

*Mr. Hutchinson's Clerk*  
by Frances Mary Schoolcraft

Horberg is a town on the east bank of the Hudson River, about forty miles above New York. One of the most considerable landed proprietors in the neighborhood was John Granger, a gentleman of good family and standing, who benefited mankind, not merely by making two blades of grass grow where one grew before, but by making scores of shorthorn calves grow where there were none before, and by leading the van in a spirited passage of arms concerning the merits of long wool and short wool, Paular and Infantado. He was known as Judge Granger among his neighbors, though over what tribunal he ever presided, save at a county show, does not clearly appear. His place was one of combined agricultural efficiency, and of mere ornament. The house was large and handsome, and the garden and pleasure-grounds extensive and well-arranged. Mr. Granger's family consisted firstly of himself and his wife, and one or two young children; so far it was uninteresting and commonplace; but there was one member more, who was neither uninteresting nor commonplace, and that was Mr. Granger's wife sister, Jeannette Vanderheyden. She was about twenty-three years old, and was the owner of a moderately independent fortune, including, among its items, certain real estate on Long Island, valued in round numbers at ten thousand dollars. She was at present engaged to a young lawyer practicing in Norberg. Francis Hoel was the very reverse of a favorite with Mr. Granger. He had a prejudice against the Hoel family, and he regarded Francis himself as a very bad match, on account of his want of money, if on no other. It must be confessed, that excepting in matter of his limited means, Mr. Granger rather visited the sins of the father on the son, than judged the son by his own merits. Mr. Hoel was a man who had carried the follies of youth into mature age, and who had probably not a friend left in the world, except his son. Consequentially, although Mr. Granger had consented to an engagement which he had no power to prevent, he had not spared any means of making Francis feel that he merely tolerated his visits at his house. Mrs. Granger was one of those model wives who always follow the husband's lead, and was very cool in her civility. So that if there had been any attraction less strong, it is not likely that Francis Hoel would have very often entered the Granger domains. As it was, he was not sorry when he could time his visits at periods when the head of the family was absent.

On one fair midsummer evening, knowing that he should not be likely to encounter Mr. Granger, who had gone to New York, Francis Hoel walked from his abode in Norberg to Mr. Granger's place, and was fortunate enough to meet Jeannette in the grounds, thus avoiding the necessity of crossing the inhospitable threshold at all. They wandered about the walks for some time, watching the white sails that glided along the water. At least, Jeannette did so, but Francis's attention seemed almost entirely occupied by his companion, who was as fair an excuse for indifference to the most beautiful natural scenery as could have been found. She was of a rather slight, but very graceful figure, with a face that at first seemed merely piquant and pretty, but whose pure soft color and outlines bore examination remarkably well. Francis Hoel was by no means a blot upon the picture, although I cannot describe him as remarkably handsome. The chief thing one who knew Frank's history would wonder at in his countenance was, that it bore no deeper marks of the trouble which he had known almost all his life.

We said that Jeannette seemed less absorbed in their conversation than Hoel did. He was speaking, but she evidently did not hear. Her eyes were fixed on a small boat containing only one

man, which was approaching the hither shore, not with a vague and idle gaze, but with interest, and even slight anxiety. Hoel, though he was looking at her, did not notice her preoccupation, or mistook its character, until she caught his arm, exclaiming:

“He will be drowned!”

Hoel looked out on the river, and saw at once what caused Jeannette’s alarm. The small boat, from some want either of care or of skill, had approached too near the bows of a small steamer, and appeared in danger of being run down. Hoel looked on for a moment with the natural interest which a stranger would take in such an incident, but Jeannette was pale and breathless, and her hands closed tighter and tighter on Hoel’s arm.

“No, they will clear it,” said Hoel, as the steamboat floated by. Jeanette did not accept his assurance, until the boat reappeared in perfect safety. Hoel had leisure, during this time, to notice her manner. “Who is it, Jeannette?” he asked.

She did not answer. Though the momentary peril was over, she did not recover herself; she was trembling like a leaf, and her very lips were white.

“Is it someone that you know?” repeated Hoel.

“Do you think I could recognize any one at such a distance?” asked Jeannette, trying to laugh. The effort was so hysterical that she wisely abandoned it, lest it should end in tears.

“It is very singular that you should be so interested in a stranger,” said Hoel, a little piqued, perhaps, at his somewhat glowing pictures of future felicity having been thrown away upon Jeannette.

“Is it singular that I am a little nervous at seeing a man in danger of drowning before my eyes?” asked Jeannette.

“The danger is past,” said Hoel, dryly, seeing that Jeannette’s eyes had wandered towards the boat, “and I think your concern seemed rather personal than general.”

“I see the danger is past,” said Jeannette, passing over his last words. “And now I must go back to the house. It is growing late, and Margaret will be sending out to look for me.”

She turned, and walked away; Hoel accompanied her, but not wholly satisfied, more especially as he knew that the boat was making for the landing-place below them. He walked silently by her side, with an uneasy feeling becoming disagreeably strong in his mind. The lady of his love, long-wooed and lately-won, had betrayed very often a capricious and coquettish spirit, and he did not feel so secure of his prize as not to feel a slight movement of jealousy. He tried to dismiss it, and address her in his usual manner. She answered, but not at all as she was wont. As they came in sight of the house, she stopped and said hurriedly:

“Frank—you had better not come quite to the house with me. I may get a lecture from Margaret on the impropriety of roaming about out-doors with you, instead of seeing you in her presence, as I have almost promised that I would.”

“As you please, Jeannette,” said Hoel, now unable to avoid seeing that she was anxious to leave him, and equally unable to attribute it to a fear of being lectured; “I will go no further. Good-evening.”

