her. In fact, Harry Vincent was not a "good boy," and managed to cover himself with disgrace in the eyes of his pastors and masters, wherever he went. His father sent him from one school to another, but no one found the right course of discipline for Harry Vincent's case. When he came home, he was sure to put his stepmother into a state of tragic wrath within twelve hours; and even his father, whose sympathies were of course on his side, had threatened him with the extreme penalty of the law, if he did not stop keeping the house in an uproar by his overt acts against his stepmother and her brother.

Such was the domestic Eden to which Vincent returned. He found Mrs. Vincent alone, with her war-paint on. This expression is purely symbolical, for Mrs. Vincent never would have been

guilty of the sin of improving her complexion by any means, much less of painting. Vincent feigned to be unconscious of the boding sings, and asked:

“Where is Frederick?”

“He has gone back to town to attend a lecture. *I* should have liked to have heard it.”

Vincent shunned the snare, and did not ask why she had not gone, but said:

“Where is Harry?”

“I do not know,” said Arabella, in a voice that said he ought to be ashamed of himself, wherever he was. Vincent abandoned that topic also, and did not try to advance any other.

After Vincent had concluded his repast, he retired to an arm-chair and an evening paper, in which he appeared to be absorbed, although he was really considering the great problem that had engaged him all day, and for many previous days. Mrs. Vincent broke the silence.

“Mr. Vincent!”

“Well!” said Vincent.

“When you are perfectly at leisure, I should like to speak to you.”

“Very well,” said Vincent.

There was a long pause. Again Arabella spoke.

“Mr. Vincent!”

“Well!”

“Did you hear me?”

“I am listening.”

“I said, when you are *perfectly* at leisure,” said Arabella.

Vincent laid down his paper, and turned himself and his chair together full towards her, with an air of undivided attention that should have conciliated her, but did not seem to have that effect. After a moment’s pause, which was a rhetorical effect, Mrs. Vincent commenced with a dignity tempered (and very ill-tempered, too,) with assumed humility:

“Mr. Vincent, I am very much in need of a small sum of money.”

“So am I,” said Vincent.

“I am *serious*,” said Arabella.

“So am I,” said Vincent.

Arabella’s fierce gray eye and bending beak were concentrated on her husband with a degree of flashing and dilating that would have set up twenty heroines in facial expression.

“Mr. Vincent,” she said, “I am not to be trifled with.”

“Mrs. Vincent,” said Vincent, “I would as soon trifle with an Indian devil. I have no money. I have told you so again and again.”

“I *know* you have,” said Arabella; and then she swept across the room, and made a short rustling in a drawer, and came back with a small sheaf of papers which she held out at arm’s length under her husband’s nose. Eyes would end the sentence more elegantly, but it was not to those features which Mrs. Vincent presented the documents.

“*Then*, sir,” she said, “since you absolutely *refuse* me the least use of *money*, which is *certainly* as much *mine* as *yours*, I must call on you to pay *these bills* yourself. Some of them have been sent in twice.”

“I’m very sorry,” said Vincent. “It isn’t pleasant to be dunned. But I can’t help it. I haven’t a dollar to-night. You may search my pockets, if you like.”

“*Search—your—pockets.*” said Arabella, with strong disdain. “I dare say you empty your pocketbook before you come home. You can give me a check.”

“Easily,” said Vincent, with a ghastly grin. “I have plenty of blank checks. Flying kites is a practice sanctioned by the great Franklin, but even he found that if persisted in, it is apt to produce a flare-up.”

Arabella was not pleased by this crackling of thorns.

“I don’t understand your *slang*, Mr. Vincent,” she said. “But I understand that you intend to refuse me any money whatever for the commonest necessities of life.”

Vincent started up, and said:

“Are you an utter idiot, Mrs. Vincent, or are you trying to drive me out of my senses by your ceaseless dunning? I have told you again and again, and I tell you now, that I do not know where to get any money. I am all but bankrupt now, and you may think yourself very lucky if this house isn’t sold over your head.”

“*My house!*” shrieked Arabella.

“Yours, or mine, or any one’s, it doesn’t much matter. You know it is all mortgaged, and I suppose you know what foreclosing a mortgage is.”

Mrs. Vincent knew about the mortgage, as a mere matter of fact, but she had a creed that her right to her land was, as it were, indefeasible, and stronger than any legal instrument whatever, even when executed by herself. She broke out in eloquent vituperations against her husband, which were interrupted by the entrance of Frederick Day, with a handkerchief before his face. There was a pause, and then Vincent asked:

“What is the matter, Day? Have you been in a fight?”

Arabella looked reproachfully at Vincent, and asked:

“What *is* the matter, Freddie? Have you got hurt?”

“Where is Henry?” asked Frederick, in muffled tones of stern indignation.

Henry, by the way, was not the youthful Vincent’s name; he had been christened Harry; but all the more for that. Frederick called him Henry because he said it ought to be his name.

“Harry?” said Vincent. “What has he been doing?”

“He has committed a most dastardly outrage!” said Freddy, withdrawing the handkerchief. “Look here!”

Frederick’s face was as black as that of a full-blooded negro of the blackest variety. Vincent burst out into a laugh, for the tragic sense of injury on Freddie’s transformed face was sufficiently ludicrous. But Arabella exclaimed:

“The abominable young ruffian! How did he do it, Freddie?”

Frederick did not know how the fell deed had been done. He had not discovered it until he was in the hall; but his suspicions fell at once upon his step-nephew. Arabella had no doubt that Frederick was right; and neither, indeed, had Vincent, the incorrigible Harry having done many things as base as this. A short search showed that Harry was not in the house, and Vincent, after a little trouble, succeeded in sending Arabella way, and remained alone to wait for the return of his unregenerate son. Vincent was somewhat incensed at Harry himself, not so much for the practical joke played on Mr. Day, as because he had disregarded the only very strict injunction his father laid upon him, which was not to be out late at night. It was at a very unseasonable hour that Master Vincent returned. His explanation was, that he had gone into town, to enjoy the effect of his jest, and had missed a train, and walked almost all the way out of town. Vincent gave him a rather more severe admonition than usual, owing, perhaps, to his irritated state of mind, and Harry responded that the next time he wouldn’t come home at all, and was ordered peremptorily to hold his tongue and go to bed. He refused to do either, and so his father carried him off bodily to his room in the attic, and administered a slight chastisement. All this made considerable noise, and Mrs. Vincent appeared, and said:

“Mr. Vincent, don’t kill the boy.”

