

Ten Millions—An Extraordinary Story

It certainly a most astonishing change of fortune—as widely removed from the ordinary course of events which we see transpiring around us in every-day-life as the adventures of Aladdin and Sinbad the Sailor, who are regarded by a majority of the reflecting men and women as fictitious characters.

I wonder it did not completely turn my head and leave me sufficiently demented to go into politics, with a reasonable prospect of success. What saved me from such a fate I am at a loss to conjecture, unless it was that, having been knocked about the world from my youth up, in a miscellaneous manner, experiencing hard usage, and only that, and very possibly deserving no other— for, candidly, I can recall no particularly meritorious action of my life—I was impervious to all emotional consequences, and when I unexpectedly became the inheritor of *ten millions*, I believe I indulged in no more startling extravagance than that of executing a shrill whistle, followed by the ejaculation, addressed to no one in particular, “What an extraordinary affair!”

I may mention, in an explanatory way, that from my earliest recollection I had been *hard up*, to use a vulgar but expressive phrase, of which a large percentage of the human family have an experimental knowledge. I don’t know why it should have been so, for I will maintain, whoever chooses to differ with me on the point, that I am possessed of common sense and a passable education, which ought to insure one a livelihood; but something was diametrically out of sorts in my horoscope, and I arrived at years of discretion fully convinced by experience that I was one of those unfortunates whom no one would ever dream of employing in any lucrative business situation, although there were plenty who were willing to make use of me in a thousand-and-one ways whereby they, not I, received advantage.

Thus at one-and-twenty I found myself in New York city, and after witnessing with a sigh of regret the departure of my last dollar “to that bourne from which no dollar returns,” and my last suit of clothes slowly changing from genteel to shabby, I thankfully accepted a place on a daily newspaper, where, for about sixteen hours of hard service daily, I received the munificent sum of six dollars per week, and began to consider my fortune mending.

They were appreciative fellows, the proprietors of that newspaper. Before I had been in their employ a week, Bosh, the senior, patted me on the back, in the most friendly manner imaginable, observing with a complacent smile that I was “an amazing clever writer, and really if times were not so hard, and rents so high, and the price of paper so exorbitant, he should almost feel like adding another dollar to my weekly stipend; and perhaps in the course of the year—there was no telling what time might bring forth—he might feel justified in perpetrating such an extravagance.

My heart warmed toward Bosh, and to myself I observed, having no other intimate acquaintance to whom I could direct the remark, “In the other world Bosh will certainly receive his reward.”

It is possible, if my habits had been expensive, the salary I received might have been inadequate, but being of a frugal turn, I made it do, although my suit of clothes grew daily shabbier, and it required “faith like a grain of mustard-seed” to discover a probability of supplying the place of

these old-tried companions; and my lodgings on Grand street, near its eastern extremity, might have been more commodious and comfortable without being unduly luxurious.

There, however, were trifles, with which I seldom troubled myself.

I awoke in my Grand street attic about ten o'clock one morning in the latter part of January. I had been detained at the office until half-past three, A.M., and had overslept myself. A heavy frost covered my one window, and hung upon the extremity of my moustache. The floor was carpetless, and although a tiny stove occupied one corner of the apartment, it was useless, for my stock of coal was exhausted, and my stock of ready money required careful husbandry to supply me with edibles till the next Saturday, our pay-day. From a tingling sensation at the end of my nose, I inferred that the temperature had widely departed from zero in the wrong direction, outside, and was considering whether my finances would admit a cup of hot coffee at my morning repast, at Mr. Scrimp's restaurant, when I heard a heavy step toiling laboriously up my stairs.

Having no duns to apprehend, I listened without trepidation, and to the rousing double-knock that was finally bestowed upon my door, responded, "Come in!" in an unfaltering voice, though vaguely wondering who should have taken the trouble to have climbed all those stairs in pursuit of me.

That adventurous individual presently appeared, in the person of a stout, middle-aged gentleman, of a florid complexion, singularly clear but rather restless and wandering blue eyes, and hearty, off-hand manners.

"How are you?" was his introductory salutation.

"At the present moment quite comfortable," I rejoined, wondering not a little who my visitor was, and what he wanted. "How do you find yourself this morning?"