His tone was unusually cold, and without noticing her deprecating glance, as she returned his good-evening, he turned and left her, without further farewell. Jeannette looked after him for a moment with a troubled face, and then went on towards the house. Hoel did not leave the grounds immediately. He wandered about for a short time, and finally threw himself down on a bench at the foot of a tree, and tried to assure himself either that Jeannette was a coquette, and only amusing herself with him, or that he himself was a jealous fool; for, at first, the alternative seemed to him to be limited to this. He was just beginning to think the latter was the case and that Jeannette’s secret, if secret there were, was nothing that called for such embittered reflections, when a new cause was given for him to wonder. The spot where he sat commanded very nearly the same view as the chalet, but more of the banks of the river could be seen. It was on the edge of a wood through which an opening had been made to show the more distant prospect. A winding path nearby led down to the landing-place, and was visible in places from the seat under the tree. At one of these points he caught sight of the flutter of a skirt, and at the next he distinctly saw Jeannette walking rapidly down toward the river; and yet further down the slope he saw her joined by a man. Hoel instinctively followed, without very clearly knowing why he did so, or what he proposed doing. He came in sight of Jeannette and her mysterious companion standing together, in, it seemed to him, an attitude of intimate confidence. The man was dressed as if he wanted to hide his form and features as much as possible, wearing a slouched felt hat, and a loose cape coat. In spite of this, Hoel judged by the air of the stranger that he was young, and such a man in other respects as a lover might be justly jealous of finding in mysterious correspondence with a lady who had given assurance of affection to himself. His first impulse was to break upon the interview, but on second thoughts he changed his mind, and the pair moved out of his sight. He remained where he was, to ascertain how far the meeting was clandestine. The stranger might be a visitor at Mr. Granger’s, and in that case he could easily learn who it was. They did not go towards the house, however; they seemed to be walking to and fro on a level space a little out of the path, for at intervals more or less distant they came in sight, and then again disappeared. After a longer interval than usual, he saw them again more plainly than ever, and they paused in full view. Jeannette was evidently speaking with considerable vehemence, and using those graceful little gestures half-commanding, half-imploring, which *he* always found so irresistible. He guessed that she was urging him to go—in fear, perhaps, of discovery. He saw her receive what seemed to him a locket, and after glancing at it, saw her hide it in her bosom. Next he saw the stranger clasp Jeannette in his arms—and then—and then the space was empty, and Jeannette was flying towards home like a startled deer, passing within a few feet of Hoel, without dreaming that he was near. Hoel deliberated no longer, but rushed down towards the landing place. He was too late, for as he reached it, he saw the boat put out into the open river, where the light of the young moon was lengthening out the twilight. Hoel stood a few minutes watching the boat, and then taking the shortest way to Norberg, delayed not an instant until he found himself in his office, where he administered to himself, by way of

anodyne, as much law in various shapes as one would have thought adequate to have calmed Othello himself.

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When Jeannette reentered the house, she found Mr. and Mrs. Granger at the tea-table, Mr. Granger was busily feeding himself on old roast beef and English ale, having just arrived from New York, and being, in his own words, "as hungry as the very deuce." Mr. Granger was a large and portly man, with a manner that was only bluff and positive when he was in good humor, but very apt to become blustering at the least opposition. He greeted Jeannette with an abrupt:

"Where have you been, Jeannette? We have been waiting nearly two hours for you."

Jeannette was less impressed with her sin of unpunctuality than she would have been, had she not been quiet aware that Mr. Granger would not have waited two hours for any one, particularly when he was in that state of diabolical inanition which was not uncommon with him. She sat down, and presently observed that her brother-in-law was not in a serene state of mind. She had suspected it on his first address, partly because he called her "Jeannette" instead of his customary "Net," and she had further occasion to remark that his disturbed condition seemed to have sole and direct reference to herself. Finally pushing away his plate, and shoving back his chair with energy, he said:

"Jeannette! I have got something to say to you. Come into the study."

Jeannette arose and followed him, thinking that there must be something unusually serious in the matter, and wondered for which of her sins she was to be called to account. Mr. Granger shut the door with a solemn bang, and hemmed resonantly thrice; then taking his stand behind his accustomed armchair, with his hands on the back of it, he said in a voice accusing and condemning at the same moment:

"Jeannette, I want to know what you have been doing?"

This was a very comprehensive question, and one very difficult to answer, and any one with the clearest conscience might have hesitated. Mr. Granger pushed aside the chair, and took up a new position, repeating his question.

"I—I—don't know what you mean," said Jeannette.

You *do* know! You *must* know! You can't *help* knowing!" said Mr. Grange, rising on his toes, and falling on his heels with the rising and falling inflection of his sentences, and not at all softened by the downcast and blushing face upon which his majestic gaze was bent.

"I don't think I have done anything very wrong," said Jeannette, raising her large hazel eyes with a look that might have moved Rhadamanthus to a merciful construction, but which had no particular effect upon Mr. Granger.

“I don’t say you have done anything *criminal*,” said Mr. Granger, “but it is, to say the least, *singular—very singular*—that a young woman who has guardians, and certainly not harsh ones, should resort so unnecessarily to clandestine measures unless there was something in the matter to be *ashamed* of.”

Mr. Granger had naturally a loud and inflexible voice, and he chiefly imparted stress to it by raising it, and bringing out some of his words with explosive force. Jeannette looked down again, and offered no reply. “Now,” continued Mr. Granger, “I want to know *why* you mortgaged your lots on Long Island.”

Jeannette looked up, as if taken completely by surprise, and as if she had been prepared to be taxed with something very different.

“I have not,” she said.

“You have.”

“What has put such an idea into your mind?” asked Jeannette.

“I have seen the record,” said Mr. Granger, shaking his finger at Jeannette to check off the syllables of the names of the parties. “Jean-nette Van-der-hey-den to Wil-liam Da-vid-son.”

“It must have been some other person of the same name,” said Jeannette.

“Then the other person of the same name owns property of identically the same boundaries as yours,” said Mr. Granger ironically.

Jeannette continued to deny, and urged that she would be very unlikely to take such a step without advice.

“I daresay you *had* advice—Mr. Francis Hoel may have advised you, and Mr. Francis Hoel may have had the benefit of the transaction.”

“Francis Hoel!”

“Yes, Francis Hoel! I remember very well how much surprised every one was that Frank Hoel should have the money to get old Hoel out of his last difficulty, and *the date of the mortgage was just at that time.*”

“That money—” commenced Jeannette, and stopped short.

“Yes—that money—came from you.”

“You have no reason to doubt my word,” said Jeannette, in a rather proud and cold tone. “If I had thought it right to mortgage my land for any purpose, I should not have taken the pains to make a secret of it. I didn’t do it, and that ought to end the subject.”

“Why—Jeannette! this is absurd—preposterous! Don’t I tell you I have seen the record!”

“If there is any such thing on the record, the record is wrong,” said Jeannette. And from that point Mr. Granger could not move her, and they parted without coming to a more amicable understanding of the mystery.

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The next morning Mr. Granger again approached the subject, and received the same uncompromising denial from Jeannette. After this, he informed his wife that it was his duty to inquire further into the matter, and accordingly drove into Norberg to consult Josiah Hutchinson, Esquire, the senior member of the legal profession in that town, a man much respected in the community; he always kept the law on his side, and never for one instant lost sight of his own interests. Although he had reached an age and experience which would have made it natural for him to desire to resign some of the lower details of the practice into younger hands, yet he never without a pang saw a client go into another lawyer’s office, or heard of a writ coming out of one—particularly Francis Hoel’s office. Issuing writs was Squire Hutchinson’s dearest avocation; he had a grand bipartite alliance offensive and defensive with Mr. Deputy Sheriff Drake, for the promotion of lawsuits between man and man, and the enhancement of costs. Mr. Granger had a good opinion of Mr. Hutchinson; he thought him an experienced lawyer, a sound and safe adviser, and an honest man—all of which things he doubtless was, to a certain extent.