There was no risk of life involved, but Vincent answered that it was none of her business if he did. However, he locked the door on Harry, and went down stairs, Mrs. Vincent following, and remarking that striking the boy brutally because he (Vincent) was angry at *her* was not punishment. Mr. Vincent responded that he himself would rather be thrashed than scolded, and there the domestic tragedy ended for that night.

The next morning, however, when Vincent came down stairs, he found that Arabella had devised a notable scheme for bringing him to repentance. The breakfast table was prepared for him alone, and the only viand it presented was a singularly forbidding looking loaf of uncut bread, by which there stood a pitcher of water and a glass. Vincent looked at this array for a moment, and then inquired into its meaning. Arabella answered him with reproving point.

“After what you have told me of your circumstances, Mr. Vincent, you cannot expect me to be so foolish and *criminal* as to maintain our customary style of living.”

This sentiment was correct and virtuous, undoubtedly. Vincent, however, did not receive it in the right spirit; he did not exclaim “Noble woman!” or otherwise recognize her claims to admiration. On the contrary, his apostrophe, though limited to three monosyllables, did in that brief speech asperse at once her sagacity, her juvenility, and her chance of salvation; and with it on his lips, he strode into the kitchen. Here there was an abomination of desolation, and the fire of the domestic altar (for such I hold a cooking-stove must be considered) was extinguished. Mrs. Vincent, from behind him, explained:

“I have sent away Jane and Maria.”

Mrs. Vincent made no answer. He turned silently back into the other part of the house, and sought for his hat. Mrs. Vincent refrained from any more words, for she saw that her admirable system of wifely consolation had succeeded, and that her husband was only silent because words were inadequate to express what he felt. He departed, and Arabella returned to the house; and soon after, Frederick came down stairs. He had been engaged in trying to restore his complexion to its native state, but had only imperfectly succeeded. Arabella narrated what had passed, and wound up by saying:

“What a savage temper that man has! If you had seen his face this morning! He was positively livid—positively livid—and last night! why, Freddie, I believe he would have murdered that boy, if I hadn’t interfered!”

Frederick caught a glimpse of his own face in a looking-glass, and that perhaps modified his horror at the idea of Harry’s being murdered, for he made very slight reply, but requested to be supplied with breakfast, which request Arabella complied with more liberally than she had in Vincent’s case, that being merely levelled against her husband. Freddie applauded her device.

“I would persevere, Arabella,” he said. “I have reason to believe that Vincent is misrepresenting the state of his affairs, and is putting his property out of his hands for an unworthy purpose, into the hands of a person still more unworthy.”

“Do you think so?” said Arabella, immediately putting the unworthy person into the shape of one of her own sex—for jealousy, of the dog-in-the-manger type, was one of her failings. Frederick said he did think so.

In order to relieve every one’s feelings in regard to Arabella, be it understood that out of the liberal quarterly allowance placed to her account in the Effingham Bank, by her husband, during the previous years of their union, she had laid by a comfortable little sum, of which he knew nothing, and which Frederick only guessed at; for this superior woman did not trust even him, having no intention of sharing with him. However, Frederick did guess it. He had found it out by what *he* styled his penetration; a good many persons mistake prying and eavesdropping for penetration. It was Frederick’s penetration, in which [Arabella] largely shared, that Vincent chiefly objected to. Arabella at home, had shown it by religiously searching the pockets of every garment that Vincent laid by, even temporarily; and Frederick, in the office, had read every scrap of paper that he could get at, and listened to every scrap of conversation that came within his range of hearing. They even went so far, at times, as to have recourse to the spout of a boiling tea kettle, to solve at once the gluten of an envelope and the mystery which they assumed it to contain. If they hitherto had discovered comparatively little, they ascribed it less to innocence than to art, being both well convinced, especially Arabella, that Vincent was in the constant practice of the most awful and soul-destroying iniquities. They now, over their breakfast, served up Vincent as sauce *piquante*. Luckily he had a good many faults, or else they could not have raised so fine an edifice of wickedness upon the basis of his character.

Having said all they could about Vincent, they talked about Harry awhile, and then Arabella went up and admonished Harry, through the door, that if he would beg his uncle’s pardon, he should have something to eat. But Harry would not agree to the conditions, and so he was left to himself again until evening, when the same terms were proffered and refused; and Harry demanded if his father said he was to be locked up there. Mrs. Vincent responded that his father would treat him a great deal worse than that, and retired again. Vincent did not come out of town that night, and so the starvation system was not interfered with.

The next morning, when Arabella went up to see if Harry was reduced to subjection yet, she found the door of his room open, a square hole in the door where the lock had been, and the lock itself, and a gimlet, and a scattered heap of particles of wood, from the holes the young housebreaker had bored, were lying on the floor. Arabella gazed in mute displeasure, her thoughts more on the injury done to her door than on the probable fate of the culprit. The last question, however, she and Frederick easily settled, by taking it for granted that he had gone to Vincent’s office in town. So they did not trouble themselves about the boy at all. Vincent came home that night, but very late, and Arabella did not see him until the next morning. Then it appeared that Vincent had seen nothing of Harry.

“I scarcely think I shall look for him,” said Vincent, morosely. “Wherever he is, he is as well off as he is likely to be at home. *At home*,” he repeated, sardonically. “A sweet home he had, as well as I.”

Arabella cleared her throat, and quoted, “he that soweth the wind shall reap the whirlwind,” and pursued, “Your *home*, George Vincent, is what you have made it, and so is your son—”

“Bosh!” said Vincent, irreverently and savagely. And he deigned no further words while he remained in the house, which was not long. Frederick had not presented himself to his brother-in-law, but had seen him, without being seen, and remarked when he was gone:

“I do not believe you will ever see that man again, Arabella. There was something rather singular in his demeanor, and it is my belief that he has made up his mind to desert you.”

Frederick did not seem to find this idea displeasing, but Arabella pinched her lips together vindictively. She knew her rights. Vincent was *her* husband, and she had a right to torment him as long as she lived, unless he chose to die. Frederick pursued his remarks:

“But he shall be made to provide for you properly, Arabella; you may depend on that. I’ll keep an eye on him.”

Vincent did not return for several days; but Frederick, who had turned white again, went into the office regularly every day, and looked at everything that came his way, without learning much except that Vincent had not confined his pretence of embarrassed circumstances to them, but had palmed it effectually on very many other persons.