"In a very self-satisfied frame of mind, Mr. Bahr, since I have had the good luck to find you at last—and the deuced's own amount of trouble I have had on your account, too. Upon my word, I have been looking for you from one end of Christendom to the other."

"It grieves me exceedingly to learn that I have occasioned you such serious inconvenience," I replied, feeling convinced either that the stranger had mistaken me for some other man, bearing the same patronymic, or was engaged in the perpetration of a joke; "but perhaps you will be good enough to enlarge my debt of obligation by advising me why you have taken so much trouble on my account, and also favor me with your name."

"My name," pursued the stranger, deliberately producing a card from his case, "is Godfrey Leighton, of the firm of Leighton, Brother & Leighton, Attorneys street, London; and my business is to inform you that you are the heir to *ten millions*."

There was something so superlatively absurd and profoundly ludicrous in the idea of a man who was heir to ten millions being engaged on a daily newspaper at a salary of six dollars a week that

I considered myself excusable for indulging in the shrill whistle to which reference has been already made, and following it up by a hearty laugh, at what I felt persuaded my visitor intended for a stupendous hoax.

“Well! I did expect you would evince a shade more gratitude, young man,” pursued the florid gentleman, with a calmly censorious air. “It is no joke, I assure you, whatever your impressions may be to the contrary, to spend the best part of two years in ransacking Europe and America in search of the heir to a great estate. I have expended time and money in your behalf, and you will pardon me for saying I am surprised at your reception of myself and the news of which I am the bearer.”

“My dear sir,” I answered, “pray be seated, if you can find a chair capable of supporting a gentleman of your evident moral, social and physical weight, which is rather doubtful, in my chamber. I assure you, upon my sacred honor as a reporter of the daily press, that nothing would afford me more unalloyed satisfaction than to find myself the heir to ten millions, or the thousandth part of that sum; but as I haven’t a relative in this world, or any other, to my knowledge, and am by no means certain that I ever had any ancestors, I am reluctantly forced to believe either that I am not the man you are looking for, or else that you have some motive, which I do not even care to discover, for endeavoring to impose upon me with a very pleasant fiction.”

“If I rightly understand you, then, Mr. Bahr,” continued my visitor, with considerable accession of dignity, “you don’t believe yourself to be the heir to ten millions?”

“Unhappily for my own peace of mind, sir, I am compelled to admit that you have divined my meaning with singular accuracy.”

“Very well, sir; very well. I expected different things of you; but no matter. This much, however, you must permit me to remark; attorneys—and particularly London attorneys—are not in the habit of wondering about the world for the purpose of playing practical jokes. Their time is much too valuable; and, I may add, the dignity of their profession does not allow for it, sir. Now I have called upon you in a professional capacity, to make known a certain fact. You decline to believe my statement. What evidence will satisfy you that I am in earnest, and that what I tell you is true?”

The business-like tone and manner of the florid gentleman, and the gravity with which he spoke, would probably have convinced a more credulous person that his story was not entirely without foundation; but I was possessed with the notion that my new acquaintance was, for reasons best known to himself, endeavoring to victimize me, and I therefore answered, in the same bantering manner I had first assumed:

“You’ll be astonished, Mr. Leighton, to learn that a gentleman with such brilliant prospects as myself is actually in want at the present moment of the paltry sum of five thousand dollars. If you would be kind enough to advance me that amount, on any personal security within my power to give, you would greatly oblige me, and go far toward relieving my mind of any doubts I may have entertained touching your sincerity.”

“If you require no stronger proofs than that, Mr. Bahr, they are easily educed,” said the stranger, with a peculiar smile. “I shall be only too happy to advance you the sum you mention, or ten times the amount, on your simple IOU,” and thereupon he drew forth a capacious pocketbook, from which he produced a check, and stepping to my table, where there were writing materials, he filled it up, signed and handed it to me.

I glanced at it. It was a check for five thousand dollars, drawn upon one of the leading banking-houses in Wall street, and payable to my order.