Mr. Hutchinson’s office was a small, square room in the corner of his house, whose furniture was not more than was needed, nor such as would make it at all unlikely that he had purchased it as second-hand when he first commenced practice. Mr. Hutchinson himself was seated in a rocking chair, perhaps of a more modern date, undulating slowly to and fro. He was a man of fifty or more, looking much like an old woman in male attire. At a desk by a window sat Mr. Hutchinson’s clerk.

Mr. Hutchinson’s clerk was not a young man, nor yet an old man, but a young woman between twenty-five and thirty, being the sole daughter of his house and heart. Mr. Hutchinson had had male clerks in days gone by, but he had not been fortunate in his selection: possibly because the first qualification into which he inquired was their cheapness. Finally, thinking the money they cost, if it was not much, had better be kept in the family, and having no sons, he had inducted Athalia at an early age into the position, which she had filled ever since, with far more satisfaction to her father than to herself. Under happier auspices Athalia might have been called a very handsome woman, but her training had not been such as to develop either intellectual or physical qualities in the best manner. As it was, she was a handsome girl, though there was more than one defect in her features, and the dead pallor of her skin did not give them the aid that a brilliant complexion would have done. She had a broad open forehead, and large, bright eyes. These eyes were not like the generality of eyes, which, with all the poetry and prose about them, are apt to be the most commonplace features possible. They were well set, under low, arched brows, and noticeably wider apart than the rule, which gave them, when she was in an ordinary mood, an unusually frank and candid expression; but they were capable of a great change of expression. At present they were engaged in glancing listlessly from her writing to the window. After one such careless look into the street, she said, suddenly:

“Here is Mr. Granger, father. I will go out.”

Mr. Hutchinson nodded; not that he cared for his daughter’s presence, knowing by experience that she was perfectly trustworthy, but because he knew Mr. Granger might be less indifferent. Athalia gathered up her writing materials, and retired, but only to a very small room, or a large closet, as any one pleased to call it, immediately adjoining the office. Here she seemed to be quietly pursuing her writing, but, although there was no error or omission made in the deed she was filling up, her fingers were working mechanically, for she was not giving any heed to the parties of the first or second part, in whose interest the deed was drawn. She had not altogether civilized nerves and muscles, for her own ears moved from time to time, and her eyes glanced from their outer corners in a manner more becoming a savage, or an animal, than a female clerk in a law-office in the highly-civilized town of Norberg. At length she laid down her pen, and devoted all her faculties to listening. It was not difficult, for the partition was of thin boards, not very closely joined, and covered only with wall-paper, and that only on the office side. Neither did her listening seem prompted by more idle curiosity. She sat with her head slightly bent towards the partition, and the iris of her eyes seeming alternately to contract and dilate, while they were turned in the same direction, and filled with a look of mingled fear, fierceness and cunning. The conversation which so deeply interested her, was concerning the discovery Mr. Granger had made of a mortgage on Jeannette’s Long Island property. Mr. Granger’s voice was easily audible, and Athalia was able, from long familiarity with it, to follow her father’s although it was not loud. Mr. Hutchinson’s sentences were broken up into disjointed bits, and the pauses filled up with short sniffs, accompanied with a number of nods and blinks, and raisings of one eyebrow, which served to give him an air of suspecting a good deal more, on almost every subject under discussion, than he cared to say.

“I should hardly think,” said Mr. Hutchinson, after hearing the story and making some few inquiries, “I should hardly think Miss Vanderheyden would deny it if she had made a mortgage. Can you guess at any motive for her making it, or denying it if she did?”

The lawyer’s peculiarities being chiefly of delivery, and not of construction, cannot well be indicated to the eye.

“I am afraid I can do both. I wish I couldn’t,” said Mr. Granger. “You are aware, I presume, that Jeannette is engaged to young Frank Hoel—very much against my wishes, I must say. And you remember—you remember Hutchinson, that three months ago, old Hoel had an execution on his place, and came within one of being sold out of house and home by the sheriff.”

“Yes, I remember,” said Mr. Hutchinson. “I was attorney for Mr. Huestis, who brought the suit. It was a very strange affair. The sheriff had actually commenced the sale—two or three bids had been made—when Frank Hoel made his appearance, all of a sudden—stopped the sale, and paid the execution. I was very much surprised. In fact, everyone was. I was, especially, for only the day before—Frank told me—he had no hopes—whatever—that they could—settle the matter, and that the sale would have to go on.” Mr. Hutchinson stopped, and with a very suspicious turn of the head and arching of the right eyebrow, added, “I never could guess how he got the money.”

“Nor anyone else,” said Mr. Granger. “He positively refused to tell—he would not even tell his father. All he would say, was, that a friend had accommodated him at the last moment. I must confess that the explanation did not seem very likely, for I knew that he had no friend that either could or would help him. I heard him say so himself within a very short time.”

“Well, I rather expected—when I took the case against Hoel—that his friends would come forward—and help him out. He has—old Hoel, I mean—a good many wealthy and influential friends—or used to have.”

“So he did use to have,” said Mr. Granger, “and they have come forward again and again, and helped him out of every kind of difficulty, until they are all tired of it. Two years ago he was just in the same condition—going to be sold out—and his friends saved him *then*, and told him it was the last they ever should do for him.”

“What on earth does he do with his money? He used to be quite rich.”

“*Gambles!*” said Mr. Granger, in a voice of strong reprobation. “*Gambles*, Mr. Hutchinson! He is the greatest old gambler in the country!” This was no news to Mr. Hutchinson, but he had never heard Mr. Granger say it before, and so he demonstrated much concern, and disapproval, while Mr. Granger continued, “All the Hoels were a worthless, gambling, drinking, profligate set, and this old Frank Hoel is the very worst of the tribe. He was very proud of his mother’s being a member of an old French family—the only thing he had to be proud of, I admit—and he acted like an old French nobleman nobody can deny. What would you expect a boy to be, brought up as Frank was, and his father’s example before him? I told them, Frank’s mother’s people—that the only salvation for the boy would be to take him away—but the old fellow wouldn’t let him go—and afterwards I advised Frank myself to go out West or somewhere, where his father wasn’t known—no—he wouldn’t. Then, he should have gone into the army—just the man to do it—a young, strong man, with no ties, and his character to make—I thought he would have been the first to go—I asked him why he didn’t? Well—he hemmed and hawed, and finally said something about his father having no friend but himself, and rather hinting that he was afraid the old blackguard would disgrace himself publicly, if he was not on the spot to look after him.

“Frank,” I said, “I know what you mean; but, mark my words, your father will do you more harm than you will do him good. And so he has. From all I know of them, it would be all of a piece with the usual Hoel way of doing things, if Frank had persuaded Jeannette to mortgage her property for his benefit and made her promise not to tell of it.