On the fourth day of Vincent’s absence, Arabella discovered a key on the floor of the room that he had occupied when he was last in the house. Frederick pronounced this the key of the safe, and carried it off in triumph. He was engaged that day in the work of penetration into the contents of the safe, but had not had time to find out much when the office door was opened, and turning, he saw Vincent. There was a moment’s pause. Frederick looked blank and rather scared, at first, for there was a truculent air about Vincent which a haggard and unshaven face easily presents. Vincent’s expression, too, evidently showed that he thought he had caught Frederick in an act for which he could find no words of excuse. He did his brother-in-law injustice. Calling to mind that he was a respectable member of society, and that Vincent was suspected of forfeiting that grade, he said:

“I trust, brother Vincent, that you do not suspect me of any unjustifiable motives in opening this safe.”

“I don’t know what other motives you could have had.”

“My conscience is clear,” said Frederick, shutting the safe, and feeling furtively in his pocket, to see if an envelope he had put in it was secure.



“I dare say,” said Vincent. “I don’t suppose anything of the kind weighs on your conscience. I have known a long time that you were in the habit of prying into my concerns, but you have done it so sneakingly that I never had any direct proof of it before; but I will take care that it never happens again. Go out of this office.”

“If your privacy could bear inspection better,” said Frederick, “you would not be so sensitive about its being inquired into.”

“Leave the office!” repeated Vincent, peremptorily, pointing to the door with an index hand that could easily have been converted into a doubled fist, that Frederick obeyed, in order to save a fellow-creature the sin of assault and battery. Standing outside the door, and seeing other persons within a safe distance, he resumed:

“There are certain things that my sister has a right to inquire into, and it is my duty to protect her in her rights.”

“Go and protect her in her rights, then!” said Vincent, and shut the door on him.

Frederick went out to Effingham, and narrated what had passed to his sister. After this had been done, he took out the envelope he had secreted, and said:

“Now, here is a small thing, but it goes to prove what I have suspected. Here is an envelope postmarked Montreal, and directed to Vincent in a female hand.”

Arabella seized on it. It was so. A delicate female hand. Frederick took it back again, and opening it, drew out a slip of paper.

“This,” he said, “has been torn off a letter—the letter itself is probably destroyed. It is a direction in the same writing to Miss Annette Campbell, care of J.D. Desaugiers, No.——— street, Montreal.”

Frederick surrendered this to Arabella, and went on. “Last of all, here is a partly finished letter from Vincent himself, commencing ‘My dear Annette—I ought to have answered your letter at once, but I thought I might come myself. I think I may yet, for all your prudent advice—’ There, that, as I say, is but little, but I think it is enough. Here are some calculations and reductions of Federal into Canadian currency, and other small items, that all seem to indicate the same thing—that Vincent has transferred property to Canada, and intends going there himself.”

Mrs. Vincent was exceedingly contented at having got scent of a good palpable injury. She had always known she was a martyr, and now she was sure of having other people know it, too. She had not enjoyed this prospect, however, more than a few days, when Vincent suddenly returned home. He looked very grave; Arabella, however, scarcely noticed his looks, in her eagerness to attack him.

“I never expected to see you again,” said she.

“Never mind that now,” said Vincent, replying more to her manner than her words. “I came to tell you that I have found Harry.”

“Well, sir,” said Arabella. “Of course you will not bring him *here*.”

“Where else?” said Vincent.

“You had better take him to *Canada*,” said Mrs. Vincent.

“Wait a moment, Arabella, until you hear what I have to say. I shall only bring Harry home *to be buried*.”

Arabella changed countenance at this, and asked:

“What do you mean?”

“I mean that Harry is dead.”

“How did it happen?” asked Arabella, startled out of her ill-temper.

“He was drowned,” said Vincent. And as Arabella asked more questions, Vincent narrated more in detail what had happened.

It appeared that Harry had made up his mind to go to sea. There was a ship then in the harbor whose captain was well known to Harry, and who had often promised to take him a voyage to the Mediterranean. This same vessel and its captain were both involved in Vincent’s business, and he owed the captain a small debt, and there had been some words between them about it. For this reason, Captain Harrington did not immediately inform Vincent when Harry came and wanted to be taken on the next voyage, although he said he intended to do so before he sailed. On the day after Harry came on board, Captain Harrington took him and another boy in an open boat down the harbor. The boat, by some accident, capsized. Captain Harrington and one of the boys were picked up by another boat that was near, but Harry Vincent was drowned. His body had not been recovered for several days, when it came ashore, and Vincent did not receive the intelligence of the loss of his son until Captain Harrington came to bring him word that the body had been found. When Vincent had ended his story, he paused a few moments, and then said:

“Do you object to my bringing him here to be buried?”

“Why, Mr. Vincent,” said Arabella, hysterically. “Do not look that way at me. I am sure I never wished that Harry was dead.”

“Then you have more than your wish,” said Vincent.

Arabella had not definitely wished that Harry was dead, certainly, but she was not much grieved by his death. She was startled and frightened, because she had never connected any ideas of death with the boy. And she was one of the kind who have an abject terror of having any idea of

the nature brought very closely before them. This enabled her to preserve admirably the degree of solemnity which she thought etiquette demanded; and the first impression wearing off, she took that degree of ghoul-like interest in the occasion that very many respectable ladies show. As to Frederick, he seemed to find himself called upon in an especial manner to take a leading part in all the arrangements and ceremonials. Vincent readily committed them all into his hands. Indeed, after the first communication of the fact that Harry was dead, he seemed to avoid all mention of his name. On the day set for the funeral, Vincent, who had been away from Effingham since the day before, returned, and Captain Harrington came with him. Frederick remarked that Vincent's manner was very much agitated. He spoke to him as he came in, and said:

"I began to be afraid you would be detained, brother Vincent. It is almost the hour appointed."

"Don't talk to me about it," said Vincent, hastily. And he pushed Frederick aside, and ran up stairs to his own room, and closed the door violently. Frederick looked at Captain Harrington.

"Pretty badly cut up, isn't he?" said the sailor. "Well I dare say it's a loss to lose an only son."

"Yes sir," said Frederick, with a duly melancholy intonation. And he was about to continue, when Vincent called loudly and sharply:

"Harrington! Harrington!"

Captain Harrington responded, and ascended the stairs, and Frederick, after a little hesitation, did the same. Arabella, in deep sables, opened the door of a room on the floor above, and asked:

"What *does* Mr. Vincent mean by speaking so loud? It doesn't sound well."