“You can present that as soon as you please and it will be honored,” Mr. Leighton said, as he returned his pocket-book to its place and buttoned up his coat. “At three o’clock this afternoon I will see you again, and by that time I am confident you will be disposed to meet me in a different spirit from that you have thus far exhibited. For the present, sir, good-morning,” and without waiting for a reply, my visitor marched out and closed the door behind him, and I listened to his heavy tread until he had reached the street

In this degenerate age of civilization it is so deplorably seldom that well-to-do gentlemen go about the world looking up needy youngsters and presenting them with checks for five thousand dollars from a spirit of pure philanthropy, that I was justified in feeling, as I did, profoundly, overwhelmingly astonished; indeed, I doubt if I could have felt more thoroughly amazed had Bosh voluntarily raised my salary to the munificent sum of ten dollars per week. But there was the check with the ink scarcely dry, requiring only my signature across the back and presentation at the Wall street banking-house to place me in possession of a far greater sum than I had ever owned at one time in my life; that is—and here my constitutional skepticism touching all matters looking to my pecuniary benefit suggested the not unimportant query—supposing Messrs. Leighton Brother & Leighton, whose names appeared at the bottom of the document, happen to have the amount of funds at their disposal in the Wall street establishment, and supposing again if that were true that my late visitor was really a member of that respectable firm (all firms with five thousand dollars to their credit are, of course, respectable) and authorized to draw checks on their bankers.

These reflections somewhat tended to cool my enthusiasm, and upon further consideration it dawned upon me that it was quite within the bounds of possibility that the stranger might be spreading a cunning snare to involve me in the consequences of an audacious swindle. The check might be a forgery, more or less skillfully executed, and my florid acquaintance might have obtained a hint from the old fable, and amiably resolved to use other paws than his own for extracting coveted chestnuts from a dangerous locality. Upon the whole, I did not see my way clear to the immediate inheritance of ten millions.

However, I had become interested in the affair, and resolved to follow it to the end. It would make an admirable news item, if nothing better came of it; but it behooved me to proceed with caution, unless I felt inclined to see my name mixed up with the police reports of the widely-circulated journal with which I had the honor to be connected; and having arrived at this sage conclusion, I dressed myself, pocketed my check, and proceeded to breakfast.

As I was leaving the restaurant, after concluding my frugal repast, I encountered my friend Duffer of the detective police, and it occurred to me that he was the very man for my present emergency.

Acting upon the inspiration, I observed to Duffer that I had somewhat to say to him, and taking his arm, I led the way to a neighboring saloon, where, over a mug of ale, I related all that had befallen me since my eyes opened that morning,

Duffer did not say much, but talking was not his forte. He examined the check attentively, asked a question or two relative to the personal appearance of the florid gentleman, remarked that it was "a rum old affair, to make the best of it," and ended by suggesting that I should present the check as soon as practicable, and he would be in the vicinity to observe the finale to the proceeding; so we turned our steps down town.

It required all the courage I could muster to walk up to the desk of the paying-teller, to whom I was personally known, and present my check; I felt like a swindler, and suspect I looked like one, and my resolution would certainly have given way but for the proximity of Duffer, in whose friendship, discretion, and resources I had unbounded faith.

But my terrors were all without foundation. Merely glancing at the check, the teller inquired in what denominations I preferred it, to which I replied, as nonchalantly as possible, "In hundreds and fifties" and three minutes later I walked out of the bank with the novel consciousness of having five thousand dollars in my pocket.

I don't know what I said to Duffer, whom I found unconcernedly loitering on the steps, for I was bewildered and well-nigh confounded, not so much with my present possessions, though that was wealth to me, as with what it seemed to promise. The ten millions began to seem tangible and real, and those who like me have known the grinding despotism of poverty, who have known money only as it was the representative of weary toil can form some estimate of my emotions when I saw myself about to be lifted at once from a life of indigence and ceaseless, ill-requited labor to princely wealth. It was like escaping from the frightful atmosphere of a burning building, where the hot and heavy vapor seemed to press upon the respiratory organs like the resistless hand of death, into God's free and open air. I could have laughed, cried, and done various other absurd things, but I believe I did nothing worse than to publicly embrace Duffer, under the momentary impression that he was the author of my good fortune, and hurry him away at a pace ridiculously rapid even for a New Yorker.