“Do you think so? Well, I don’t know—Frank always seemed to me a pretty steady young man—I don’t know—I don’t suppose he would have been likely to have made it *himself*, would he? without *her* knowing anything of it?”

Mr. Granger stared at his legal friend, started, brought his fist down on the table violently, as if he had seized the idea forcibly, and fell into a deep meditation. Mr. Hutchinson, who had delivered the suggestion in a yet more fitful manner than usual, and with yet more winking and nodding, sat and watched the process of Mr. Granger’s meditation, winking like a toad, and



using his handkerchief evidently, merely by way of oratorical gesture. Mr. Granger spoke, when he did speak, in a lower tone than usual, but not too low for the sharp ears beyond the partition.

“Hutchinson, I don’t believe but what you are right. I don’t think, I don’t really think, on reflection, that Jeannette would tell a downright lie, but” —here his voice rose like a northeaster after a lull— “by the Lord! I have such a bad opinion of young Hoel that I believe he would do *anything!*”

“Well—I ain’t quite prepared to say that,” said Hutchinson, “but it may be so—very likely to be so, I am afraid.”

“I think it *more* than likely. I remember now distinctly, that when I first asked Jeannette, she told me plainly and promptly that she had not mortgaged the land, and after I brought Frank Hoel’s name in, she got very much confused and would not answer any more questions. I am sure this occurred to her, and she is infatuated enough to want to shield the rascal. I see it all, as plain as day.”

But he did not see, and possibly would not have understood if he had seen, the face with which Athalia listened to his last speech—with a smile half crafty and half contemptuous.

The consultation, as to what was best to be done, was of more length than interest, but ended at last in Mr. Granger’s approving of Mr. Hutchinson’s proposal to employ a private detective in case the inquiry should present any further difficulty, and in Mr. Hutchinson’s undertaking to go to New York to ascertain from Mr. William Davidson whatever he could in relation to the mysterious mortgage.

Athalia remained perfectly still until she heard her father and Mr. Hutchinson leave the office. Then she arose with every appearance of strong agitation.

“I must not lose a moment,” she said. “I must go to this girl—though I feel that I hate her, she does not suspect it. I am the stronger of the two, and I can make her do as I will—if not for *his* sake, then for her own.”

Why should Athalia hate Jeannette Vanderheyden, who had always treated her with marked kindness? Because Athalia loved Francis Hoel. She had had frequent occasion to meet him, since he commenced practicing law in Norberg. It had been at first the old story of friendship, and nothing more. Athalia had told Frank he must consider her precisely the same as he would have done Mr. Hutchinson’s clerk, if that clerk had been of his own sex—she had professed to have nothing in common with other women—called herself an improvement on Sally Brass—and in various other ways assured Hoel that there was a “cell more in her brain, and a fibre less in her heart,” than a young person of her age would naturally be credited with. Frank had not had a very strong sense of the danger that a friendship between a young man and a young woman would probably terminate in a stronger feeling on either one side or the other. He had liked to talk to Athalia—and he had been interested by her character and position to a degree that might have made him feel the danger very sensibly soon, if he had been fancy-free. His devotion to Jeannette

saved him, but Athalia had no such protection. Lately Frank had avoided Athalia, but she had by no means forgotten him.

After a few minutes of hesitation, Athalia appeared to take some resolution. She put on her walking-dress, and went out. In a short time it was evident that she was directing her course towards Mr. Granger's place. She walked with a long swift gliding step, that gradually increased in speed, until, after turning aside from the public road into a short cut towards her destination, she gathered her skirt up in her hand, and ran for some distance, until she reached a gate that opened into the Granger place. After passing through this, she went on more slowly. It was a very remote corner of the estate, and Athalia, who knew every inch of the ground from childhood, did not confine herself to any path, but went directly through the wood. In a short time she stopped, arrested by hearing voices near, and listened. The one voice she knew at once for that of Jeannette; they were manly tones that answered, but not those of Francis Hoel.

Athalia paused.

"Ah!" she muttered, after an instant. "*He* is here again! So much the better" —she hesitated— "so much the better, perhaps; perhaps so much the worse."

Without more delay she turned aside, and broke upon the secret interview. She had approached so near already, that when they heard her footsteps, there was ample time for her to see Jeannette's companion, who was the same mysterious stranger seen by Francis Hoel on the preceding evening. He was retreating when Athalia appeared, and did not stay his steps for her coming, though he must have heard her address to Jeannette, which probably led him to believe that his identity was mistaken.

"Miss Vanderheyden! I was coming to see you on very pressing business, but I did not expect to find you here, nor to find Mr. Hoel with you."

Jeannette did not at once reply, and Athalia coming nearer, and looking straight into her blushing face, repeated:

"I did not expect to find *Mr. Hoel* with you, nor, still less, to find you engaged in a romantic interview with any one but Mr. Hoel."

It was not Athalia's habit to indulge in raillery upon sentimental topics, nor Jeannette's to suffer any unauthorized remark from any one whose degree of intimacy did not in some degree excuse it. But Jeannette answered now without appearing to see that Athalia's manner was not quite natural.

"There is no romance in it; it is a very prosaic matter. At the same time," she added, rather confusedly, "you will oblige me, Athalia, by not speaking of it to any one."

"Why should I? I think my errand here will show that I am eager to serve you and your friends. Can we speak here without being overheard?"

“I left the pony chaise not far from here,” said Jeannette. “If you will let me drive you home again, we can be quite alone.”

Athalia acquiesced in this arrangement. The pony chaise was fastened to a gate that opened into the public road, not far from the smaller gate by which Athalia had entered. Athalia took the reins in her own hands as she followed Jeannette into the chaise, saying, with a sinister smile:

“I think my hand will be steadier than yours this morning.”

Jeannette made no answer, and they had driven some distance before she spoke:

“What have you to say to me, Athalia? Your manner seems strange.”

“Does it? I have been listening to a very strange conversation this morning—between your brother-in-law and my father—about you, and a mortgage on your Long Island property. Mr. Granger said you denied knowing anything about it—but I think you *do* know.”

“I do not understand you,” said Jeannette, a little haughtily.

“I think,” said Athalia, meeting Jeannette’s eyes with a steady gaze, “that even if you do not know about it, you ought to be at least as anxious to have all inquiry into that stopped, as into the matter of your secret meetings with that man, whom I have seen before, some three months since for your own sake and Mr. Hoel’s.”

“You are mistaken, Athalia,” said Jeannette. “I have no reason to wish to have inquiry stopped into the mortgage business—”

“And Francis Hoel thinks you love him!” burst out Athalia, with a passionate scorn. “Love him! I tell you, Jeannette Vanderheyden, if I loved anyone, my hand, my brain, my tongue, my whole being should be for his service, and for his only, whatever he need might be, though shame and death were to be averted from him to fall on me.”