Frederick made no answer but an expressive gesture enjoining silence, and stole on tiptoe to the door of Vincent's room. He heard a mixed sound of voices, Vincent insisting apparently on something from which Harrington dissuaded him. So much Arabella herself could hear, but no words; and she interrogated Frederick, in pantomime, if he were more successful. He repeated his sign of silence, and continued to listen, until a call for him from below compelled him to leave.

"What were they saying?" asked Arabella, in a loud whisper.

"Nothing that I could make out very plainly," said Frederick. But mystery was so plainly written upon his face, that Arabella did not believe him. However, there was no more time for discussion, for the ceremonies were about to commence. Frederick kept continually glancing towards the door, for Vincent's appearance. At last he came in with Harrington. Frederick continued his watch. [Vincent's] expression was rather fixed and vacant than sorrowful, but it was unquestionably grave, and gave no occasion for remark. When Vincent entered the carriage, Harrington, accompanying Frederick, followed, and said:

"I began to think you would not have the nerve to go through this."

“Why not?” asked Vincent, looking at him with a steady stare that rather discomposed Frederick, who answered rather hurriedly:

“O nothing—only I thought you seemed rather, as it were—discomposed.”

Vincent made no answer but a look, and drew back into a corner of the carriage and remained silent and motionless. After their return home, Captain Harrington just before he took his leave drew Frederick aside, and said:

“I perceive that you see that Vincent’s nerves are rather the worse for all he has gone through.”

“I thought as much,” said Frederick, sagaciously. “I hope his mind is not affected.”

“O no!” said Harrington, carelessly. “Blue pill, and a little ready money will set him up again in no time.”

“Are you acquainted with his pecuniary affairs, sir?” asked Frederick, who never slighted an opportunity to gain information.

“A little,” said Captain Harrington. “He was going to the dogs for want of a thousand dollars, and I lent it to him.”

“You must have considerable confidences in him, to lend him money when you think his affairs are seriously embarrassed,” said Frederick.

Captain Harrington made no reply but a slow contraction of the lid of one eye, while he gazed abstractedly at Frederick with the other. Leaving that acute physiognomist to guess the meaning of this, at his leisure, he uttered an abrupt and cordial sounding “Good-day,” and joined Vincent, who at the moment came from the house.

After this event, matters in the Vincent domicile seemed to run in the ordinary channel. Arabella was kept in awe for some time by the recent occurrence, and by Frederick’s hint that Vincent’s reason was unsettled; but as time went by, and Vincent’s manner seemed to become what it had formerly been, *hers* began to do the same. At last, one day, she said to him:

“Mr. Vincent, am I still in danger of having my house sold over my head?”

Vincent looked at her, and answered very quietly, “No.”

“Was there *ever* any danger?”

“Yes.”

“Excuse my asking questions. I am *ignorant*, you know. How have you become so much richer all at once?”

“Don’t you know?” asked Vincent, harshly and abruptly.

Arabella bridled, and answered meaningly, “No.”

“Don’t you?” repeated Vincent in the same tone. “I’ll tell you, then. Harry’s life was insured, and I’ve got the money; and there is some for you, as I suppose you meant to ask for it. There! and much good may it do you.”

He threw a handful of paper money into her lap, and then went out of the room, leaving Arabella displeased at his manner, but not at all displeased that she had in any manner received a hundred and seventy-five dollars, as the sum proved to be. As she was counting the money, in came the cat-footed Frederick, from whom she would have concealed the donation, if she had been aware of his approach. However, she narrated to him the little scene. Frederick looked mysterious and solemn.

“Harry’s life was insured, was it? Strange now, I never knew that.”

And surely it was strange, considering Frederick’s zeal in researches. Frederick pondered awhile, and then asked for how much Harry’s life was insured, but this Arabella could not tell him.

“What are you thinking about, Freddie?” she asked, looking at his mysterious countenance.

“Don’t ask me, Arabella,” he said. “God grant I may be mistaken. But I fear not. My intuitions are but too correct. It is not an enviable gift.”

“Why not?” said Arabella, looking at the money. “I have a right to it.”

“I do not mean that,” said Frederick. “I mean the gift of penetration into acts and motives which pass unquestioned with men in general.” Here Frederick sighed. “The money indeed may also be called no enviable gift, considering the source from whence it comes; but *you* need have no scruples.”

Arabella put it by, with an air which sufficiently said that she did not mean to have any scruples. She tried to induce Frederick to speak more clearly, but he would not. Neither did anything more appear, until one evening, about a week afterwards, when Vincent was sitting alone, by his cheerful fireside, when Frederick entered, and sat down opposite to him. Vincent paid no attention to his entrance, and Frederick was obliged to call upon him twice by name before he raised his eyes, and when he did Frederick’s ominous expression seemed quite thrown away upon him.

“What is it, Day?” he asked.

“Do you not think,” commenced Frederick, “that it is your duty to make some permanent arrangements for placing Arabella beyond all risk of being involved in any calamity that may befall her hereafter?”

“It is not at all likely,” said Vincent, “that, if I do not do it of my own accord, I shall do it at your instance.”

“Perhaps,” answered Frederick, “it may be your wisest course to use a more conciliatory tone, Vincent. I earnestly desire to be your friend, though I hardly see how I can be so, consistently with my duty to society; and I surely cannot while you show no signs of regret or repentance—”

“What do you mean?” asked Vincent, sharply.

“You have a conscience,” said Frederick; “and *that* will tell you what I mean.” Vincent made no answer, and Frederick, who had commenced his remarks with some trepidation as to how they might be received, was emboldened by his manner, which he thought betrayed some confusion and signs of yielding. “You must be aware, that there are some parts of your life that will not bear close examination.”

“*You* must be aware, if there are,” said Vincent. “You examine it so closely.”

“I own I have a fair share of penetration,” said Frederick. “But, I insist, Vincent, Arabella must be placed in full possession of independent means. This you *owe* to her. If you did not, I would rather see her beg her bread in the streets, than stain her hands with money obtained by such means.”

Vincent passed at once from a serious and quiet manner, to a violent passion, and starting to his feet, asked again:

“What do you mean by that?”

Frederick turned pale and retreated towards the door. There, seeing that Vincent did not advance towards him, he stayed, and answered in a hurried voice:

“Nothing, if you have done nothing.”

“Speak out!”

“I will, sometime,” said Frederick, feeling behind him with trembling fingers for the knob of the door.

“*Now*, sir!” said Vincent. “*Now*, or never!” And he seized the luckless Frederick, and shook him until his teeth bit through the end of his tongue.

