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VAN CLEVE AND HIS FRIENDS

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CHAPTER I

CONTAINS SOME SLIGHT MEMOIR OF
A RESPECTABLE FAMILY

SOME few years back, at about that date in our national history when Mr. Nast was drawing cartoons about the Tweed Ring; when every stray child was suspected of being Charley Ross; when Goldsmith Maid held the trotting record; when ladies wore pull-backs and waterfalls, and men made the landscape glad with the spectacle of flowing side-whiskers, low-necked waistcoats, and diamond shirt-studs—briefly, about the year 1872 or 1873, two very handsome weddings took place in the high circles of a certain Ohio city, to both of which the fashionable columns in all the local papers of the day refer in the richest terms. You may read therein that Miss Helen Van Cleve was united in marriage to Mr. Harrison Glaive Kendrick at Christ Episcopal Church, at six o'clock in the evening of June fourteenth, in the presence of a brilliant gathering of friends and relatives; there were six bridesmaids and six groomsmen; the bride was given away by her brother, Major Stanton Van Cleve; her dress was a magnificent creation of white grosgrain, with garniture of white velvet bows

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and white silk fringe, and she carried a bouquet of roses, white carnations, and maidenhair fern in a filigree gold holder (the gift of the groom), etcetera.

In the autumn of the same year the Van Cleve household furnished another and similar social sensation. This time, Miss Myra Van Cleve was united in marriage to Mr. Richard Lucas, supported by an equal number of attendants, given away by the same military hero, dressed and decorated with identical elegance. There is a photograph yet in existence of the two pretty young women taken together in their wedding finery, the grosgrains made alike, with duplicate bouquets, monstrous, mathematically circular, the roses and carnations packed tight within frills of lace-paper; they smile from out their white illusion and orange-blossoms, happy and satisfied, and each one, without a doubt, serenely convinced of the excellence of her own choice, and wondering tolerantly in private at her sister's. The heart grows young again to see them.

The Van Cleve brides were twins, and ten or twelve years younger than their brother Stanton, all three being children of Joshua Van Cleve and his wife, who was one of the Zanes of Wheeling, a staunch old pioneer family. Joshua came to Ohio from Phila-

delphia or Germantown, somewhere about 1840, and went into the commission business, in which he amassed a considerable fortune; but he had been dead a good while at the time of these weddings.

Already, five years after his death, the property he left exhibited a woful shrinkage; it is to be feared the Van Cleve heirs were a rather impractical, helpless set. An elderly gentleman of my acquaintance (Judge A. B. Lewis, in fact: a known figure on our bench, whom most people will remember), long engaged in the legal profession and the management and winding-up of estates, who had had some experience with the family, delivered his opinion of them to me (on request) in pretty plain words. 'The Van Cleves? Oh, yes, I know who you mean — know them all well,' he said, stroking his chin, whereon he wore a pointed goatee of the classic American pattern; 'we used to attend to a piece of property on South High for the widow — collected the rents for a number of years. Van Cleve was a very solid sort of man — a hard worker — a man of force. It was a pity that fine property he'd got together was all dissipated so soon, although that's such a common occurrence people don't pay much attention to it. I think they've traveled about a good deal; every time they sold a piece of property they'd make a move — go to Europe or somewhere. That's the kind they are; you know.'

Mrs. Helen Kendrick died within a year of her marriage. She left a baby of two months, whom they had had baptized by her family name, and whom her mother and sister took into their own keeping after the poor young wife's death. They all lived together for a while under the same paternal Mansard, in the amiable delusion that the several families each saved money thereby; though Heaven knows what queer,

helter-skelter accounts they kept, or how heavily this economical arrangement bore on the widowed grandmother. Her husband's will left almost the entire property at her sole disposal, and she seems to have been a generous, open-handed sort of woman, the last person in the world to deny either herself or her children anything in reason — or out of it.

There they all lived, then, Mrs. Van Cleve and Major Stanton, and the remaining daughter and the two sons-in-law, the whole tribe of them, to whom, in no great while after Master Van Cleve Kendrick's appearance, there was added another baby, a girl this time, little Evelyn Lucas — Evelyn being the somewhat rococo name her parents bestowed on her.

Then Lucas died. He had a weak heart and died with dreadful suddenness of sunstroke in the hot summer of eighty-one. It would seem as if the Van Cleve house was one of mourning and tragedy and a pursuing Fate. Judge Lewis could speak only in a very vague way about the two men whom the girls married. Kendrick got the gold-mining fever, and went out West to the Black Hills, where he contracted a lung trouble from exposure and the roughness of the life, from which he never recovered. He came back home, lingered in a decline for some months, and finally died at Cresson Springs, Pennsylvania, where they had taken him on one of those futile and pathetic journeys that consumptives are forever making, up to the last moment of their lives, in the hope of a cure.

The boy Van Cleve was perhaps eight years old at the time of his Uncle Lucas's death. He remembered standing on a chair in the nursery where both the children had been incarcerated, peeping through a crack between the closed shutters, and seeing a great

concourse of carriages in the street and persons who were evidently attired as for Sunday entering the house — all of which reminding him of certain festivities which he had also witnessed from afar, he reported to the baby Evelyn that there was a 'die-party' in progress and remonstrated with the horrified nurse for not letting them both go.

It was not more than a year after this that Van — as in later life he could recall clearly enough, but without any sentiment whatever, for he was not a youth of easy emotions — found himself being gravely taken in to see a gaunt man with a flushed face and great glassy eyes, who lay in bed, and put out one fevered claw of a hand and held the little boy by the shoulder, and told him feebly to be a good boy — to be good to Grandma and Aunt Myra and little Evelyn, and take care of them — would he do that? Would he promise to do that?

'Yes, sir. All right. I meant to anyhow,' Van said in a cheerful and practical voice. 'When I'm big enough,' he added prudently.

'Do you know who I am?' the other asked.

'No,' said the boy, who was of an honest spirit.

'He was only four when you went West, Harry,' cried out his grandmother, anxiously; 'we've talked about you — we've told him about you — indeed we have. But the child's too little — he can't remember. It's Papa, Van, you know *Papa*, dearie?'

'Never mind. When I get well, I'll stay at home with you, and we'll get to knowing each other, sonny,' said the sick man.

Van Cleve wondered why the two women hustled him out of the room so quickly, and cried so over him in the hall, outside the closed door.

There followed upon this sad event a period of journeyings about and kaleid-

oscopic changes of scene which must have lasted ten years and upwards. Soon after Mr. Kendrick's death, the Van Cleve family sold a lot they owned on South High Street in the capital city, with a five-story building and some small stores on it, — it was that very piece, in fact, which the Lewis firm of attorneys used to look after, — and bought an orange grove down near Palatka, Florida, where they all emigrated, and lived for a matter of eighteen months. Little Van heard a great deal of glowing talk about soil and climate and the dignity and ease of rural life upon one's own 'broad acres beside some clear, sparkling mountain stream, or within view of the majestic ocean's proudly swelling tide,' to quote his Uncle Stanton, who was not particularly strong on geography — or not nearly so strong as he was on rhetoric, at any rate. 'Our golden orchards will yield us golden returns,' the Major observed poetically. Sad to relate, nothing of the kind happened; or, at least, prosperity such as Major Stanton indicated was too tardy in arriving to suit these speculators. They returned, denouncing the unfortunate State of Florida high and low.

To their surprise and consternation and great wrath, the Van Cleves found serious trouble in disposing of the Palatka grove — which caused the ladies, Mrs. Van Cleve and Mrs. Lucas, to go about crying out with even more vehemence against the folly of Florida investments! One can scarcely blame them; they recovered only a lamentably small proportion of the money they had put into this venture. The last of the land was sold for taxes ten years or so ago to a man who has since made a fortune off of it in string-beans, as I understand.

After this Mrs. Van Cleve sold the big old Mansard-roof home for twelve thousand dollars (a good deal less than

it had cost), and with this sum bought an untold number of shares in the Cincinnati, Paducah & Wheeling Steam-Packet Company, which had been a flourishing concern before and during the sixties when Joshua Van Cleve himself had, for a while, been interested in it; he sold out on observing the increasing activity of railroad traffic in this section of the country. The Ohio River had ceased to be that 'highway of commerce, of wealth, travel, and industry' which Stanton called it, by the time the widow came to invest in the C. P. & W. Packet Company, which, to tell the truth, was already on its last legs; and shortly thereafter it tottered over altogether: the steam-packets figuratively blew up, went to pieces, sank, carrying along with them poor Mrs. Joshua's twelve thousand. What with receiverships, injunctions, suits of one kind and another, the echoes of the disaster lingered in our courts for years.