Jeannette shrank from her companion, repelled by the fierceness of her tone. Athalia suddenly changed her manner and burst into a laugh. “You know I am a story-writer sometimes, and have fine words at command. For all that, the truth is that you do not care much for Frank Hoel, and that you do care for this stranger. Do not be indignant. Truth sometimes must be spoken, even at the expense of our feminine delicacy. You would see Frank Hoel a disgraced outcast when the breath of your lips can save him.”

Jeannette turned deadly pale.

“Athalia,” she gasped, “don’t—don’t for God’s sake, tell me that Frank—”

“I tell you that Frank is *ruined* if you persist in denying that you made the mortgage. If you did not know it before, you can believe me that it is so. I tell you, besides, that you *must* save Frank, or—” she paused, and added, meaningly— “or you need not depend on me to keep your secrets.”

“No one need to plead Mr. Hoel’s cause with me,” said Jeannette, coldly. “He must come to me himself. I cannot speak on his affairs with you.” And for the first time Jeannette in her turn felt an impulse of jealousy, mingled with the other emotions that Athalia’s words had excited. Athalia set her teeth with a fierce, inarticulate ejaculation, and struck the ponies with her whip with the full force of her arm. They started and dashed forward at full speed. The road they were on led towards the river; it was a dangerous spot for a runaway accident. Jeannette knew it well—and so did Athalia.

“Be still!” she said, turning a face on Jeannette that frightened her. “Men have their duels—why should not we? I will drive into the river, and whichever escapes shall have her own way.”

“Are you mad, Athalia?”

“Are *you*,” said Athalia, “that you would stand in my way?”

“I do not stand in your way,” said Jeannette, speaking firmly, though her eyes were fixed with the fascination of fear on the danger before them; “if Mr. Hoel has made any professions of affection to you, he is free to act upon them.”

“A curse on you!” said Athalia. “Did I say he had? I only say that if you—you whom he loves—will not save him, we shall—we *shall* be lost together.”

“Will you listen to me?” said Jeannette, touching her. “I mean to save him. If I do not, it will be your fault. I think it is too late. You cannot—”

Jeannette clasped her hands before her eyes, for the turning for which she had been looking was close to them. If the horses continued their straight-forward course, as was most likely, even if Athalia did not urge them to it, the carriage would be overturned and themselves thrown down the steep bank. She did not believe that Athalia could control them now. Athalia herself was doubtful—stop them she knew she could not. She braced herself firmly, and pulled the right hand rein with all her strength. The ponies were as obstinate as ponies are apt to be, and Athalia had put them very much out of temper. They had no mind to be either coerced or soothed out of their justifiable revenge; they had the bits tight between their teeth; but Nickie the off-ponie, being a little tender in his mouth than his colleague, did not like the wrenching at the bit, and yielded ever so slightly; upon which the other pony followed his lead, and they took a new direction, and rushed along the open road with no other damage than keeping the pony chaise at an acute angle for a little time. There was a long hill before them, and no vehicles in sight, and Jeannette knew that there was no further danger from the ponies. She was by no means at ease, however, with her companion.

“You must forgive me,” said Athalia, abruptly. “I am not sweet-tempered, and you roused my anger, by speaking of—what did you say?—something about Mr. Hoel.”

“We will not speak of Mr. Hoel,” said Jeannette. “Only this—what am I to do?”

Athalia had her advice ready. Jeannette must see Mr. Hutchinson before he left for New York, and persuade him to make no further inquiry. Jeannette consented, and as soon as the ponies could be brought to forget the insult that had been offered them, they were driven to Mr. Hutchinson's office. Jeannette entered it, with a nervous tremor that she disguised so well that the old lawyer did not at first detect it at all. He was bustling about to get ready for his journey, and fretting because Athalia was missing, when they entered. Athalia retired, and Jeannette, declining the offer of a chair, said quietly:

"Mr. Hutchinson, I understand that Mr. Granger has been saying something about the mortgage on my Long Island property, as if the transaction ought to be examined. I came to tell you that I prefer not to have anything said or done to it. You know I have been, two years, of age, and that there is no one who has any authority over me to prevent my making what disposition I please of my property."

Mr. Hutchinson looked at the young lady.

"Very true. Just so, Miss Vanderheyden. Mr. Granger said you told him you didn't execute the mortgage."

"I suppose, Mr. Hutchinson, you will act on what *I* tell you, and not on what Mr. Granger told you I told him," said Jeannette, as discriminatingly as Mr. Hutchinson himself could have spoken, but not without a painful blush, which her legal adviser set down to her shame at being obliged to confess she had told her brother-in-law a falsehood.

"Well, yes, of course. I prefer direct information from the principal. If you say the mortgage is all right—" a nod, a wink, and one or two sniffs to show that the legal mind was busy—"why it *is* all right."

"Then, will you persuade Mr. Granger that he need give himself no more trouble?"

Mr. Hutchinson would. Jeannette, after saying neither more nor less than was necessary to complete her business, bade him good-morning and returned home. Miss Hutchinson offered her company, in case the ponies should be unruly, but Jeannette declined. She had taken a sudden repugnance to Athalia's company, which she had never before felt. Athalia watched her departure with a mocking smile.

"Yes, you carry it off well," she said to herself; "but if I had not seen that man, and had not started your ponies, I should have had a longer argument to make, and the train would have carried your brother and my father to New York. She does not care a straw for Frank, and—I have let her see that I do—bah! I have acted like a fool, after all, but—never mind."

Mr. Hutchinson met Mr. Granger, and to that gentleman's great indignation, declined any further inquiry into the matter, and gave his reasons.

"She never made the mortgage!" asserted Mr. Granger. "She does this to shield that rascal. I *know* she never made it."

“Well, well, my dear sir, if she acknowledges it, it comes to the same thing. If she don’t deny her signature, nobody can do it for her.”

“Very well,” said Mr. Granger, obstinately. “Of course you can do as you please. But *I* mean to be at the bottom of it; *I know* she never made it.”

And while Mr. Hutchinson went back to his office Mr. Granger went on to New York, determined, at any cost or inconvenience, to justify himself in his ill opinion to Frank Hoel, and, if his own wit and wisdom failed, to call in the aid of a detective.

Frank Hoel did not hear of the suspicions concerning himself from any one in Norberg. On the evening following the events last narrated he went home. The Hoel mansion had been built by Frank’s grandfather, and was of greater architectural pretensions than most houses in that vicinity. It was now much out of repair; luckily, however, it was so much beyond the needs of its occupants that the few rooms that were fully furnished and thoroughly comfortable were sufficient. One of the best of these was devoted to the master of the house who was now at home. Of Mr. Hoel’s usual manner of life, the less said the better. Lately he had been forced to more orderly and Christianlike habits, partly by his failing health and partly by his utter dependence on his son Frank. He was now entirely confined to the house and made bitter complains of the solitude and irksomeness of his life, reduced as he was to the companionship of his wife, whom he asserted was “too good” to be a good companion. Mrs. Hoel, did, perhaps, indulge more in a naturally silent and melancholy temper than was absolutely necessary, but her husband had certainly given her sufficient cause.