“Help! murder!” gasped Frederick. Arabella rushed in at the moment, and received her brother in her arms as Vincent threw him from him.

“And now,” said Vincent, “leave the house!”

“Mr. Vincent,” said Arabella, “it is *my* place to say who shall stay in this house, and who shall go out of it.”

“Very well,” said Vincent. “Say which one of us shall go, for one it must be.”

“Why?” said Arabella. “How has he offended you, except by being my brother?”

“By hinting at crimes he thought no one suspected,” said Frederick, outside of the door.

“Hinting! yes, by hinting that you wanted a bribe. I will not bribe you. Tell any tale you please! Prove it! swear to it, true or false! What do I care! I’d rather endure anything than being under the thumb of such a contemptible whelp as you are!”

“If I pause,” said Frederick, “it is only out of regard for Arabella’s feelings.”

Vincent whistled contemptuously.

“Do your worst,” he said. And passing by Arabella, he left the house. Frederick waited until the sound of his footsteps had died away, and then exclaimed:

“Hardened villain! I fear I did wrong to let him escape.”

“What does it all mean?” asked Arabella.

“Wait a little while, and I will tell you,” said Frederick. “I am too much agitated to speak just now. It has been a terrible scene.”

Frederick walked with a feeble air into the room, and sat down on the sofa, to give the idea of great exhaustion, as he had rather a habit of taking great credit to himself for physical infirmity. However, in the present instance, there was not much pretence in his apparent faintness, as he had been nearly frightened into a fit by his brother-in-law. After he had somewhat recovered, he said:

“After all, Arabella, I think I had better not tell you. You will be too much shocked.”

“Frederick,” said Arabella, “I *will* know.”

Frederick allowed himself to be persuaded, the sooner that he had not had the least intention of keeping his discovery from Arabella, and knew that she could easily endure anything that he had to say so far as it concerned Vincent’s safety and happiness. He commenced his narration with considerable prelude, which, as it was intermixed with remarks and questions from Arabella, may with great propriety be omitted. He told how he had kept his eye upon Vincent ever since the day of Harry’s funeral.

“My first impression was, that he was insane,” he said. “His conduct was so very singular. I really cannot say when or how, it was that the idea first suggested itself to me, that there was something wrong—very wrong. Do you suspect what I mean?”

“No,” said Mrs. Vincent, with very little expression but curiosity. Frederick looked at her, and lowered his voice into its deepest key.

“*Harry*,” he said. “Don’t you catch my meaning?” Arabella shook her head. Frederick continued, yet more solemnly, “Harry’s life was insured.”

Arabella caught at Frederick’s meaning, and looked very much shocked. As to Frederick, he did not seem to be very deeply impressed with his own words, or to feel the atrocity of the crime with which he was charging Vincent, half as much as he did the pleasure of having elaborated the accusation. He went on. “The insurance on Harry’s life extricated Vincent from his difficulties.”

“O, but his own son!” said Arabella. “I can’t believe that, Frederick.”

“I am sure—I am positive,” said Frederick, “that the boy did not come to his death by an accident. I don’t wish to accuse Vincent unjustly, no; although I have had constantly increasing proof that he is totally without moral perceptions—I would not make him out worse than he is. But let me tell you what I have heard and seen, that has led me to this—fear, let me call it.”

Frederick stopped a little while, and then went on with the same self-complacency, and making it evident that he had familiarized his own mind completely to the idea: “On the day of Harry’s funeral, when I was listening at Vincent’s door, I heard him say, ‘I will not follow that coffin. It would be a horrible mockery.’ Those were the words. I did not take in their sense at the time, because they seemed to me then, merely the dictates of an unsettled mind. I heard various other disjointed words, which I have since put together, and found all tending the same way. Captain Harrington is evidently an accomplice. He was arguing with Vincent, and soothing him. ‘Don’t be a fool, Vincent,’ I heard him say. ‘The boy is ten times better off, and so are you. And, besides, it is too late now. What is the use of making a scene when everything is going off so smoothly and naturally?’ and other speeches of the same kind.”

“I wonder you did not suspect *then*,” said Arabella. Frederick hesitated a minute, conscious, perhaps, that the speeches had been less coherent as he heard them than they were as he rehearsed them.

“I told you,” he said, “that I scarcely regarded their meaning then. But wait, I will say nothing of Vincent’s strange manner. That we have sufficiently noticed, both of us. But I thought it was right to keep watch over him, both on that account, and on account of other suspicions which I formerly entertained. And I have done it.”

Frederick proceeded with his narrative, which, divested of all the ornamentation and self-gratulation with which it was mixed, amounted this. He had ascertained that Vincent, in his frequent absences from home, had found it convenient to engage a room permanently at a hotel,



and he had contrived to obtain access to this room during the absence of its proprietor. He did not explain by what means he had done it, whether by making a private agreement with the chambermaid, or by some hitherto unheard-of triumph of penetration. However, while he was in the room, he was surprised by Vincent's approach, and fled to a closet. Here Frederick rather enlarged on the critical nature of his position, and the heroism it required for him to listen coolly to what was passing in the room. For Vincent was not alone. His companion in guilt, Captain Harrington, was with him. "Does it not show that something wrong is going on?" asked Frederick, "that Harrington should be here, when every one supposes that he is with his vessel?"

After insisting on this awhile the amateur detective went on to tell what he had overheard. Vincent had said to Harrington, "Your diabolical contrivance has not turned out so well, after all. We had better have left Harry alive." Harrington had answered with a brutal laugh, "Do you expect me to bring him to life again?" After this they had removed to a more distant part of the room, and he had lost a great part of their conversation, only they had spoken of Canada and some property there, in which Vincent was interested. He was also sure he had heard the name of Annette Campbell, and some expressions from which he drew the inference that this property was now in the hands of this Annette, that it had been made over to her by Vincent; and that he entertained some doubts of being able to regain possession of it. He ended by declaring that he was greatly relieved when the conference broke up and they left the room. "For," he said, "had I been discovered, my life would not have been safe in the hands of such men as those. Harrington I believe to have been the active instrument in the crime; and the manner *may* have been precisely as narrated, but it was certainly a premeditated scheme, for the sake of obtaining the money for which the poor boy's life was insured. Vincent seems to feel something like remorse, but the other is completely hardened."