Perhaps these two samples of the Van Cleve style of business management will serve to justify Judge Lewis's pronouncements on the family. He was wrong in one particular; they never did 'sell something and go to Europe'; the poor things were not knowingly extravagant or self-indulgent. But as long as there was anything left to buy with, Mrs. Van Cleve and her children were buying and scheming and failing and selling out at a heart-rending sacrifice. They tried oil lands in Texas, mica mines in Georgia, granite quarries in Maine, lots and 'corners' in half a dozen different cities, — there was nothing they did not try. Sometimes they went and lived in the locality of their wild-goose purchases; sometimes they tried to direct at a distance, — in either case with the same disastrous results. Circumstances contrived always to be so overwhelmingly wrong, after they had lived in one place for six months, that a

change was imperative, and it was amazing to see the confidence, the happy expectation, with which they looked forward to the next move. A few such experiences would have made pessimists of most of us.

Master Van Cleve Kendrick, therefore, began at an unusually early age to see the world, and acquired his education in an extensive variety of places and ways. They were in Florida when he learned his letters and read his first book, *Robinson Crusoe*. He had a year of school in Pittsburg (this must have been during the C. P. & W. episode), and after that a year in New Orleans, and another year divided between Boston and Bangor, carrying it off pretty well as a scholar, on the whole, in all these places; he was not a dull boy, and showed, moreover, an eminently plain, sane, reliable temperament. Once (when they were in Baltimore, when the boy was about eleven years old) Major Van Cleve, having given his nephew an odd penny or two, observed with a humorous curiosity that the young gentleman deposited these coins carefully in a little tin bank that somebody had presented to him, the key whereof he carried in a pocket of his small breeches, securing his property with a sedate air and complete absence of any sort of affectation.

'What's that you're doing, Van?' his uncle asked.

'Putting it away,' said Van, tranquilly, looking about for his cap and a certain new baseball bat with which he proposed to try conclusions in that day's game after school-hours.

'*Putting it away!* Don't you want to spend it?' said the Major, astounded at the novelty and originality of this conception.

'No, sir. I've got some money. I've got a dime. I don't need any more right now,' Van Cleve explained; and perhaps seeing doubt on the other's face,

he dug his sturdy little grimy fist down into the pocket again, and pulled out the coin, and showed it, still in his matter-of-fact style.

"Do you put all your money away?" his uncle inquired, winking over the boy's head at the grandmother and aunt sitting by with interested looks. And Mrs. Lucas signaled to little Evelyn, who was playing noisily with her dolls in the corner (she was a noisy and restless child), to keep quiet so that they could hear these revelations.

"No, sir," said Van again, unembarrassed. "I always put away some, though."

"How much have you got?"

Van Cleve considered, wrinkling his brows. "I don't know whether it's a dollar-forty-five, or a dollar-fifty-five," he announced at length; "I'd have to count it. But I guess it's only a dollar-forty-five, because it's always littler than you think it is. I mean to get a book and put it down, so I'll always know, without having to count every time."

"What are you going to do with it? Aren't you going to spend it some time?"

"I don't know — maybe. Maybe I'll just save it," said the youngster, beginning to fidget a little under the concentrated attention of his superiors.

The others exchanged a glance again. "You must n't be a miser, you know, Van Cleve," said his Aunt Myra in her clear and sweetly dictatorial voice; "misers are *horrid*!"

And, although the habit of saving some part of one's money does not of necessity lead to miserliness according to most persons' views, the family were all more or less relieved when, later on, Van expended almost his whole capital on an outfit of second-hand fishing-tackle, and presently had nothing left to show for it — like any normal, ordinary boy.

Yet, as young Kendrick grew up, among other alien and puzzling traits, the most pronounced, which he every now and then displayed anew, was this same unaccountable tendency to thrift. The lad did not, indeed, seem to possess much aptitude for earning money, he was as prone to absurd planning and dreaming, as lazy and industrious by turns, as enthusiastic and despondent in fits and starts, as the average boy.

"But Van Cleve is sure always to have *some* money. He's never clean out!" the Major used to remark with indulgent laughter; "and he never will let any of us keep it or take care of it for him. No, sir! Van's his own banker. He reminds me of an ancestor of ours, — an uncle of my father's, in fact, — who, being a man of known wealth, was advised by Benjamin Franklin (an intimate friend) to put his money in a bank, instead of keeping it in hogsheads of Spanish gold dollars in the cellar, which was the old fellow's habit. "Some day they'll murder thee for that money, Marcus," says Franklin; "thee should put it into a bank." "Well, when I'm dead, I shan't need it," says Uncle Mark; "and I'd as lief the murderers had it as the bank! There's small choice in rotten apples." — Ha, ha! Quaint old chap, was n't he?" Major Van Cleve would finish, looking around upon the company to whom he had retailed this anecdote in his usual pleasantly dramatic fashion.

Van Cleve used to hang his head, and wriggle on his seat, and fiddle with his big, overgrown, sunburned hands, while the stories were going forward. He had heard about Benjamin Franklin and the hogsheads of gold dollars many times — to say nothing of a score of other yarns the Major was accustomed to tell. Van thought they were not very funny, or very bright; he did not believe them; he did not see how

anybody could believe them. Between family loyalty and the dread of ridicule he writhed in the depths of his boyish soul, and wished the floor would open and let him through. Who of us that are human and have been young does not share that feeling? Verily I think I should rather make a fool of myself (a feat which I perform with facility and unconsciousness) than see my brother do it!

Van Cleve had reached sixteen when, during a summer spent at Put-in-Bay on Lake Erie, his family became acquainted with that of Professor Samuel Gilbert. Mr. Robert Gilbert was near Van Kendrick's own age, and they speedily contracted one of those heroic, splendidly unselfish, time-and-death-defying friendships into which young gentlemen at this stage sometimes enter. To the credit of mankind, those friendships do often endure, and there is nothing more amiable and comforting in life than the spectacle.

It was after that long, lovely summer season of swimming and rowing and idling about; and reading *The Count of Monte Cristo*, and the adventures of Mr. Huckleberry Finn, and *The Luck of Roaring Camp*, and sundry other gallant classics; and dreaming glorious dreams, and spinning happy, impossible futures for both of them with his boy companion, that Van Cleve, upon returning home (they were living in St. Louis at the time), announced his desire to go to college. Everybody went to college; Bob was going to college — Van Cleve would go, too. He knew he could get ready — maybe he would be *conditioned*, as they called it, but he would get *in*, anyhow; he was way up in mathematics, and that was what counted most, Bob said, and he could make up the languages and the — the other things easily, oh, *easily*. Could n't we afford it? He wanted to go to Bob's college — that

was n't a very expensive place, you know.

The family agreed readily; Major Stanton commended his nephew's ambition; they were all very proud and fond of Van; and, moreover, by a neat coincidence, Mrs. Van Cleve was upon the point of selling that old farm up in Union County, that they had owned all these years and never got a cent out of, for forty-five hundred dollars, part of which money could not be better employed than upon her grandson's education. It was all delightedly settled round the reading-lamp in the library one evening; and the next day Mrs. Lucas hurried downtown to secure a set of book-shelves and a wicker lounge she had noticed in one of the shop windows, which would be just the thing for Van Cleve's college room.

Well-a-day, it must be told! All this pretty scheme came to naught. Van Cleve did not go to college that year, or any other year; he never lounged on the campus, or cut chapel of a winter's morning, or strummed on a banjo with the Glee Club, or shouted his young lungs out around the football field, or got his degree, *magna cum laude*, and marched down from the platform with the tassel of his mortar-board over the honorable ear, signifying graduation and the close of the academic career. Without any of these agreeable preliminaries, and with a sad suddenness, the young fellow came to the sign-post on his road marked, 'This way to LIFE'; and if he did not reach manhood in a night, at least he took a long step in that direction.