Of course there was no such thing as attending to my ordinary avocations in such a state of mental excitement, but I called at the office, and on the plea of indisposition, got leave of absence for the day and night, after which I returned to my quarters and impatiently awaited the reappearance of the stranger.

True to the minute of his appointment, he entered my chamber, and I need scarcely say had no reason to complain of a chilly reception.

“Well,” said the florid gentleman, good-humoredly, “I infer from your manner that you are satisfied I am not an impostor.”

“Perfectly, Mr. Leighton; and you will pardon, I am sure, my thoughtless levity of this morning. Your communication was so unexpected and extraordinary that it can scarcely be wondered at that I was, for the time being, incredulous.”

“Not the least apology is necessary, Mr. Bahr—not the least. We understand each other now and that’s enough. Would you like to hear some of the particulars of your affairs, or shall we defer it to another time? You have only to indicate your pleasure in the matter: I am quite at your disposal.”

“I am naturally curious to learn whence I derive the great inheritance,” I answered, excitedly.

“Ah! to be sure; nothing more natural,” continued the stranger, glancing about the room with a peculiar, uncertain expression I had noticed in him before. “The very suggestion I should have made myself, were our positions reversed. Well, then, you are the next of kin to, and consequently the heir of, Charles Masterson Bahr, late of London, who died intestate about two years ago. He was an old client of ours, and had passed the greater part of his life in the East Indies, where he amassed an immense fortune, and when he died without chick or child and having made no will, you can easily imagine, sir, we were in no small flurry to discover the rightful heir; but that proved no easy task. A thorough search failed to discover a single blood relative of his in the British dominions, and it is an especial Providence or a miracle that directed me to you at last.”

“But where are the proofs,” I said, “that I am the kinsman of this man of whom, I am free to confess to you, I never heard until this moment?”

“My dear boy, let me advise you on one point. Proofs are matters that belong to the province of your attorneys. Never bother your head about them. Of course they are satisfactory and complete, or I should not be here; so consider that settled, and yourself as entitled to succeed to an estate worth ten millions—ten millions, mind you, as soon as you please, and in the meantime, draw upon our firm for any amount you desire, and we shall take pleasure in honoring your drafts, and hope to be retained as your solicitors, if you are satisfied of our fitness for the position.”

I could do no less than assure Mr. Leighton of what I certainly felt in all sincerity, that himself and his partners had afforded me the best possible evidence of the propriety of retaining them as my legal advisers, by the zeal they had already evinced in my behalf.

“Thank you, sir, thank you,” Mr. Leighton replied. “It is always a pleasure to give satisfaction; still we have done nothing more than our simple professional duty, but you want an opportunity to collect your ideas, which are a little confused by the incidents of today, as I can readily understand, and determine upon your plans for the future, so I will leave you to yourself for this evening; and, to tell the truth, I have a business appointment which I must attend to at once or I

shall be late. Good-evening, sir, and don't forget to call upon me for whatever funds you may desire."

I was well pleased to be left alone and at liberty to reflect upon my strange good fortune. It seemed incredible that a few hours could have effected such a stupendous change in my affairs, and more than once I caught myself wondering whether, after all, I might not be wandering in the mazes of a curiously vivid dream, but as the thought swept through my mind, my hand involuntarily sought my pocket where lay the five thousand dollars in crisp notes, and assured me that I was the victim of no vagary of sleep, and that the ten millions was a fixed fact.

But what to do with my fortune and how enjoy it, were questions that soon occurred in their natural order of sequence. It was certainly ample enough to satisfy all my wants reasonable or otherwise, and now when it fairly dawned upon me that I was possessed with the wherewithal to procure whatever comfort or luxury money would purchase, I felt as I should imagine a honey-bee might, suddenly let loose amid a wilderness of flowers, bewildered and uncertain where to commence its feast.

If I had been blessed with relatives, the exquisite pleasure of sharing my great wealth with such of them as were needy and deserving would have been mine, but I knew neither kith nor kin, and there were but few who were endeared to me by the ties of friendship. It did occur to me, in a vague kind of way, that I might endow an immense charity for the benefit of newspaper reporters and writers, whose salaries furnished them with sufficient physical provender to keep them from actual starvation, but left no margin for mental food or habiliments to comfortably clothe the outer man, but my eleemosynary schemes were overturned by the recollection of certain rascally reprobates, much given to wide departures from pretty nearly all the commands of the decalogue and undue potations of lagerbier, who would, in all probability, be the first to benefit from my bounty.