It was an evidence of how well Freddie understood his sister's character that he spoke so fluently about an act, which her husband was supposed to have committed or sanctioned, and which one would have imagined would have raised something like horror in the most commonplace mind. It did, indeed, in Mrs. Vincent's, but not of the kind that caused her any intense anguish. It was an injury against her, and it proved that she had been right in her estimate of Vincent's character, that he should have committed a great crime; but further than that, her mind seemed altogether too narrow and shallow, to contain any ideas proportionate to the magnitude of the guilt it contemplated, and she took up an accusation of murder with very little more hesitation than she would one of everyday guilt.

Frederick had this additional excuse, if it can be called so, that he hated his brother-in-law—not cordially—that was inconsistent with his nature—but thoroughly and venomously. Vincent had always treated him with a cool indifference, bordering very strongly on contempt, and it pleased his imagination to think that he should represent the avenging Nemesis to his haughty and insolent brother-in-law. He did not enlarge on these feelings, however, for he had wit enough to know that they had better be kept to himself, and he confined himself to a well-digested thesis on the comparative demands of his duty to his sister, and his duty to society. Here Arabella interposed. She had no desire to have the matter publically discussed. She was very sure that that would not increase her dignity in the social scale; and so it was agreed that Vincent should be called upon imperatively to make separate provision for her independent existence, and then permitted to expatriate himself, if he liked.

The next morning, Mrs. Vincent received a note from her husband, briefly informing her that he should be absent for some time on business, and requesting, if she desired him to return home, to intimate to her brother Frederick that his residence elsewhere would be more than desirable. Arabella showed this note to Frederick, and Frederick remarked, "He is afraid of me, you see." Mrs. Vincent was disposed to think that Vincent was actuated less by fear of Frederick, than by his own convenience. Whatever motive induced him to go, the same induced him to stay away—at least, he did not return, and he did not write. When nearly two months had elapsed, Arabella began to urge her brother to make some attempt to find Vincent. Frederick answered that he did not know where to look for him.

"Why, in Canada, I suppose," said Mrs. Vincent.

"Canada is a large place," answered Frederick; "and he may be gone to Europe. It is very likely he has."

Arabella continued to urge Frederick, and Frederick to represent the uselessness of trying to trace Vincent, until Arabella was provoked to tell him that he was afraid of Vincent, and not Vincent of him.

"I'll go myself!" she said. "If you choose to come along, you may—and if not, you may stay here; but you will have to find some place to live, besides my house; for I shan't leave it open while I am gone; you may depend on that."

Thus decidedly addressed, Frederick at first became sulky and dignified. The truth was, that he was afraid of encountering his brother-in-law, without some one to back him; besides, he was satisfied with Vincent's absence. Not so Mrs. Vincent; the vision of her husband living in comfort beyond the reach of her wifely power to make him uncomfortable, was an irritating one; besides, that mysterious Annette Campbell.

"I mean to know all about Annette Campbell," said Arabella. She had a kind of involuntary skepticism about the other counts against Vincent; but in Annette Campbell, and all manner of wickedness connected with her, she believed to the very bottom of her soul. Mr. Frederick Day found that when Arabella's temper wanted its legitimate object to spend itself upon, it began to interfere very seriously with his comfort. He regretted deeply that he had procrastinated so long that Arabella had conceived the thought of going herself in quest of Vincent, for she did not abandon the idea even when he finally declared his intention of going. She would go with him, she said. Frederick did not precisely like the idea of having her for a travelling companion; but it was one of Arabella's characteristics, that she would do anything she had once positively asserted she would, if she found it was at all opposed. So, amid the lively comments of the neighborhood, Arabella packed up her trunks, shut up her house and started for Montreal, under the escort of the sagacious Frederick, whose sagacity, albeit, was much at a loss to know what was to be done next. They arrived in Montreal, and took rooms at a hotel, and how long they may have stayed there without advancing any nearer to their object is a question. However, it occurred to Frederick to look over the register of the hotel, and there he found the name of George Vincent several times. He reported this discovery to Arabella, observing, however,

astutely, that it might very well not be the man they were looking for, as he would probably travel under a false name. Arabella sensibly observed, that he had better try and make sure it was not Vincent. Frederick made some inquiries, and came to the conclusion that it *was* Vincent; but as he had not been at the hotel for two months, and as there was no one to say where he was, it did not practically advance the inquiry. Arabella found that prosecuting her search after Vincent might prove a very expensive undertaking, if it involved staying an indefinite time at a hotel, and she told Frederick with point, that she wished he would show some of the shrewdness he boasted of so much. So goaded, Frederick stuck out an idea. It was to inquire of Mr. J.B. Desanglers, if he knew the present address of Miss Annette Campbell. Arabella applauded the idea, for it was her great desire to be informed concerning Miss Annette Campbell. Frederick, accordingly, wrote a note, and received a prompt and brief reply, from which they gathered that Miss Annette Campbell was at St. Catherine's, Canada West.

“You see,” said Frederick, “they fell into the trap at once.”

There was no one to suggest that perhaps Mr. Desanglers had no motive for concealing Miss Campbell's address, or Miss Campbell for desiring to have it concealed, and Frederick was allowed full credit for entrapping the information by the artful expedient of asking for it. No matter how obtained, they had it; and so to St. Catherine's sped Nemesis and his sister, the later congratulating herself that now she should surely find her recreant husband. They arrived at St. Catherine's and Frederick commenced his quest. His first question as to whether any one could tell him where Miss Annette Campbell lived, was answered at once.

“Certainly. Every one knows the house.”

Frederick paused awhile, fearful lest he might have compromised himself fatally, by asking after Annette Campbell, and then continued, putting on his most respectable manner, in order to check unjust opinions.

“Will you be good enough to direct me there? I wish to see a gentleman whom I believe I can hear of there.”

He received the direction he sought, and informed Arabella of it, but suggested that she had better not accompany him.

“It may be a place you would not like to go to, Arabella.”

“*May be!*” repeated Arabella. “But I *shall* go, Frederick. I shall not be talked over by anybody, and just as like as not, *you* will.”

Frederick resented the injurious supposition, but it made no difference. Arabella was resolved to see Annette Campbell with her own eyes. They easily found the place. It was a pretty cottage, standing in a garden, and caused Mrs. Vincent to exclaim:

“And *this* is how he spends his money!”