That wretched old Union County farm, which had always been a nuisance, now, at what you might call its final hour, when it was as good as sold, and everybody — in a figure of speech — had pen in hand to sign the deeds, all at once developed new powers of annoyance; it is not too much to say that

in the minds of Mrs. Van Cleve and her daughter it took on a malignant, a diabolic personality. For the first time in the history of the family sales, the lawyers on the other side raised some objection to the title. The *title*, of all things! 'It was good enough for my husband, and it ought to be good enough for these people,' said Mrs. Van Cleve in majestic indignation; 'Mr. Van Cleve was a very careful man — a remarkable man; he never would have bought a defective title. I have managed my property for twenty-two years, and I *think* I can lay claim to *some* knowledge of business, and I never had a title disputed before.'

But it appeared that the attorneys were casting no reflections on anybody's integrity or abilities, as they respectfully pointed out. They had wished to see Mr. Van Cleve's will — a not unusual request — and according to its terms they were inclined to the opinion that, etcetera, etcetera. Mrs. Helen Van Cleve Kendrick had died in February, 187—, they understood — yes? and Mr. Kendrick at such and such a date? The boy was still a minor, but, etcetera, etcetera. Their civil accuracy frightened the widow, domineering and self-reliant as she was; terrifying doubts of her own position for the first time in her life assailed her. Stanton looked profound, but, understanding absolutely nothing of what was said, for once kept silence. He had no stories that would fit the occasion. Mrs. Lucas, with not much clearer vision, was bewildered, and helplessly angry. They all three came back from the legal offices very much excited and perturbed, and all talking at once in their high-pitched, vehement way, which would have alarmed any one but Van Cleve, who was used to it.

'Pooh, they have n't got a case — they can't do anything! They have n't got a case, I tell you!' cried the Major,

stroking his side-whiskers with large contemptuous gestures, and looking very fierce and military; 'don't be alarmed, Mother. These fellows are mere shysters.'

'Oh, Stanton, it is n't a *case* — there is n't going to be any lawsuit — can't you *see*?' both of the women wailed in concert; 'they don't want to go to law about anything — it is n't *that*, at all! It's just that we did n't know all these years. How *could* we, when nobody told us? I don't see why they did n't find it out before — all the buying and selling we've done! Maybe it is n't true anyhow —' they questioned each other, in a frenzy of worry.

'What on earth's the matter? Can't you sell the old land? Don't they want to buy it after all?' asked the boy, aroused to curiosity at last; 'won't somebody else buy it? What on earth's up?'

'Oh, Van, my dear boy, I — I'm afraid we ought n't to have tried to sell it at all; I'm afraid we ought n't ever to have sold anything!' Mrs. Van Cleve began; and fairly burst out sobbing, to the youth's horror and distress, as she put her arms around his neck.

He was growing fast this last year, and had shot up to be a head above her; the thought that he was almost a man, in some indescribable way at once startled and consoled the grandmother. She tried to explain brokenly:—

'The lawyer — that Mr. Fogson, you know — wanted to read your grandfather's will, and he said something about it having v-virtually created a tr-trust for you — for your mother's share, you know, my dear — poor Nellie's share; and — and I *can't* understand it; I don't see why somebody did n't find it out before. But I'm af-fraid we've used your property — your money, Van; I'm afraid we've spent what you ought to have h-had!'

She looked into the boy's face, the

tears streaming down her own. Every one looked at him; and there was a silence in the room.

'My share? My mother's share, I mean?' said Van Cleve, perplexed, but not much upset otherwise; he had seen the family get into states of excitement such as this before, over matters no more weighty than dismissing the cook, or laying a new carpet, so was not disposed to take it very seriously.

'We did n't mean to, Van — we did n't know we had n't any right to it!' cried his aunt, hysterically.

'Well, how about Evelyn's?' Van inquired. 'Oh, I see,' he added quickly; 'Aunt Myra's being alive makes a difference, I suppose. Evelyn could n't inherit until her mother's dead, anyhow.'

'*Van Cleve!* How can you? *How* can you talk about my being dead that way?' Mrs. Lucas almost screamed. 'Don't you care if I die? Don't you *care* if I die?' She, too, broke into tears and sobs of sheer fright at the idea.

'I did n't say that!' said Van Cleve, helplessly; 'I only wanted to get the straight of it, Aunt Myra. I don't want you to die. Nobody wants you to die.'

'We did n't mean wrong to you, Van, my dear, darling boy. You know I love you like a mother, you *know* that, don't you?' his aunt gasped out between sobs; 'you've had just as much good out of the property as anybody else, anyhow. We've always shared with you, have n't we? Oh, say you forgive us, say you forgive us!' She cast herself on him with wild prayers.

'Well, but I don't know what's happened yet,' the boy began, not too patiently.

'Say you forgive us!' reiterated Mrs. Lucas with prodigious determination in the midst of her weeping.

'Don't get so excited, Myra,' Major Stanton remonstrated; 'you'll hurt

yourself. You know excitement's not good for you.'

'I'm *not* excited — I'm *not* excited,' retorted the other in a tearful impatience. She attacked her nephew anew, at once pleading and imperative. 'You do forgive us, Van, don't you?'

'All right. I forgive you!' said Van Cleve shortly, coloring at the words. Anything for peace, he thought in a species of resigned exasperation — and then wondered guiltily if there was not something wrong with him morally or mentally because his aunt's behavior seemed to him utterly foolish. He reminded himself with remorse that he had been warned repeatedly that Aunt Myra was very delicate and high-strung; and it was always perilous to contradict her. Everybody in the family was more or less delicate and high-strung, for that matter; Van had even heard himself so described, although he was uneasily conscious of being all the while in absolutely brutal health!

'I'd better go down and see those lawyers myself, had n't I?' he suggested, perceiving that it was useless to expect any more definite information from his elders, and judiciously selecting a moment when the scene had quieted down somewhat.

And everybody agreeing, with many expressions of wonder and satisfaction at the maturity of his judgment, young Kendrick did go down on the morrow and interviewed Messrs. Fogson and Dodd — not the true names, indeed, but they will serve, as this is the first and last appearance of that legal firm in this history, and Van never saw them again.

Both attorneys smiled a little when the young fellow recited the family fears that he had been done out of his inheritance. Mrs. Van Cleve, they said, had not precisely understood — they regretted exceedingly to have given her a false impression; of course

it would not have been possible for her to alienate her grandson's property — anything like real estate, that is. Nevertheless, after a careful study of Mr. Van Cleve's will, they thought it not unlikely that confusion might arise at some future time from — er — from the fact that his daughter's, Mrs. Kendrick's, interest, which was certainly implied, if not explicitly stated, had been apparently overlooked, and so on.

They had no trouble with the boy; the questions he asked were clear-headed enough; and he listened to their explanations with more understanding and self-control than they had met with in any of the older members of the family, Messrs. Fogson and Dodd remarked to each other, with some amusement, after Van had taken his leave. He himself came away not greatly cast down; he walked home slowly in a thoughtful mood, and as he went up the steps to the Van Cleve front door, and rang the bell, decided privately that he must have a latch-key.

His grandmother was alone in the sitting-room with a mass of documents spread out before her, and the little old wooden strong-box bound and fortified at its corners with brass, in which her husband had always kept his papers, with 'J. Van Cleve' outlined in brass nails on the lid, standing open alongside. She looked up at the lad, troubled and apprehensive.

'Well, Van?' she said; and her hands trembled slightly amongst the old deeds and receipts and letters. 'I — I think perhaps you ought to look these over. You — you're getting to an age when you ought really to know something about business — about your — our — affairs. I must begin and teach you.'

'Yes. I guess it's time I took hold,' said Van Cleve. He came and stood by her, smiling, as he looked down at the litter. 'I used to think all the money

came out of that box, when I was a boy,' he said.

When he was a boy! That was only yesterday, Mrs. Van Cleve thought with a strange mixture of fear and pride and pain. Well, and why should he not be grown — be a man? She was an old woman, she would be seventy her next birthday, and she had been only fifty-two when this grandson was born.

'What did those men tell you, Van Cleve?' she questioned him jealously; 'what have they been saying to you? You know we — I never meant to use any money of yours, whatever they say.'

'Oh, you could n't, anyhow,' said the young fellow, practically; 'that's safe enough.'

'But I *would n't* — why — why, I *would n't*!' his grandmother cried out, grieved and indignant; 'I would n't *do* such a thing —!' She broke off abruptly, aghast at the sound of her own voice raised in futile protestations — for that they were futile, she could read in the kind indifference of the other's young face. She recognized in a sort of terror the same feeling that had so often possessed her in her Joshua's company; she remembered Joshua's harsh tolerance, his half-answers, even that gesture of putting his hand in his pocket and that abstracted, 'Well, how much d'ye want?' which was many times the only notice her attempts at conversation got. It used to irritate her so! And now this youngster —!