At last a happy thought struck me. To travel had always been the darling wish of my life. With the Old World and its thousand shrines consecrated to genius of ages gone by, its monuments of times that have been, its works of art and scholastic associations, I was acquainted so far as I could be from reading; but now I could see it for myself; loiter for years, if I was so disposed, through European capitals; enjoy the glorious skies of Italy; revel in the artistic atmosphere of Rome; ascend the Nile, and view with my own eyes the wondrous ruins with which its banks are strewn; tread the hallowed land of Palestine, and if the humor seized me, penetrate with befitting escort the remote regions of the East, and acquire from Oriental sages an insight into those mysterious sciences of which the world we live in have shadowy hints now and then. Ah! here was a way in which my wealth could be made to minister to genuine physical and intellectual pleasure.

The picture suited me, so I lighted my meerschaum, and as the fragrant smoke rolled upward I proceeded to add some finishing touches. A man with ten millions at his command could, of course, travel as he pleased. Ordinary mortals are under the disagreeable necessity of waiting for regular packet-steamer days, in order to reach places they desire to visit. I would remedy this evil in the outset by purchasing a taut little steam-vessel, fitted up with all the modern conveniences and elegancies, secure a commander of established character and ability, and a crew of first-class

seamen, to whom I would pay such extra compensation that they would feel no disposition to abandon me in a foreign port.

I would supply my craft with everything to tempt an epicurean palate; with books, pictures and musical instruments, for my mental delectation; hunting and fishing apparatus suitable for all sports of these kinds, in whatever portion of the globe I might see fit to tarry; scientific instruments, for determining the height of mountains, the density of the atmosphere or the degree of temperature, and for the solution of other natural and scientific problems. In brief, I pictured to myself a veritable floating palace, and resolved to achieve it in reality.

But it would not do to go alone. There would be a manifest impropriety in a gentleman worth ten millions hobnobbing with the crew of his pleasure-yacht, and as I proposed nothing less than a voyage round the world, calling at all ports on the way, a select company would be highly desirable. In the first place, as even millionaires are subject to the various ills that flesh is heir to, a medical gentleman, well skilled in his calling, would be a valuable *compagnon du voyage*; an artist also, to sketch scenery, would come in play; a gentleman with a botanical turn, to prepare herbariums of foreign plants, and another given to geological research to supply the requisite enthusiasm when we scaled volcanoes, and had rocks and other hard subjects under consideration; a naturalist to preserve the skins of birds and animals, and a middle-aged baldheaded gentleman with a collegiate degree or two to do the scientific and give the expedition a suitable *éclat* in the estimation of all sorts of societies for the promulgation of useful knowledge.

Perhaps one or more members of the party might be married gentlemen, with a superfluous daughter or niece, and feel inclined to have their fondly-cherished bear them company, which would make it all the merrier, and furnish us with feminine fingers to discourse sweet music; and besides, let our cabins be ever so elegantly appointed, they would lack one great essential were there not two or three ladies scattered about them, with their multifarious paraphernalia for the manufacture of pretty things for personal or house adornment.

Lastly, to make our corps complete, Duffer, the sagacious should go with us, for it is a lamentable fact that in all parts of the habitable globe there are those to be found who fear not God nor respect man, and to the workers of iniquity Duffer was a terror.

Whimsical as the foregoing plan may appear, I seriously resolved upon carrying it out, with such modifications as circumstances might determine, and for the next two weeks I was quietly casting about among my acquaintance for the materials for my proposed party; but with the exception of Duffer and Mr. Leighton, I took none into my confidence. Neither had I removed from my Grand street quarters, though why I lingered in such a comfortless abode it would have puzzled me to explain, save that the humor prompted me to continue my life with as few changes as possible until my arrangements were complete, and I was ready for transformation from an extremely unpretending caterpillar into a butterfly of the most gorgeous description. To Bosh and his six dollars a week, however, I bade adieu.