The room occupied by Mr. Hoel was a large pleasant one on the ground floor, and containing the present library of the Hoel family. The late Mr. Hoel had a very large and valuable library which his son had sold, all save a few books which filled the shelves in this room. The master of the house was extended on a comfortable couch supported by cushions. A table was by his side, covered with books, papers, and an endless variety of things which he either wanted, or fancied he should want. A fair, pale complexion, and high, rather sharply-cut, features, had borne the inroads made by time, disease and a profligate life, without losing altogether the semblance of what they had been, though becoming sallow and wrinkled; wrinkled, above all, around the eyes, which, once sparkling and expressive, had now only a hazy twinkle between the contracted lids, more or less bright as he was more or less animated. He looked good-humored; it was the only merit he had, and so I will not detract from it.

He received his son when he came in, more as a prodigal might his father or the severe elder brother, than as a father does his son, but seemed glad to see him. After a little while he commenced a conversation by saying:

“I have had a visitor to-day, Frank.” Frank made a fitting reply. “Yes—and a lady. Don’t be frightened, my dear boy, don’t be frightened. No friend of mine—a friend of yours—Miss Hutchinson.”

“Miss Hutchinson?” said Frank, in a tone of great wonder.

“Ah! Miss Hutchinson. A very fine young woman, Frank. One I should have admired very much when I was young.”

Frank interrupted any encomium on Miss Hutchinson by asking what she could possibly have wanted to see Mr. Hoel for.

“Because I am your father, Frank. So she said. I told her that I had always appreciated the advantages of being your father, but never so much as now when it procured me the honor, etc., etc., etc. Don’t be impatient, Frank. I am coming to facts. She had something to say concerning you, and had some delicacy about saying it to you (Frank, I think you are sneering—don’t sneer at feminine delicacy in my presence), whereas, my gray hairs relieved her coming here of the least shadow of impropriety. You look doubtful. Never mind. Here are the facts. It seems there hath been the devil to pay, and an insolvency in pitch suitable for liquidation, in the Granger family—because of a mortgage on Miss Vanderheyden’s lots somewhere. *That* interests you.”

It did apparently. Frank looked up suddenly, and changed color.

“You knew there was such a mortgage?” said Mr. Hoel.

“Yes,” said Frank, rather impatiently. “Well?”

“Aha! *You did* know it. Now, Miss Vanderheyden says *she* did not; she never made any such mortgage.”

“Indeed!” said Frank, starting. “Who says so? I mean—that she denies it?”

“John Granger. Told old Hutchinson so in his daughter’s hearing. A devilish queer story, isn’t it?”

“Very strange,” said Frank, gravely. “Very strange that she should deny it. Stranger still—if—” he stopped, with knit brows and perplexed face.

“Not very strange that she should deny it, rather than explain all her little secrets to John Granger. Why, hang it, Frank, I’d tell a lie myself rather than explain anything to him!”

Frank did not utter any unfilial hint that a lie was by no means a dernier resort with his venerated sire, but said:

“Well—what ensued?”

“It ensued, Frank, that Mr. John Granger took it into his numbskull that, because the date of the mortgage was two or three days before our last financial crisis, *you* know something about it. Every one naturally thought it a miracle that you should have got five thousand dollars just in the nick of time, or got it *at all*, and the public mind has been lost in wonder ever since how you got it, and was only sure it could not have been honestly. You never even told *me*,” said Mr. Hoel, in

conclusion, “but I always suspected you got it from Miss Vanderheyden, in some manner, and wouldn’t tell me for fear I should have a new exigency if I thought you could get money by asking for it. See my generosity, my dear son. I guessed the goose, but never asked for any eggs.”

Frank nodded mechanically in reply, but seemed lost in his own thoughts. Mr. Hoel watched him for awhile, with a look of smiling shyness, and then resumed:

“Now I don’t have to learn that when Mr. Granger takes what he calls an idea into his head, he follows it up with the obstinacy of a mule; and he may a good deal easier besmirch you than you can clear yourself. Eh, Frank?”

“I dare say, sir; but I undoubtedly can clear myself.”

“But stop the story in the outset. Napoleon—no my old friend in the Tuileries—Napoleon said that if a lie was believed twenty-four hours it would become a matter of history. You don’t value my advice much, but take it now.”

“I will if I can. What is it?”

“Well—What do you suppose Miss Hutchinson’s motive to have been in coming to me? To spare your feelings I will answer; it was out of friendship to you. Did you ever suspect her of too great regard for you, for her own happiness? I am glad to see you blush, Frank. It looks as if you weren’t hardened in vice. You ought not to treat the poor girl so badly. She loves you—and that is more than Miss Vanderheyden does, my boy, take my word for it. Did you ever chance to hear or see anything of a mysterious lover of Miss Vanderheyden’s, who pervades the vicinity, like the ghost of Stonewall Jackson, in an old slouched hat and a cavalry cloak, or some such guise? Ah! I see you have. He was here last spring, and he is here now, meeting her in all kinds of out-of-the-way places. There is some devilry there. Look out, Frank. The girl only accepted you as a blind. Don’t let yourself be made a catspaw.”

“I am as sure as I am of my own life that there is no wrong in anything which Miss Vanderheyden is concerned in,” said Frank.

“Of course,” said Mr. Hoel, with a derisive gravity. “There is no *malum per se* in her liking another man better than she does you.”

Frank did not care about drawing forth Mr. Hoel’s opinions in regard to Miss Vanderheyden, and so, without saying more on that topic, he inquired what reason Miss Hutchinson assigned for interesting herself so deeply in his concerns.

“The reason that she *is* deeply interested,” said Mr. Hoel. “No one knows better than you that she is. To make a long story short, she owned to me that she had been angry with you for some time for abandoning her for Miss Vanderheyden, but that when she heard of your present embarrassment she became ready to forgive and forget. She would not say, in so many words, what she meant, but it amounts to this; that she has the money ready for you to settle this



disagreeable business, and will give it to you, on condition that you give up all thought of Miss Vanderheyden and return to your allegiance to her, and, in short, make her Mrs. Frank Hoel, I suppose.”

Frank was silent a few minutes.