Desperately she made an effort to regain their familiar footing. 'I suppose we'd — we'd better not talk any more about college, Van,' she said, with a tightening of the throat; in spite of her, the words came humbly. 'I hate to have you disappointed, but —'

He was not listening to her! But, at her second attempt, he roused himself.

'Hey? Oh, *college* — yes, I know,'

said Van Cleve, and patted her hand soothingly. 'That's all right, Grandma, don't worry — it's all right. I have n't got any time for college, anyhow. I'm going to work.'

CHAPTER II

SOME FURTHER RECOLLECTIONS

Latterly we have fallen into the habit of saying to one another that the city is getting so *big* with all its near and far suburbs, and the distances are so *impossible* (unless one has a motor), and there are so many *new* people, and everybody has so much to do, and one is *constantly meeting* at clubs and parties, *anyhow* — I say we have got into a way of telling ourselves that for all of these reasons the fashion of making calls is practically obsolete. But at the date when the Van Cleve family came to Cincinnati to live, this efficient catchword had not yet come into vogue; people called on them, and they began to be known and to go about in a surprisingly short time.

I think all the ladies had a quite unusual social gift, setting aside the fact that they were well introduced and very well connected, — the Zanes and Van Cleves, you know. Even Major Stanton, for all his unreliable reminiscences, was a man of distinguished presence, and good manners, — an agreeable enough addition to most companies. Young Kendrick was the only unornamental member of the family, and hardly anybody ever saw him; very likely he was grubbing down town in some grimy office all day and coming home at six o'clock in the evening, tired and hungry and short-tempered, hanging on a strap in the trolley-car along with the rest of the tired, the hungry, and the short-tempered. A shabby, overgrown, and, on the whole, rather sulky and silent, lout, was the

verdict passed upon Mr. Kendrick by most of the people — by all the women, in fact — who were privileged to meet him at this time. As to the gentleman's opinion of them, he probably never took the trouble to form one; during all this part of his career, Van's energies were strongly concentrated on his own affairs.

But the ladies! I remember the first time they appeared at Sunday morning service at All Saints' in our suburban parish of Elmhill, where they had taken a house somewhere on Summit or Riverview Avenue, so the Gilberts — with whom, it seemed, they were intimately acquainted — had told me. There was a tall, fine-looking old lady, Mrs. Van Cleve presumably, with an erect carriage, dark hair thickly laced with silver, brilliant dark eyes, and a beautifully fresh complexion almost like a girl's, to whom the Major carefully gave an arm up the aisle; to tell the truth, his mother looked much more capable of giving an arm to *him*, and, indeed, of generaling the whole congregation and church to the Reverend Mr. Babcock himself, for all her seventy-odd years!

After her, there came a couple of much younger women, — Mrs. and Miss Lucas, as it developed, — both of them slender, tall, black-haired, bright-colored, repeating in the strangest incisive way the older one's effect of personal distinction. They were quietly dressed, their entrance was as unostentatious as any lady's should be, and we ourselves were no staring, provincial-minded audience; but had they been preceded by a herald and trumpets, they could scarcely have been more impressive. I recognized Van Cleve awkwardly bringing up the rear; but nobody else noticed him, even when he stumbled over the hassocks in their pew, and sat down with undue violence, reddening round to the back

of his neck. He was figuratively nowhere by the side of the imposing Major and those three torch-like women.

It was after this that I bethought me, not without shame, of my own polite duties, and, in a day or so, posted over to the Gilberts' for Lorrie's company and countenance in a call upon the Van Cleve household. The Gilberts lived on Warwick Lane in a weather-beaten old house, — their means must have been very small; it was wonderful the way Lorrie and her mother managed, — and young Mr. Robert himself opened the door to my ring. Instead of bolting off incontinently, as heretofore, at sight of the petticoats, he grinned and said, 'Oh, how d'ye do?' in an affable and unconstrained manner; and ushered me into the big, battered parlor, explaining that Lorrie was out — she had just gone over to see one of the girls — and his mother busy with a seamstress upstairs, but if I'd wait a while, they'd both be here, he thought. And he hospitably pulled forward an arm-chair, and offered me some home-made peach-cordial out of the short, squat, cut-glass decanter that Mrs. Gilbert always kept — she was a Virginia woman — on the side table by the dining-room door. It was strong, high-flavored stuff, and doubtless there were members of All Saints' congregation who would have shaken their heads at the spectacle of the Professor's son drinking it, and at my countenancing him.

Bob displayed a refreshing willingness to talk, joke, chatter, tell everything he knew, in the obvious desire to be a civil and entertaining host, and being, moreover, by nature — as I judged him — open and talkative. The burden of his conversation was mostly *Van*, however — Van this and Van that; he told me all about their association at Put-in-Bay two or three sum-

mers before; how Van Cleve had wanted to go to college with him, and how something had happened, Bob did n't know what, — of course Van would n't say much, — but his friend suspected the funds gave out. Anyhow, Van went to work — got a job in a shoe factory over there in St. Louis at eight dollars a week. Did n't I think that was a fine thing to do? Did n't I think that was a *great* thing to do? Yet Bob was sure from little things he saw and heard when he was with them, you know, that Van's family had made the most awful fuss. 'A *shoe factory* — that's what got 'em! That's what they could n't stand. As if that made any difference! It's what a man *is* that counts, it's not what he *does*, is n't that so? I mean, as long as he does something honest, of course,' the young fellow added hastily, fearing I might misunderstand the above highly original statement. 'I think Van's pretty *big* — he's the *biggest* man I know!' declared Robert roundly, his own fair, good-looking face flushed with enthusiasm and a little with the peach-brandy, no doubt, and his voice shaken by a generous excitement and pride. 'Give me a chance, that's all! I'd show you how quick I'd do it!' he cried bravely. It was rather foolish and rather touching.

He went on without much prompting. 'Hey? Why, yes, I think they have some money — yes, Van as much as told me that himself. But it's not enough without him working — Major Van Cleve does n't do a thing, you know. Anyway, Van wants his *own* money — why, *any* man does. Van's not going to sit round and ask his grandmother for it — I would n't, 'either,' said Robert, loftily. 'Van Cleve just kept right on at the shoe factory, and let 'em fuss. He's awfully stern and — and *strong*, you know, when he wants to be.'

However, at about this time, it seemed they had moved to Lexington, and Van Cleve went right off and found another place — some kind of a place where he did some kind of office-work in one of the Government bonded warehouses or distilleries, or whatever they are, Bob was n't quite certain. They only stayed in Lexington a few months; and since they had been living here in Cincinnati Van Cleve had been working for a firm of brokers down on Third Street — Steinberger and Hirsch. Bob had another friend in the same office, Phil Cortwright — did n't I know him? He, too, by a curious coincidence, had recently come here to live. Van Cleve, it appeared, did n't like it at Steinberger and Hirsch's; he was going to leave them in September. No, Bob did not know what it was that Van disliked about the brokers' office or business — he would n't be likely to tell anybody, even Bob. 'He says I'm a regular sieve, anyhow!' Robert confessed with a laugh.

'Has he got something else to do?'

'Oh, yes! Van would n't throw up any job unless he was sure of another. He's going into the National Loan and Savings — Mr. Gebhardt's bank, you know. He'll have a pretty good thing there, he thinks,' Bob said with a large air. 'At least, he told me he meant to *stick* this time. He says he's chopped and changed around enough; he's tired of it, and he's getting too old. He's right, too, — he'll be twenty-one his next birthday. Funny thing about Van, he is n't the least bit swell-headed, you know, but he talks about sticking with the bank just as if nobody else had any say about it — just as if he was perfectly dead sure of making good. And he will, too, you see!' said his friend confidently.

I said quite truthfully that it had always seemed to me a formidable sort of undertaking to go and offer one's self

and one's services to anybody; that I wondered how any man could ever get up the courage to do it. Young Mr. Gilbert heard me with gravely smiling tolerance.

'Well, of course, a *woman*, you know —! Now, between *men*, it's so different.' He spoke with the wisdom of the ages. 'But Van Kendrick — why, applying for the bank job, or any other job, would n't worry *him* any. He went right to Mr. Gebhardt. Mr. Gebhardt knows his people, anyhow; he knows Major Van Cleve —'

Here Robert stopped short, struck, perhaps, by a certain idea of which he may have seen the reflection in my own face; for, our eyes meeting, he burst into a sudden guffaw of laughter. I am afraid I smiled, too. It was more than a little funny to think of Mr. Julius Gebhardt or any other hard-headed business man being favorably influenced by knowing Major Van Cleve.