Frederick only shook his head, and in a few minutes they stood beneath the porch of the cottage. Miss Campbell was at home. It had previously been agreed, not to send their names, which might put Annette Campbell on her guard, and so they merely announced themselves as strangers, who wished to see Miss Campbell on particular business. One would suppose that such an announcement would have been enough in itself, to put any one, who had anything to fear or conceal, effectually on guard; but they were shown into the parlor without any further preamble. Arabella pinched her lips, as she looked round and round. There was a want of a subdued tone of coloring about the pretty little room, that she considered far from what it ought to be. Her face had grown positively portentous, when a light step was heard outside, and the door opened. Arabella stood rigidly facing it, but the figure that entered was not at all what she expected. It was a woman, to be sure, but a little, middle-aged woman, without the least pretence to beauty, though with a lively, good-humored expression and a well-bred manner. She came forward and addressed Arabella, who rather brusquely answered:

“I wish to see Miss Campbell.”

“I am Miss Campbell.”

“Miss Annette Campbell,” insisted Arabella.

“That is my name,” said the lady.

Mrs. Vincent stood gazing half-blankly and half-suspiciously on the little lady, whose appearance was so unlike that of the gay young [siren] whom she had confidently expected to meet. Was she mistaken? or was she being played with?

“You expected to meet someone else?” suggested Miss Campbell.

“Yes,” said Arabella; “I expected to meet a *young* lady.”

“I know of no other lady of my name in the place,” said Miss Campbell, “though there possibly may be. I am sorry you are disappointed in meeting your friend.”

“O, she is not a friend of *mine*,” said Arabella. “But I wished to see her to inquire—Perhaps though—pray, madam, do you know a Mr. George Vincent?”

“I do,” said Miss Campbell, smiling. “I know him well.”

“Is he here?” asked Mrs. Vincent.

“He is not,” replied Miss Campbell.

“Can you tell me where he is?” said Arabella. “*I am Mrs. Vincent.*”

Miss Campbell looked slightly surprised, and then, very politely but somewhat stiffly and coolly, expressed her pleasure at seeing Mrs. Vincent. Arabella having introduced herself, introduced “My brother, Mr. Day,” and then inquired again if Miss Campbell knew where Mr. Vincent was.

“He was in England when I heard from him last,” said Miss Campbell. “He is a near connection of mine, and I am, of course, acquainted with his present business, but that is no secret to any one, I believe.”

“It is to *me*,” said Arabella. “Mr. Vincent has placed his property in your hands, hasn’t he?”

Miss Campbell looked at her questioner with raised eyebrows for a few moments, and then said:

“It seems to me we are talking at cross-purposes in some manner. George Vincent married my niece—the daughter of my half-brother, Harry Etherage—I presume you are not mistaken in the person? No—I beg your pardon, I remember the name of the lady he afterwards married was Day. But I know of no property of his in any one’s hands but his own. Certainly there is none in mine.”

Arabella glanced at Frederick, and Frederick returned an incredulous and warning look, and addressing Miss Campbell, said:

“I suppose, madam, you will admit that a wife is the fittest person (of all ladies, I mean,) to be entrusted with her husband’s affairs?”

“Certainly,” said Miss Campbell; “and I suppose that you will admit that her husband is the fittest person to inform her of them?”

Frederick looked slightly severe at this reply which savored of flippant repartee in his opinion, and answered gravely:

“Yes, of course he is the *fittest*; but if he does not choose to impart them, or if they are of a nature that will not bear imparting, I question the prudence of the lady who takes custody of them. If you *are* intimately acquainted with Mr. Vincent’s affairs, Miss Campbell, you will excuse my saying, that you run the risk of being implicated in some very dark mysteries.”

Miss Campbell looked at Frederick as if she were on the eve of expressing the offence she had evidently taken at his manner. A little reflection, however, appeared to convince her it was not worth while, and she answered, dryly:

“Mr. Day, I am seven-and-forty years old, and you may be two-thirds of that age. I thank you for your advice, but I think that the experience which has guided me so far in life will last me yet a few years, especially in regulating my acquaintance with George Vincent, which commenced when he was a baby. However, I would not have Mrs. Vincent,” turning to her, “think I have any very deep confidences with him which she may not share, and if you are really unacquainted with the business that brought him here, I will tell you. I suppose you know the story of George’s first marriage?”

“No,” said Mrs. Vincent, shortly. “He never told me anything about it.”

“Well, he married my niece, the orphan daughter of my mother’s only son, and my mother did not like it, and never would see her granddaughter again, nor take any notice of Vincent. So we quite lost sight of him for a long time. The first I heard from him, he wrote to me a little over a year ago, to ask if my mother would not allow his son Harry to be sent to her. We exchanged several letters upon that subject, and then he suddenly ceased to write, and as I could give him no encouragement to think that my mother would ever relent towards him, I did not write again. My mother, as you may suppose, was far advanced in years—she was eighty-one—but she was in full possession of her mental faculties, and of her health, too, making allowances for her age; she never even mentioned Harry Vincent’s name, and would not allow me to do so, after I had made a few attempts to speak about him. A few months since, she died very suddenly, and, to the surprise of every one, she left the greater part of her fortune to Harry Vincent, on condition of his taking the name of Etherege—and several other minor conditions easily fulfilled. This was the business that brought Mr. Vincent to Canada, and afterwards sent him to England. I am every day expecting either his return or a letter informing me when he will sail for home.”

Miss Campbell observed something strange in the countenances of her hearers, and she had not fairly finished when Frederick, with a highly excited air, broke in:

“Harry Vincent! His son Harry?”

“Surely,” said Miss Campbell. “His son Harry.”

“But Harry Vincent is dead and buried!” said Frederick. “Do you mean to say he has produced a boy, purporting to be Harry Vincent! It is a vile fraud.”

Miss Campbell was moved from her self-possession by this assertion, and the tone in which it was made. She rose from her seat and looked from Frederick to Arabella.

“I will never believe that of George Vincent,” she said.

“Believe *that!*” said Frederick. “You will believe worse of him when you know all, Miss Campbell. He is not a man; he is a monster—a monster.”

Miss Campbell, however, did not want to listen to invective. She wanted to hear the plain statement of the case, from beginning to end, which she obtained. She looked very much agitated, and said:

“George must have changed greatly—very greatly. He need not to have done this. He knew that what *I* had would have been at his service.”

“You understand now why he kept his movements a secret from us,” said Frederick. “But yet I must say it was a daring fraud—under all the circumstances, a most daring fraud; one which only George Vincent would have been capable of attempting.”

“Do you think so?” said Vincent’s voice; and Vincent himself stepped from the veranda into the room. “I meant to surprise you, Annette, but I see the surprise was waiting for me.”

“I *have* been surprised, George,” said Miss Campbell. “You have deceived me.”

“Deceived *you!*” said Vincent. “I don’t plead guilty to that.”