“I am willing to believe that she means well,” he said; “but it surprises me to hear this. I did not know that she was so utterly without womanly delicacy. You have made one mistake, besides, which I must correct. I have never said anything to Miss Hutchinson that could have been interpreted into love-making, and even if I ever had, I should think myself fortunate that I had gone no further with a woman who could think me capable of the crime that Miss Hutchinson seems to believe that I have committed, and, thinking so, had, nevertheless, made such an offer through—”

He hesitated slightly, and Mr. Hoel took up the word:

“Through such a channel, I suppose you would say. That may all be very true, Frank; but you had better think twice before you take so high a tone.”

“I have nothing to fear, I assure you. And even if my present engagement were at an end forever, I never could marry Athalia Hutchinson. Now let us talk of something else.”

“Well, Frank, well. It is your own affair doubtless. But I can’t help feeling sorry for the girl. She seemed very sincere. And you are in a dangerous place. You are, indeed, Frank. What would become of me if anything should happen to you?”

“Don’t be under any apprehension, father. The whole thing would be absurd. I am in no danger. I have never done anything which I wish to conceal—at such a price, too.”

“So much the better. You will keep your own counsel and take your own way, I know, *conte qui conte*. I don’t know where you got your obstinacy from, I’m sure. The Hoels are very gentle. *I* always was, I know.”

If Frank had been new to his father’s perverted system of ethics, he might have been more affected by his evident disposition to believe that he had been tampering with Jeannette’s property and Athalia’s affections at the same time. As it was, he merely dismissed the subject as soon as possible.

A few days after this, two strangers arrived in Norberg, and went to Mr. Granger’s house. Shortly after, one of them rang Mr. Hutchinson’s office-bell. Athalia opened the door, and, in reply to his question, said that her father was not at home.

“Never mind,” said the stranger, “my business is with you, Miss Hutchinson.”

Athalia invited him to walk in, and said in a quick voice:

“I cannot guess what business you can have with me.”

The stranger looked at her and then said: “My profession is one that puts me in the way of doing a good many unpleasant things. I suppose a man’s duty ought to be always his pleasure, but mine ain’t often. It ain’t now.”

“What is your profession?” asked Athalia, quietly.

“Detective police-officer. My name is Herkimer. I’ve been employed lately by Mr. Granger of this place.”

Athalia grew a little paler than usual, and her breath came more quickly, but she gave no other sign of agitation. In a clear voice, with only the least trace of trembling in the first words, she said:

“Am I to understand that you have any charge to make against me?”

“I am sorry to say I have,” said the officer, no less respectfully, for he admired the nerve and courage shown by Athalia. “A charge of obtaining money by representing yourself as another party and copying her signature—but don’t be discouraged. Charging ain’t convicting by a long shot, especially when a young lady is in the case.”

Athalia was regarding the officer steadily, with no other sign of wavering than the dilating of the orb of the eyes and contracting of the pupil of which we have before spoken. “I am not altogether unprepared for this,” she said. “Do you want me to go with you?”

“That’s what I came for,” said Mr. Herkimer.

Athalia asked only for time to leave a message for her father, and then entered the carriage with the detective and drove to the residence of a justice of the peace named Darwin, in whose private parlor there was an assemblage of those most interested in the case. It appears that Mr. Granger had easily found Mr. Davidson, the gentleman who advanced the money on the mortgage; but that the broker who had negotiated it was missing. He was a man of high standing in his profession, and no one had ever suspected his integrity before. At that crisis, however, a mighty financial irregularity had just exploded on the community, and men looked suspiciously on each other. So when it was understood that Mr. Atkinson had last been heard of in Canada, and had not been heard of at all for a day or two, Mr. Granger became certain of Mr. Atkinson’s rascality, and even Mr. Davidson was not unshaken, and, led on by Mr. Granger’s impetuosity, he came up to Norberg, in company with the detective, whose first stop somewhat surprised every one.

When Athalia entered the parlor she found Mr. Granger there, and Mr. Davidson, whom she had never seen; Francis Hoel was also there, standing somewhat apart. Athalia paused when she saw him, and their eyes met. Hoel’s look was one of grave compassion. Athalia bit her lip, and a vivid scarlet covered her pale face. She gave Frank a glance that no one else saw except Mr. Herkimer; a glance of deadly rage and hate. She collected herself at once, and listened with a calm air to the remarks made by Mr. Granger and Mr. Darwin. She said, in reply, that she was

eager to have all the facts known, but only asked to have a formal examination delayed until her father arrived. The slight and natural request was granted.

“Before any testimony is brought against me,” said Athalia, “I will tell you my own story, if I may.”

Mr. Darwin advised her to wait for her father’s arrival, and warned her of the danger of any indiscreet words.

“If I wished to escape the truth,” said Athalia, “it might be unwise for me to speak. I do not. I was the person who obtained the mortgage by representing myself to be Miss Vanderheyden. The banker was Egbert Atkinson. I knew his name because my father had transacted business with him. He had never seen me. I took him a letter of introduction purporting to come from my father, but written by myself.”

“Was any one but yourself concerned?” asked Mr. Darwin.

“Not in the actual execution of the business. I did that alone. There was another, however, who suggested the plan and received the money.”

“Who was that person?”

Athalia paused a moment, and seemed to become deeply agitated. Then she answered distinctly:

“There he stands. Francis Hoel.”

An exclamation of triumph broke from Mr. Granger. “I knew it! I knew it!” He checked himself, however, to observe what followed. Frank Hoel looked thunderstruck for an instant, and then stepping forward, said:

“Athalia! What can you mean?”

Athalia looked at him with an unflinching face.

“Yes!” she said. “*You* persuaded me to it. You received the money for it. My part in it I am willing to answer for, and you shall answer for yours.”

Frank seemed about to speak, but, suddenly checking himself, he stepped back, and stood, with a slightly scornful face, as Mr. Granger broke in with some questions, which Athalia answered readily. She repeated that Frank had received the money for the mortgage from her on the night before the sale. She said she would never have accused him, if he had not broken his word to her. Mr. Granger received this with sympathetic delight, which was evident to every one.

After Athalia had ceased speaking, Frank came forward again.

“Mr. Darwin,” he said, “I was so unprepared for this that I hardly know what to think of the accusation or the accuser. I can only deny entirely the whole story. I never received any money from Miss Hutchinson, either to pay the execution on my father’s place, or at any time, for any purpose. I never knew of any mortgage on Miss Vanderheyden’s place, until the middle of April, when I saw on the register that there was such a mortgage. I never heard of there being anything wrong in the transaction until a few days ago. The money that I paid to the sheriff on the twentieth of March, I received in a very singular manner, and if it came from Miss Hutchinson I not only did not know it then, but was led by her to think the contrary afterwards. I did not see her at all on the nineteenth. Late on the evening of the day I arrived at my office from my father’s house. I was entering, when a man came up to me, and merely asking if I was Mr. Hoel, put a package in my hand, and left at once. I supposed it only some ordinary business; but when I opened the envelope, I found in it five one thousand dollar bills, with a couple of lines to the effect that it was mine, but that the giver desired to remain unknown.”