'Has he been to see you yet?' the boy asked.

'Yes, but I was out. I'm going to call on the ladies to-day. I thought perhaps your sister might care to go with me.'

'I'm sure she'd like to very much,' said Robert, gallantly. 'Lorrie knows them pretty well; we were all summer up there at Put-in-Bay together, and she used to do fancy-work with them and the rest of the ladies on the porch of the hotel; Lorrie and Mother got to knowing the Van Cleves pretty well, lots better than I do — excepting Van, of course. Lorrie says he is n't a bit like the others. I don't believe he is, myself. Seems to me from the little I've seen of them (and Lorrie says so, too) that that old lady Van Cleve and Mrs. Lucas and Evelyn are all of them the kind that get up and run round in circles and scream if they don't get their own way, or things don't go to

suit them. Van's not at all like *that*. And the Major —' He checked himself again, eyeing me with a dubious smile that presently became another laugh. 'That's all *bunk*, you know, those stories he tells — you knew that, did n't you?' he said confidentially. 'Is n't he the prize hot-air-distributor, though?' He made a metaphorical gesture. 'Whoosh! And the blow almost killed father. Van knows it, of course. But nobody can say anything about his uncle before him — not much! He'd take your head off. It must be hard on him sometimes, though.'

Mrs. Gilbert's entrance, patting her hair and picking a stray thread or two from her dress, put a stop to these confidences. Robert, as often happens with young people, was struck into dumbness and awkwardness again by the parental presence; and sat quite silent and self-conscious until the end of the visit.

'Won't you have some peach-brandy? You know I'm one of those amusing creatures, an old-fashioned housekeeper, and I love to inflict my home-made stuff on people,' said Mrs. Gilbert, as we rose. 'Oh, the decanter's empty. Mercy, that's not at all like old-fashioned housekeeping!'

Summit Avenue, where the Van Cleves had established themselves, was in those days a quiet, plain street on the edge of one of our most fashionable and expensive suburbs, and quite popular, therefore, with small gentry. Number 8, although it was of precisely the same plan and architecture as its neighbors on either hand, still contrived to appear amongst them with a certain distinction, acquired, without doubt, from its present tenants, — or so I fancied. The whole row was, as a matter of fact, out of date and beginning to be woefully shabby-genteel, but neither of those terms could be applied to the

Van Cleves, and their home looked like them.

A nice-looking German maid-of-all-work let me into the long, dark, narrow hall whence a long, dark, narrow stairway ascended steeply to the floors above. In the parlor there were charming cretonne draperies, cushions, and so on; and chairs and tables which one might guess to be the solemn black walnut of a few years earlier, now rendered extraordinarily seemly and sprightly by a disguise of white enamel paint; there were ivory-tinted plaster casts; there were 'Copley Prints' and 'Braun Photographs' of all the best-known classics; there were smartly colored posters framed in passe-partout; and there were, besides, all over the delicate green walls, a glorious lot of water-color sketches, and chalk and crayon representations of woodland scenes, old mills, Italian-looking boys in costume, the Venus de Milo, Phidias's or Somebody's head of Jupiter, and other studies of antiquity; and, at my elbow, an easel with an oil-painting in a handsome frame of a brass kettle, a tumbler, a napkin with red fringe, and a plate with a banana on it — admirable portraits, all of them. These trophies recalled a rumor that one of the ladies was 'artistic,' the youngest, most probably; and this was presently confirmed by Mrs. Lucas and the grandmother who entered restlessly sparkling, with a kind of overpowering and devastating graciousness of welcome. It left you stunned, tense, with the sensation that something tremendous had happened, or was about to happen, during every moment of your stay in the house!

'Yes, Evelyn — my daughter Evelyn — is the artist, or, rather, the art-student. She is studying at your Paradise Park Academy,' Mrs. Lucas explained. 'Oh, *thank* you for saying that! Of course, *we* think she has tal-

ent. Evelyn is very *temperamental*, all her teachers have always said, and *temperament* is invaluable!' And in the middle of this, the young lady herself came in, from an outdoor sketching-class in the Park, in remarkably neat tramping attire, with a trig little folding camp-stool, portfolio, and artist's etceteras under her arm.

More superlatives, more graciousness, more excitement! They were, indeed, as I had been warned, as different as possible from the lank, sandy-haired, tongue-tied youth I had met in his uncle's company and seen going about with them, later. Young Kendrick did not seem at all vivacious or ready-witted; he was a little slow, if anything; whereas nobody could have been quicker, more unsparingly enthusiastic and emphatic, than these other Van Cleves. They were delighted with the city, the street, the house, the people. Everybody was so kind, so charming, so interesting, so clever! Was n't All Saints an attractive church? Was n't Mr. Babcock a *wonderfully* gifted man for the ministry — so true, so *eloquent*, so *sound*! Was n't Mrs. Gilbert a dear, sweet woman? Was n't Lorrie simply a *precious* girl —!

'Oh, you're sitting in a draught there; *do* take this chair! So careless of me, I did n't notice before!' cried Mrs. Lucas, interrupting herself with startling suddenness and energy in the midst of a cataract of exclamation points; '*do* take this chair! I *know* you're not comfortable!'

'Why, thank you — I'm all right — there is n't any draught, I think —'

'Oh, yes, I *know* there is! *Do* take this chair — you'll be *quite* safe *here*. And suppose you caught cold! I'd never forgive myself!' says Mrs. Lucas, tragedy in her voice.

All at once, terror quivered in the air about us: pneumonia — diphtheria — tuberculosis — all the forms of death

from taking cold menaced me; the Grim Reaper, as our newspapers love to call him, was flourishing his scythe for the blow, when I averted the calamity by moving to the other chair! Everybody breathed freely again (I trust), at least until the next crisis, which occurred when the maid brought in tea.

'You take sugar?' Mrs. Lucas said, — commanded would be the better word, — clamping me firmly with her bright, insistent eyes; 'you take sugar, of *course*!'

'No, thank you, I —'

'Oh, you *must* try sugar! This tea does n't taste nice without sugar, and I *do* so want you to have a *nice* cup of tea! Really, you'll take sugar, won't you? I *know* you won't like it without sugar — I *know* you won't! Have you ever *tried* sugar? You ought to, really — you can have no idea how it improves tea. *Do* let me put some in — now *do*! I *know* you'll like it with sugar!'

I took sugar; and tranquillity was restored. That is, Mrs. Lucas did not start from her chair and begin to 'run round and scream,' which at one moment had seemed imminent. After this the call progressed without any more sensational incidents, excepting, perhaps, a burst of alarm from Mrs. Lucas when it was discovered that Evelyn had gone out on the damp grass of the Park — it had rained twenty-four hours previously — without any overshoes (!!!), and the departure of the young lady upstairs to *change her shoes and stockings immediately* (!!!). Miss Lucas did not go without some objections which she voiced in what I took to be the temperamental manner, that is, with considerable sharpness and stubbornness, but she yielded at last, for — 'Everybody always has to give in to Myra. She's a natural boss,' said the Major to me with an indulgent

laugh. He arrived on the scene while the amiable little contention was going on.

'Myra is really not at all strong — she's very high-strung and sensitive,' Mrs. Van Cleve also explained aside; 'and of course Evelyn is all she has in the world, and Evelyn is n't strong, either, so they're each one a constant anxiety to the other. It's nothing but affection and worry, you know, but it sounds so much like quarreling, I sometimes wonder what strangers think of it.'

'Oh, I hear what you're saying, Mother,' said Mrs. Lucas from behind her tea-things, looking up with a roguish smile that was very attractive and disarming, somehow. She addressed me. 'What they really think is that Evelyn has been terribly spoiled, whenever she is rebellious, and I have to insist with her. But you know how it is with young people, they don't know what's best for them. I tell Evelyn and Van Cleve that they will both live to thank me for making them mind. You've met Van Cleve? Is n't he the *dearest, noblest* boy?'

'That is, of course *we* think so,' put in the grandmother. Suddenly her eyes filled. She had to take a quick gulp of her tea to keep down her emotion.