Mr. Leighton spent a considerable portion of each day with me, and entered into my plans with a relish and enthusiasm rather at variance with his dignified profession.

“It was a glorious scheme,” he averred, “and one that did honor to its originator, and he should certainly accompany us (of course with my permission), and would be available to draw the wills of members of the company who might feel disposed to set their houses in order, if for no other purpose.

So day after day we talked the matter over, and kept a bright look-out for a vessel that would answer my purpose.

One evening, between two or three weeks after my accession to fortune, I sat in my apartment in company with my now almost inseparable friends, Messrs. Leighton and Duffer. It was a miserable night outside, the sleet beat against the windows with a noise like a shower of small shot, and the wind sighed and moaned as if in impotent rage at not being able to get at us; but within all was cozy. My little stove glowed like the angry eye of a Cyclops, and upon it simmered a mighty bowl of punch, from which, in deep potations, we drank success to our contemplated cruise round the [world.]

At last a vessel had been found that was exactly to my mind—a splendid little steamer, so nearly faultless that it was safe to call her perfect, and if the price could be agreed upon I should be the owner of her the following day.

Several members of our proposed expedition had all been nominated and elected in secret conclave, and an order had been prepared for Delmonico to make ready a sumptuous feast, to which, as soon as I had completed the purchase of the steamer, all were to be bidden, and, for the first time, learn of the fortune that had fallen to me, and the happiness in store for themselves.

The evening was pretty well advanced, when a step—more than one, in fact—sounded on my stairs. I should have given no heed to it but for the singular manner in which it seemed to affect Mr. Leighton. He started up, looked uneasily around the room, and almost seemed to gasp for breath as he exclaimed, in a broken, uncertain voice:

“My God! they have found me at last!”

“Who might *they* happen to be?” Mr. Duffer said, pricking up his ears at such an exceedingly suggestive exclamation.

“No matter, Mr. Duffer, no matter!” Mr. Leighton answered, hastily; “but I wish they hadn’t found me out; I wish to God they hadn’t. We were so comfortable here, and harming no one, and were all of us going on such a delightful voyage.”

“Look here, my buck, I’m afraid you’ve been in mischief,” Mr. Duffer said, suspiciously, and at that moment came a tap at the door.

“Don’t let him in or I shall kill him!” Mr. Leighton cried, becoming in an instant perfectly furious. “I won’t be dragged back to that infernal prison, I’ll die! I’ll commit murder! I’ll do anything first! Duffer, Bahr, you cowardly blackguards! what do you mean by standing there like

a couple of statues? Why don't you shoot him through the door! Throw him downstairs! Break his neck! Don't see me kidnapped before your very eyes without lifting a hand to save me!"

"Uncle—don't you know me, uncle?" cried a sweet feminine voice from the landing.

"It's Annie," Mr. Leighton said, sinking back into his chair, and looking around him with a weary, bewildered gaze, but quiet as a child. "Poor little Annie! my pet. I wonder how she found me!"

Duffer stepped to the door and opened it, and a *petite* girlish figure sprung lightly into the apartment, closely followed by a gentleman younger by some years than Mr. Leighton, but like him in face and figure.

"Yes, it is Annie. Come and kiss me, pet!" Mr. Leighton said, in a strangely altered, childish voice. "I'm glad to see you, little one, though you have spoiled all our nice plans, and we were going to have such a splendid dinner at Delmonico's and a voyage round the world in a steamer of our own. Annie, do you know I have found the heir of the Charles Masterton Bahr Estate. This is the man," pointing to me, "and he deserves it, for he is a good fellow, and we have had such a capital time together. Perhaps, after all, your father would let us take the voyage. Ask him, pet, ask him."

"Yes, I'll ask him, and between us I'm sure we shall be able to arrange everything very nicely," the girl answered, speaking to him as though he was a child, while upon my mind a sudden light broke in, and upon my heart fell a crushing weight that I sunk into a chair and groaned aloud:

"My dear sir," said the strange gentleman, approaching me and kindly laying his hands upon my shoulder, "I sympathize with you most sincerely, believe me. I understand it all. You have been led to suppose you were the heir to ten millions. You have been deceived unintentionally but most cruelly by an insane man and my brother, whose mental aberrations are of so peculiar a character that they have deceived many older and perhaps wiser men. He has told you of an old East Indian client of ours, who died intestate and without heirs, so far as we have ever been able to discover, leaving a princely fortune.