“A very queer story,” said Mr. Granger.

“A rather singular story, Mr. Hoel,” said Mr. Darwin. “You must have formed some theory on the subject.”

“I did,” said Frank. “I admit that I thought that Miss Vanderheyden had taken that method of aid to me. When I saw the record I felt sure of it but I subsequently doubted it.”

“You never supposed it came from Miss Hutchinson?”

“I did not. She made me some offers of assistance at one time, but I paid little attention to them, not thinking she could command a large sum, and being unwilling to lay myself under any obligation that she distinctly told me *money* could not repay, if I had thought so. I should not speak of anything of this nature if it was not absolutely necessary. The day of the sale, early in the morning, Miss Hutchinson met me, and told me that she had the means to assist me, and would do it if I would prove myself worthy of her friendship—or, as I understood her, if I would marry her.”

“Francis Hoel!” Athalia broke out in a breathless voice; “You are a cowardly liar!”

Frank did not attend to her greatly. “I thanked her, and told her I had already the means in my hands. She was displeased. I didn’t wish to dwell on the subject, but Miss Hutchinson’s manner at that time changed my opinion of her, though even then I did not expect this from her.”

There was a silence. Frank felt that there was no one present who believed his story; and he felt, too, how difficult it would be for him to prove his innocence. Mr. Granger broke the silence by proposing that both Athalia and Frank should be committed. Mr. Darwin reminded them of the informal nature of the examination, and that the sole evidence against Frank rested on Miss Hutchinson’s confession. “I must say,” he said, “that it is hard for me to believe such a story of Mr. Hoel, whom I have known for some time, and I must say, also, that the improbability of his explanation of the way he got the money is the toughest point against him.”

Mr. Granger was apparently about to protest violently against such a lukewarm zeal in the cause of justice, when further proceedings were interrupted by the entrance of two gentlemen. One of them immediately went up to Mr. Davidson, revealing himself thereby as the missing broker Atkinson, the sight of whom seemed to cause Athalia an unpleasant surprise. The second stranger, merely speaking to Mr. Granger, rushed up to Frank Hoel and shook hands with him warmly. He was a man of about forty, or maybe five years older, with a handsome face, and a form not quite so slender as it had been twenty years before.

“I believe,” he said, putting his hand on Frank’s shoulder, and looking around, “that every one here knows me, more or less. My name is Rolfe Brookes—late major in the late army of the late Southern Confederacy. I only heard to-day of my way of doing business having made any trouble. I came to New York last March, with some trouble as you may suppose, and collected money there which I carried to Canada. My journey was necessarily rapid and secret, but I stopped at Norberg a couple of hours to see a friend, from whom I learned that the Hoels were in great embarrassment. I owed Hoel about ten thousand dollars before the war, and I thought likely the loss of it had been partly the cause of the present difficulty. I had no time to lose, and dared not risk being stopped. I had just the time to prepare a package for Frank and leave it, before I had to go on. I always had a taste for such kind of things besides—however, I am sorry I did not write afterwards and explain, but the truth is, for three months past I have had my head and hands full of other matters. I might have told Frank who I was, but, as I said, I preferred the melodramatic style, and, moreover, he was such a red-hot abolitionist that for aught I know he would have given me up to the authorities, or done execution on me with his own hands. Besides,” —he said, in a tone just audible to Frank and no one else— “I was not in full charity with you, on another head—I’ll explain by-and-by.”

“That may prove that *that* money did not come from Miss Hutchinson,” said Mr. Granger, “but not that he did not have it at all.”

“Miss Hutchinson did not have any money from me,” said Mr. Atkinson. “I gave Miss Vanderheyden as I thought her, a check. A couple of weeks afterwards she brought me back the check and asked me to buy bonds for her, which I did.”

This completely changed the aspect of that question. If Athalia had not money she could not have given it to Frank, even Mr. Granger admitted. After the entrance of Major Brookes and Mr. Atkinson, Athalia had turned away, leaning her head on her hand. Now she rose suddenly and said:

“Let me go from here. I would rather have ruined Frank than have had him happy—but I have only ruined myself. Frank!” she said, suddenly, “think I was mad.”

She said no more, but attempted to leave the room, and was allowed to do so, under surveillance. Mr. Granger made a kind of apology to Frank, who received it very willingly. The reader will please to imagine that all minor points were satisfactorily explained, and the last explanation which Frank heard from Major Brookes a little while after pleased him best of all.

Major Brookes had been very much in love with Jeannette, and there had been an engagement between them when Jeannette was nineteen years old. He had found out, finally, that her heart had ceased to be in the engagement, but that was not the case with him. He had absolutely refused to release her from the engagement. On his visit north it was Jeannette he stopped at Norberg to see, and she had finally told him that she never would be his wife, and that she preferred another man.

"I extorted your name, Frank, and had more than half a mind to come and defy you to deadly combat. On second thought, hearing what was to take place the next day, I determined to be just and generous at once; to pay my hated rival money instead of taking him by the throat. As it has proved, it *might* have been the worst revenge of the two. I could not find an opportunity to communicate with you. The fall of Richmond—the assassination of Lincoln—which more than half unrebelized me—and other matters, kept me busy and made the North an undesirable place for me. At last I came to Norberg again. Now it makes no great matter. The play is played out, and there is no hanging, drawing and quartering. My private circumstances led me to keep very quiet, and having nothing else to do, I have been engaged in a rather romantic manner. I have been trying to make you jealous, Frank and I hope I have succeeded. As to Jeannette I have teased her until she almost hates me; she was afraid of your jealousy as much as I would have liked to excite it. I swore she wouldn't have her letters, nor a ring I had of hers, nor anything else unless she would come and get them. You don't like the idea. I am heartily glad of it, Master Hoel. Jeannette deserved to be punished, for the little coquette deliberately made a fool of me—and I completed the work. I forgive her, however, and you too, and only hope that your engagement will come to a better end than mine. I am beaten in love and beaten in war, and I ought to retire from the world; but I mean to give away the bride when you are married, and sink gracefully into a fatherly tone to Jeannette, who is young enough to be my daughter."

Major Brookes, some two years after, did enact the part he had chosen for himself at Jeannette's wedding, instead of the part he would have chosen previously could he have had his way. Mr. Granger had been obliged to give up his prejudice and own that there was one Hoel good for something.

Athalia disappeared from the eyes of all who had previously known her. The money she had raised and never used she had returned to Mr. Davidson, and there was no disposition in any quarter to inquire into her movements. She was not dead; that was all that was known.

Mr. Hutchinson retired from business soon after this; the good-natured said because he was affected by the incident; the ill-natured said because he would not hire another clerk in Athalia's place, and I think that both were in the right. Further information on any point I have none.

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