'Van Cleve's a splendid fellow,' said the Major, emphatically, setting his cup on the table; 'an unusual young fellow, madam. Mr. Gebhardt, whom I've no doubt you know, — I mean Mr. Julius Gebhardt the banker, your most prominent citizen, I should judge,' — it is impossible to give any idea in writing of the lusciousness which Major Van Cleve managed to impart to this description, — 'paid Van what *we* consider the very high compliment of inviting him to accept a position in the National Loan and Savings, of which he is the president, as you know, of course. "Your nephew is a striking ex-

ample of an old head on young shoulders, Major!" Mr. Gebhardt remarked to me the other day. Gebhardt is himself a very original and brilliant man, a man of enormous character.'

'That's what makes us sure Van Cleve is going to like it at the bank — Mr. Gebhardt and he will be so congenial,' said Mrs. Lucas, with so much innocent pride, one could not find it in one's heart to laugh.

It was a chorus of absurdly and pathetically extravagant praise. Did they repeat these things to Van Cleve's face? It set one upon the thought: what kind of an atmosphere was this for a young man to live and grow up in? The Kendrick boy looked sensible, and all that I had heard about him so far sounded sensible; but it would need a deal of intrinsic force in any character to weather through these alternate gusts of hysterical devotion and hysterical tyranny, and keep its integrity to the end.

It so fell out that, on coming away, about a square from the house, I encountered Van Cleve himself, striding along home in the late afternoon, and whistling sturdily. He gallantly turned back to escort me to the car; and, on the way, Bob Gilbert's name having come up, I said that I had already understood from him that Mr. Kendrick was about to make a change of business.

'Yes,' said Van Cleve, briefly. He was not nearly so much of a talker as the other boy. Van, on his side, had no idea of launching into talk or praise of his friend, it was plain; and, as to betraying any sort of opinion about Steinberger and Hirsch, or brokers in general and their offices, that would be the last thing in the world to enter young Mr. Kendrick's head.

As we waited for the car, there came, walking on the other side of the street, Miss Lorrie Gilbert, in pretty, fresh, white piqué skirts, crisp and cool on

this warm day, with a straw hat with roses on her brown head, and a white embroidered parasol (they had been put down to one-ninety-eight, and I had seen her in the shop the other day gleefully buying one of these bargains out of her little, lean, careful purse) whirling and twirling over her shoulder. Miss Gilbert came walking with some other girl, and they both nodded and waved to us pleasantly. The other girl I saw was that newcomer here, that Miss Jameson, who could be recognized from afar by her bright auburn hair, and who (as the young people reported) was forever attaching herself to Lorrie, anyhow. Van Cleve looked after them with an interest showing through the odd, unyouthful reserve of his face which I fear I had not excited — alas! His light, cool, slate-gray eyes brightened indefinitely.

'Miss Jameson's a very pretty girl, is n't she?' said I, obligingly.

He started faintly. '*Miss Jameson?* Oh, yes, she's awfully pretty!' he said with almost unnecessary heartiness. And the car reaching our corner at that moment, he hustled me on to it, and scurried off after the young ladies, quite like the boy he really was, in spite of his uncannily mature airs. He could be seen to join them, out of breath and smiling, and jabbering fast enough *now*, no doubt!

CHAPTER III

CONCERNING THE GILBERTS AND SOME OTHERS

Professor Samuel Gilbert's name bore after it on the rolls of the University teaching-staff a handsome train of capital letters and abbreviations signifying all sorts of honors achieved at, or conferred by, a number of similar institutions of learning, and forming a set of decorations to which the Professor

himself was never by any chance known to refer. He was a plain man. He occupied the chair of Dead Languages, and might be seen any morning, even the rawest, windiest, and iciest, trudging off in the direction of that piece of furniture, to his class-rooms in the University; ploughing along with his large, square, tired, placidly-humorous face set toward the heights, and his large, square frame clad in a loose, ill-fitting, shabby style not at all in accordance with the dignity of his position and titles.

But who ever heard of a dapper or dressy professor? Chairs — of Dead Languages or what-not — in the colleges of this land of wealth and freedom are not notoriously the best-paid of offices; educators as well as education ought to come cheap from our splendidly democratic point of view. And it is possible that Samuel Gilbert, with his head full of hard-won Greek, Latin, and Sanskrit, with his capital letters and his scholastic eminence, walked through rain and shine to economize on carfare, and slaved away the long, hot days of summer school to pay last winter's coal-bill, and wore his dingy old overcoat and those monstrous, clumsy brogans which furnished his classes so much amusement, because he could not very often afford to change them. For the matter of that, few of his brother professors were in much better case. There was Weimer (Metaphysics) who kept his wife and two children in Düsseldorf, over in Germany, on half of what it would have cost him here, and who hoped, by saving up most of the other half, to be able to visit them, in two or three years. There were Burdette (Political Science) and Stoller (Mathematics), lucky bachelors who roomed together, thereby reducing expenses incredibly. There was Livingstone (Chemistry), engaged for the last twelve years, and

waiting till he should get up to a salary of two thousand for the wedding. No, Professor Gilbert was by no means an isolated instance.

The Gilberts, of course, had to live very simply and unfashionably in the little old house on Warwick Lane; but this fact did not appreciably interfere with their being invited everywhere, and knowing everybody. The winter Lorrie was nineteen, for instance, the first winter she was 'out,' there could be no question of a *débutante* ball or tea or dinner-dance, such as the other girls in her set were treated to, as an introduction to society. Nevertheless, Lorrie went 'out'; she poured at the receptions, she danced at all the germans, she went to the Charity Ball for the Training-school for Nurses; she was seen constantly in her little, cheap frocks — one white embroidered net, worn over a pink or blue China-silk slip, turn about — among all the gauze and lace and satin plumage, apparently having as good a time as anybody, with her pretty, waving brown hair, and her bright eyes and cheeks. Sometimes it was Mrs. Gilbert chaperoning her daughter, in her old black grenadine with the jet *passementerie* down the front; sometimes the Professor himself might be noticed waiting patiently about in corners, with a vague, resigned look, absently polite, as if he might be inwardly conjugating a Semitic verb while he answered your remark about the weather. His dress-coat was the same he had worn at the commencement ball when he graduated from Dartborough Institute, Virginia, — Samuel Gilbert, '68. By what his wife regarded as a special dispensation of Providence, Samuel never outgrew that coat; in middle life he retained the spare, angular, and bony figure of his youth.

There were only the two children — Lorrie, who was the elder by a year and

a half, and Robert. Perhaps their mother, in her secret heart, considered the smallness of the family another dispensation. Mrs. Gilbert was a devout Episcopalian, and would have taken uncomplainingly whatever it pleased her God to send; but He Himself knew that their income had always been a tight fit, and was getting tighter as the cost of living advanced, and the children grew up. Lorrie, indeed, for all her spirits and girlish delight in society, and that spice of coquetry from which, sad to relate, more than one young man had already suffered — Lorrie was, after all, a generous, right-minded sort of young woman, and had wanted very much at one time to study shorthand and go into an office, by way of lightening the family burdens. It was a sane and practical idea; but the Virginia-born father and mother could not bring themselves to accept it favorably — to accept it at all. Their particular generation did not easily emancipate itself from the traditions of their particular state. Even when the point came up of sending Bob to college, which, plan as economically as they might, would strain them to the last notch, Professor Gilbert would not listen to his daughter's proposal.

'Robert must have his education. But better let him go without than sacrifice one child to the other,' said the father. And then he added, unconsciously betraying a much stronger feeling, 'It's a poor apology for a man who can't take enough care of the women of his family to keep them out of offices, I have always thought.'

'Father, you're hopelessly archaic, and antediluvian, and behind the times and out-of-date!' said Lorrie; and laughed and kissed him between her adjectives. 'You're primeval, and probably arboreal —'

'Father's just *right*!' cried Bob, stoutly. 'It would be just the same as

my taking your money that you'd worked hard for, and going off to have a good time with it, Lorrie. I think I see myself!'

'You're not going to college just for a good time, Robert; remember that!' said the Professor, a little anxiously.

But Bob, who was always prone to sanguine and brilliant dreaming, had already begun to explain eagerly what he meant to do.