"All this was true. The rest is quickly told. Through his anxiety and almost ceaseless labor for nearly two years to discover the heir-at-law to that vast wealth, my brother's mind became unbalanced, and his monomania is to follow up the search, and if he finds a person of the name of Bahr, he believes him to be the long-sought for heir, and usually succeeds in making him believe it also. You are not the only one who has been victimized in this manner; and finally we were obliged to place him in restraint; but as he was perfectly sane on almost every other subject, and we hoped that time would restore him completely, we kept the matter secret from everyone outside the family; a reticence which has cost us dear, I am afraid, for he escaped from his house, and with the cool, calculating cunning which the insane so often exhibit, went straight to our principal bankers, obtained a letter of credit for twenty thousand pounds on a house in the city, and before we were aware of his absence, had actually set sail for the United States.

“As soon as I leaned of the letter of credit, which gave me a clue to his destination, I at once set out in pursuit of him, accompanied by my daughter, who is the only person who can control him when in his violent moods, which, however, are fortunately not of frequent occurrence. Now, sir, you know all.”

“And it’s just about the rummiest old go that ever fell under my observation,” observed Duffer, sententiously. “To think of a New York detective being imposed upon by a crazy man! Oh, Lord! I’ll go over to Jersey and hire out to drive oxen!”

For myself, I scarcely heard Mr. Leighton’s explanation. My disappointment was so sudden, complete and overwhelming; my beautiful aerial castles had fallen with such a terrible crash and lay at my feet such a hopeless mass of rubbish, that I was struck dumb, almost senseless. I do not know what I thought, hoped, or cared for; it only seemed to me, in a vague, dreamy way, that a few moments before I had been young, happy and carefree, looking toward to years of pleasure, and now I was suddenly grown old, despairing, aimless, utterly incapable of longer fighting the grim battle of life.

Do not call me weak or wanting in manhood, till you have passed through such an ordeal and come out in better plight, when I confess that as I tried to arise and murmur out some commonplace words my head suddenly turned giddy, the room swam round, and I fell back insensible.

The usual restoratives brought me to myself, I am happy to say, and after I had taken time to turn the matter over in my mind and reflect that in all probability I could resume my situation with Bosh upon application, I concluded it was best to recommence hostilities with poverty on that basis, after which I had a laugh with Mr. Leighton over the stupendous hoax his demented relative had succeeded in playing off upon me.

“But I certainly feel that we owe you some reparation, Mr. Bahr,” he responded frankly and generously. “This has passed beyond the limits of pleasantry; it has been fearfully earnest to you.”

“You owe me no reparation, sir; on the contrary, I am indebted to you for a considerable sum of money, which I have spent honestly, supposing it to be my own.”

“Do not mention it, for I certainly shall never permit you to repay it. May I be permitted to ask what are your prospects in life?”

“To work sixteen hours out of the twenty-four on a daily paper at a salary of six dollars a week,” I answered.

“I can improve on that,” said the generous-hearted Englishman. “Come home with me.”

“Thank you, and I will think of it,” I replied; and then the brothers, the sane and the insane, together with their feminine relative, took their departure, and Duffer and I were alone.

“Done by a crazy man, so help me ‘John Rogers!’” growled Duffer. “I ought to have been a school marm.”

It relieved me so much to think that Duffer had been taken in, that I began to feel better, and suggested that we finish the punch, which we accordingly did.

The Leightons remained for a month in New York, and I saw them daily. I suppose we all improved on acquaintance. At all events we became excellent friends, and two of us, something more; and when they finally set sail for old England, I went with them, Mr. Leighton having managed to secure for me a good position on a London journal, for which I was to receive a liberal remuneration.

There had been various matters talked over between us, and among them this was incidentally mentioned, that the following year Annie and myself should establish a copartnership for mutual benefit and improvement; and who knows but that therein I may find a better fortune than the ten millions of which I once supposed myself the fortunate inheritor? Amen!

Frank Leslie's Pleasant Hours, 1867 Vol. 3 p. 289