“You have represented your son as being alive,” said Frederick. “You well know he is dead, and you well know *how he died*.” As Frederick spoke, he fixed his eyes on Vincent’s countenance with what he meant to be a most soul-searching gaze. Vincent looked slightly bewildered, but not greatly conscience-stricken, and answered:

“I don’t understand what you mean, Day. I thought you had found out something, but it seems you have not.”

“I have,” said Frederick. “I will not distress this lady any further by unfolding your guilt, but in order that you may know *I* know it, read that.” Frederick presented Vincent a folded paper. It was a carefully drawn up statement of his case against Vincent, which he had made and elaborated, and regarded with no little pride as a monument of his acuteness. Vincent glanced over it, and uttered an exclamation that sounded like genuine astonishment, and then cast on Frederick a most extraordinary glance.

“You have exceeded yourself, Frederick,” he said, scornfully; and then with a degree of hardihood that human imagination can scarcely conceive, he commenced at the beginning of the document and read it through to the end in a clear and distinct voice. Miss Campbell listened attentively, but Vincent’s manner seemed to inspire her with more confidence in his innocence, than the words he read did with belief in his guilt. When he had concluded, he said:

“Here, you see, it is clearly demonstrated that I murdered, or connived at the murder in cold blood of my only son, to obtain ten thousand dollars. For my own sake it may be convenient for me to throw some doubts on the admirably constructed chain of evidence and so—Harry! Harry! come!”

Harry Vincent came in by the same way that Vincent had entered, and Arabella gave an audible shriek, and stared at him as if he had come in a more terrifying form than his own natural one. Frederick himself was inclined to deny Harry’s identity at first; but it was Harry himself, scarcely changed as much as a boy changes in the space of time, and only a very little grown.

“Why, Harry Vincent!” shrieked Arabella, “where did you come from?”

“I’ve been to sea,” said Harry, not knowing what to make of the dismay his appearance excited; and then he gave incontestable evidence of being the self-same Harry, by fixing his eyes on Frederick’s countenance, and saying, “You have left Buckley’s, haven’t you, uncle Fred?”

After this, Frederick could not say that it was a boy artfully tutored to represent Harry, and so he turned round to Vincent and was about to say something, when Vincent interrupted him:

“You both admit that that is Harry Vincent?”

“Yes,” said Arabella.

“Yes,” said Fredrick. “But what—“

“Go out again, Harry,” said Vincent. “We have some business to talk about.”

Harry obeyed, being quite as well contented to make his own explorations out-doors as to be called in to behave himself in the parlor. Vincent then took up the word.

“I am obliged to you, Day, for making a confession comparatively easy for me, that otherwise would have stuck in my throat. You have gone so far beyond anything I ever did, or ever contemplated doing, in your suspicions and your charges, that I feel myself partly relieved of the odium of what I did do. I will tell you what I did, Annette. I defrauded a Life Insurance Company. There. That is the plain truth. Now that I am in easy circumstances, and beyond all temptation, I feel very much ashamed of the trick; but still, it was not murder, and it was not a fraud at the expense of a woman who has been one of my best friends. I may say, by way of excuse, that I was harassed at home and abroad by demands for money that I could not meet, and dreading failure as if it were eternal ruin—and I may say in addition, that neither the plan nor the execution was mine. Harrington is entitled to the credit of both; I owed him money, and he wanted me to have the means of paying him. His first idea was to deceive me also; but unluckily for my conscience, I found him out; but I allowed myself to be persuaded to let the deception go on. I never felt completely easy about it, though I did not suppose that I looked as if I had committed murder. Well! all this was scarcely over, when I received the news of Mrs. Campbell’s death, and her unexpected bequest to Harry. If ever a cheat felt caught in his own trap, I did. I deserved it. I admit. How to undo what I had done, I did not know, when Harrington suddenly came back. He had been taken ill on the voyage, and taking it into his head that he was not going to live, came home in a returning vessel the *Esperance* met on her way. I suppose it was our conversation that Frederick overheard. I told him precisely how I was placed, and he having a more fertile imagination in such expedients, told me not to trouble myself; to act just as I would have done, if I had only sent Harry on a sea-voyage, and that he would explain to every one that it was a mistake; that Harry was the boy saved, and the other the one drowned, and that the time that had elapsed before the body was recovered, had made the identification uncertain. I did not care what story he told, and was glad to escape from the whole trouble. I have refunded the money to the company with a simple intimation that it was paid under a mistake, and I have paid Harrington half as much more to explain the mistake as he best can. The money I shall have to account to Harry’s estate for. If rascality gave every one as much trouble as mine has me, there would be fewer rascals, unless they are the most self-mortifying race in the world. Now I have completed my penance by standing up and owning myself a rascal.”

After Vincent ended his story there was a pause. Miss Campbell broke it by saying:



“You might have told me this before, George, and then I should have known what to think when I heard such a strange story from Mr. Day.”

Frederick Day moved at this. He did not say that he regretted his error, or in any way intimate that he had done Vincent any injustice. He merely said:

“This is a disagreeable scene, and had best be ended. Will you accompany me, Arabella?”

Mrs. Vincent arose; there was a trifle more grace in her departure. She turned to Vincent:

“I told Frederick I could not believe it,” she said. “I think I had better retire at present, Mr. Vincent, but I should like to see you *on business*, by-and-by.”

Mr. Vincent attended Arabella to the door, as courteously as if she had not been his wife, and Frederick escorted her back to the hotel.

A brief interview between Vincent and Arabella terminated in an amicable agreement to try the experiment of living separately for a time, Vincent making a very liberal settlement on his wife. His own means were augmented by a legacy from Mrs. Campbell, in addition to the advantages he enjoyed as Harry’s guardian. As one of Mrs. Campbell’s conditions had been that Harry’s education should be finished in England, Vincent’s absence was rendered natural. The explanation made by Captain Harrington was so well constructed that very few people called it [into] question, and though Vincent did not escape remark entirely, yet his present highly respectable position prevented much condemnation. No one has ever detected him in the smallest pecuniary aberration since that time.

As to the amateur detective, he considered himself very ill-used in some manner, by Vincent’s being innocent of all the charges he had brought against him; but Arabella would not suffer him to say anything against Vincent’s character in the community, she becoming much more tolerant to her husband when she scarcely ever met him. Frederick, however, pursues the native bent of his mind in other directions, and is generally conceded to be a man of keen penetration.

*The Flag of Our Union*, October 24, 1868