'As soon as I'm through — it's only four years, anyhow — I'm going to get out and *hustle*, you'll see! I mean to make money — I mean to take care of you all. I won't have Father and Lorrie and you, Mums, working round and scratching and saving the way you do now. You just wait!' he declared, striding up and down, with sweeping gestures, his hair tumbled, his young face aglow. Mrs. Gilbert watched him, infinitely proud and tender. Of course he was very young and self-confident and boastful, but his ideals were high — they were clean, they were true, thought the mother. If your young men have not the vision, the country perisheth; but her Robert had it, she was sure.

Professor Gilbert, on the other hand, lacking the maternal insight, had had his moments of doubt and perplexity, and angrily-hushed misgivings, about his son, before this; and they crowded thickly upon him now.

The truth is, that to Samuel, the breath of whose nostrils was study, labor, the conquest of difficulties, Robert offered a painful and disheartening enigma; with all his experience of youth, the Professor found himself unable to solve it. Bob was not a dull boy, or a bad boy, or a lazy boy; he was simply and incurably *boy*. He could have yawned his head off over the Dead Languages; all the poetry of both ancient and modern worlds left him cold; he cared no more to read history than to read his

mother's cook-book; he kicked his feet and stared out of window in the class in mathematics.

With all this, Robert, to the slightly bewildered relief of his parents, made no such poor appearance in their world, being not in the least uncouth, nor, on the surface, at any rate, ignorant. The young fellow was ready enough in talk, gay, mannerly, and agreeable; nobody ever took a joke better, or was more amiably amused at his own blunders.

'I can't understand it!' Professor Gilbert would complain to his wife in their worried private moments: 'Bob looks and talks like a gentleman's son — I never caught him in a lie in my life — yet he does n't seem to have the faintest idea of personal responsibility. And he can't add, and spells "judgment" with an *e*!'

By what despairing labors, or what shrinking use of his own name and influence, the elder Gilbert got his son through the entrance examinations at Eureka College, one can only guess; possibly the standards of that institution were not mercilessly high. Robert went off in fine feather; ere long letters came back brimful of zest for the new life. Such fun! He had been initiated into the B. K. E. Everybody belonged to a fraternity, you know — you *had* to belong to a fraternity; why, if you did n't, you were n't in anything, and could n't have any good times at all. He would have felt awfully if he had n't been invited to join; but two or three different frats had come after him. It sounded big-headed for him to say that; but you could n't help being glad the fellows liked you, you know. He liked them all; they were splendid fellows, every one of them. He was learning to box; pretty nearly everybody boxed or did some kind of athletic stunt; he was going to save up and buy a pair of boxing-gloves. He could get on the Glee

or Mandolin Club, too, lots of the fellows had told him; only he did n't like to be borrowing some other fellow's banjo all the time, so he could n't get very much practice, but he meant to save up and buy one for himself.

'It would be great if I could go on tour with the club during the holidays, would n't it?' he wrote excitedly. 'They have the time of their lives. Every town they go to there are always either some Eureka men, or some belonging to the same frats, and they can't do enough for you. It looks just now as if the expense would kind of oversize me, but I think maybe I can make it yet, by saving here and there. You watch little Robbie, the Wonder of Eureka College, in his Peerless Performance of Piling up the Scads! . . . There's a man in the Glee Club that's a special friend of mine, though he's a good deal older, about twenty-four, I think, and I'm such a kid. That's what they all call me, you know, Kid Gilbert. I think I told you about him before; it's Phil Cortwright, the same fellow that was so nice about telling me about rooms, and the right sort of fellows to know and all that, when I first got here. He was the one that got me into the B. K. E. He comes from Paris, Kentucky, and I believe his people are in the whiskey business, or race-horses, but you know they don't think anything of that down there — I mean they think it's all right and perfectly gentlemanly. Anyhow, Phil's a crack-erjack fellow, and if the Glee Club comes to Cinti, I want to make it pleasant for him. I'd like to have him stay at the house if we can. It won't be any trouble, you know, because we'll be out all the time. Tell Lorrie to stir up the girls, so he'll be invited places. I bet they'll all like him; Cort's a good deal of a fussy, and an awfully clean-cut, good-looking fellow, and dances like a dream, all the girls here say. . . .'

And the letter ended with, dear old Dad and Mums, he was n't doing any great things in class, just sort of tailing along with the rest, but don't worry, he'd make it up before the end of the year.

Perhaps Robert had laid out his plans on too large a scale, or had not had leisure enough for even a single one of the things he meant to accomplish; at any rate, when he came home for the holidays at the mid-year, he was not yet a member of any of the organizations for which he had proposed to qualify, and was still occupying the not at all exalted position in class which he had described. After all, however, — as the young fellow argued good-naturedly, — there was plenty of time; Dad knew that he was n't any high-brow, Dad did n't expect him to *shine*; he would come out about even with the run of 'em in the end; he was as good as the average. So why be a grind?

Why, indeed? The town was full of young college men; you saw the fresh faces, you heard the rough music of the boys' voices at every turn — goodly sights and sounds. It was not a moment for sermonizing; everybody wanted them to have a good time, everybody was bent on giving them a good time. In the middle of the festivities, the Eureka Mandolin and Glee Club arrived on their 'tour.' — 'Rah, 'rah, 'RAH! U-ree-KAH! etc.

Bob rushed down to the train and bore the much-heralded Cortwright home in triumph; not home at once, to be sure, for they had to stop at the Mecca to have a high-ball, and stop at Smith's to pick out some neckties, and stop at Andy's for a game of pool, and attend to a dozen-and-one matters of like importance before finally taking the Elmhill car. It was a cold and sunny winter day, at about that hour of the afternoon when any number of

carriages were hurrying to and from luncheons, matinée parties, receptions, and what-not. They sped by with clouds of picture-hats, furs, and white gloves, extraordinarily warm-looking and radiant. And no doubt it secretly pleased Mr. Robert Gilbert not a little, as the two young men strode along, to be constantly taking off his hat in response to smiling salutes from all these rich and dainty cargoes. Rob was no snob, but hang it, a man can't help taking a pride in his own people, you know, and he liked to show them off to Corty!

The latter young gentleman preserved a kind of appreciative immobility; he was twenty-four and a man of the world, who had seen something of life, and — ahem! — of women. Nevertheless, he was not above glancing into a mirror in the drug-store window as they passed and noting anxiously that his overcoat set without a wrinkle. He was tall, slim, straight, and straight-featured, a satisfying example — according to his own ideas — of the type that a certain eminent artist in black-and-white was just then busily bringing into vogue.

'Hello, there's Lorrie now!' said Bob, suddenly. Another carriage had gone by. Bob looked after it. 'Somebody's taking her somewhere,' he said explanatorily; 'Lorrie's generally on the dead jump.'

They resumed their walk.

'The one with the auburn hair — is that your sister?'

'No — that was n't Lorrie; her hair's brown, and she's always got it kind of loose and wavy. Lorrie has beautiful hair. No, that red-headed one is a Miss Jameson. I don't know whether she's come here to live, or only visiting one of the girls. You'll meet 'em all at this dinner of the Gebhardts to-night, and the other places, you know.'

'Gebhardt? That's a kind of Ger-

man-sounding name. You have lots of Germans here, have n't you?' Cortwright said fastidiously.

'Yes. The Gebhardts are American-born, though; they're just as American as you or I; Mr. Gebhardt's at the head of a bank here. They've got a beautiful place out on Adams Road.'

'Money to burn, I suppose?'

'Yes, I guess so — oh, of course they must have,' said Bob, vaguely. It had never occurred to him to notice; he was not interested in the Gebhardts' financial status, nor, in fact, in anybody's.

Young Cortwright was of a much more practical turn; he viewed with a more or less appraising eye the carriages and girls Bob pointed out to him, and the handsome, sober, rather old-style residences which, at that date, decorated our hill-top suburbs. 'You know I'm expecting to go into business here or in Chicago — wherever there's the best opening, of course,' he confided sagely to his junior; 'but wherever it is, I'm going to know the moneyed crowd, you bet. It's the only way to get along.'

'Well, that lets *me* out, if you ever settle down here. You won't know *me*!' said Bob, with his ready laugh.

And the other, after an instant of confusion, laughed too, and clapped him a staggering blow on the back. 'You *are* a kid, Gil,' he said.

This last conversation took place in Bob's bedroom (the one at the back over the kitchen, a shabby and homely little room like all the rest of the shabby, homely, dignified house) while they were dressing for the dinner; and as Cortwright, having finished first, went downstairs, he repeated to himself that Gilbert *was* a kid, but a good sort for all that, and a regular little Who's-Who-in-Society. Anybody could see the family were n't just what you'd call rolling in coin, but that did n't

count so much after all, outside of New York; the old Professor was a nice old mossback; and Bob's mother reminded Philip of his own who had died when he was a little fellow — the young man, for all his ingrained worldliness, thought of her with a momentary flush of sentiment that did him credit. He had not yet met the sister that the Kid was always bragging about; — and upon this, Mr. Cortwright, straightening his fine, square shoulders, and feeling for the final time to see that his white tie was accurately in place, passed into the living-room whence he had already heard certain girlish sounds.

A young lady, dressed, or, one might say, over-dressed, in a delicately elaborate evening toilet of Nile-green chiffon, covered with beaded embroidery, fairy-like lace festoons and knots of ribbons, who had been sitting in the low chair by the hearth, jumped up with a faint scream at sight of him. Never was fright more overwhelming — considering the very slight occasion for it — or more prettily displayed. She clasped her slim hands together, and gazed at him with wide eyes of the most beautiful deep and clear violet-blue ever seen.

'Startled fawn style!' said Philip to himself, knowingly; he had not gained that reputation of being an expert and successful 'fusser' without practice. 'What stunning red hair! But I thought Bob said the red-headed one was n't his sister,' went through his mind as he delivered a glance nicely compounded of admiration and apology, and began, 'Miss Gilbert —?'

'Oh, no, *indeed*, I'm not Lorrie,' interrupted the fawn, still in a charming flutter; she dropped her eyes before the young man's, which, to tell the truth, were sufficiently bold, and fidgeted with her frills and laces. 'I'm — it's — I'm Miss Jameson — I came over

to go with Lorrie to-night, you know — I did n't expect to see any strangers —'

'You did n't, hey? *Come off!*' thought the experienced Philip skeptically, though the lovely shell-pink of her cheeks had not altered, and the blue eyes were quite childishly candid and open as she faced him with this statement. 'I startled you bolting in this way? I'm awfully sorry,' he said, and once more allowed his gaze to wander appreciatively over her — a gaze which Miss Jameson apparently did not in the least resent, although she could scarcely fail to be conscious of it. 'I'll have to introduce myself, if you don't mind. I'm Bob's friend, Cortwright — you may have heard him —'

'Oh, Mr. Cortwright! — oh, of course! Why, I did n't know you were here yet! They were n't expecting you *to-day*, were they? When did your train get in?' And with these guileless inquiries, Miss Jameson reseated herself, turning her head so that her profile, exact and finished as a cameo, was exhibited to him in full relief against the dark and dingy old iron mantel-piece.

Cortwright, who himself possessed a good figure and no small talent for posing, forgot all his own tactics to stare at her unrestrained; he had never seen so completely pretty a woman. No wonder she liked to show herself off, he thought; she was pretty all over; the calculated grace of her attitude brought out sweet, exquisite curves and outlines of a yielding suggestion that set the young man's senses tingling. He did not rebuke himself, not being, perhaps, particularly conscientious on that score, and feeling, moreover, a cynical suspicion that she was fully aware of this powerful feminine appeal — counted confidently on it — wielded it as a familiar tool. He knew something about women, and he had met her sort before! Their eyes met. Cortwright, with a spectacular haste, lowered his to

her foot — an enticing foot in a high-heeled satin slipper and all but transparent Nile-green stocking.

‘Why, we got in in the afternoon — a little late on account of the snow in the mountains, you know,’ he said, answering her last remark elaborately.

‘Oh.’

There was another silence; then another interchange of glances. Cortwright began to feel uneasily that the scene ran some risk of becoming ridiculous. She could n’t expect him to start holding hands, or teasing for a kiss right off? That would be a bit *too* strong, although, to be sure, there *are* girls — but not in a house like this — among this kind of people —

‘It’s awfully cold, is n’t it?’ said Miss Jameson.

‘Yes, but I like it, don’t you? So bracing!’

‘Yes, it *is* bracing.’

Again the conversation halted. The young lady appeared to have an exceedingly shallow run of small talk; yet she was anything but bashful. She wore her unusually low-necked ballgown, and languidly uncovered her round, tapering ankles, with an air of complete self-possession. Cortwright looked and looked with a kind of luxuriance.

‘I like summer better than winter,’ said Miss Jameson, playing with an elegant trifle of a fan she carried on a slender chain threaded with pearls that hung and swung below her knees. ‘It’s so much warmer.’

‘Gets almost too hot, though, in this locality sometimes.’

‘Yes, it *does*, does n’t it?’ She looked at him under and through her long, thick lashes this time; and this time Mr. Philip gazed back at her ardently, not thinking it worth the trouble to go through his former pantomime. This was what she was after; and he had always found it worked

well to meet them halfway, he said to himself. She was as softly accommodating as a cushion; and it sufficed for her that he was male. But in another moment this most promising flirtation was all off — in Philip’s own phrase — because Bob came breezing downstairs into the parlor; and after him Miss Gilbert, who turned out to be no such beauty as the other girl, though she was nice-looking enough, and who gave him a firm little hand, and looked at him out of a pair of straight and steady brown eyes, with a frankness and simplicity which were on the whole rather refreshing.

‘We’re so glad to have you here, Mr. Cortwright. It’s so nice to know Bob’s friends,’ Lorrie said sincerely. ‘We drove past you and Bob this afternoon — did you see us? There was n’t time to stop and speak,’ she added innocently.

And Cortwright, glancing swiftly into Miss Jameson’s face, experienced a not unnatural glow of conceit, as he knelt down to put on the latter’s furry party-boots. Well, he *was* a fine-looking fellow; she was n’t the first woman that had found it out, and made an opportunity to meet him!

Then they all bundled off to the Gebhardts’ dinner-dance, and the ensuing ‘whirl of gayety,’ as the “Society Jottings” column in the Sunday supplement described it. There were so many girls and such pretty ones, and so much good eating and drinking, and so fine a dancing floor, that Cortwright lost sight of Miss Jameson after the first two-step. He hardly had time for any one girl in particular. At this party and at others, to Bob’s immense pride and delight (he was so unreservedly proud and delighted, in fact, that the older man was at times a little annoyed and almost made ashamed by it), Corty made a highly successful impression in their society. He was undeniably hand-

some, he dressed well, he could talk, he could dance, he could rattle off any amount of rag-time on the piano, and whistle and sing all the latest 'coon-songs' and airs from the popular operas. The men liked him; he spent freely, and was an all-round good fellow, they voted. It was with a real reluctance that the young people saw him go when his time was up; and his last act on the day of his departure, after the Wattersons' breakfast at the Country Club, was to entertain a dozen or so of his youthful hosts and hostesses at the vaudeville performance they were having that winter down at the old Pickrell Opera House.

I grieve to state that the party, under Mr. Cortwright's leadership, behaved with regrettable indecorum, notably when Mlle. Patrice came on for her serpentine dance and the calcium-light machine in the gallery threw an illuminated picture of the United States flag accompanied by the legend '*La Libertad de Cuba*' all over her and her gauze draperies as she serpentine about the stage, a spectacle they singled out to welcome with applause fit to raise the roof. The '*Libertad*' of this island was something everybody was hearing a good deal about in those days.

Miss Jameson was not one of the guests on this occasion; as it happened, Cortwright had seen her only once or twice after that initial party. He divined that, for some reason, she was not always welcome everywhere in Lorrie's set, but was far too wise to ask why. For all that, Philip did not forget her, and therefore pricked his ears one day at a fragment of talk concerning the young lady between Bob and his sister.

'Say, Lorrie, who is this new skirt, anyhow?' the brother demanded inelegantly; 'I don't remember ever to have met her before, and yet they say she lives here, and she talks as if she al-

ways had. You know who I mean — Miss Jameson — your friend Paula. She said she would n't mind if I called her that — floored me for a minute. I had n't asked to, you know.'

'Why, yes, you do know her, too, Bob. We all went to kindergarten together to Miss Banning when we were little — don't you remember? You ought to know Paula Jameson perfectly well.'

'Well, I don't — hold on! I believe I do, too. She must have been the little girl with the flossy sort of clothes that always had whole boxes of chewing-gum in her desk — oh, yes, I know *now*. But where's she been all the while in between? Nobody seems to know her nowadays. When I asked some of the girls the other day, they all rather sniffed, and said she was hanging on to *you*, and trying to *get in*.'

'Oh, don't talk like that, Bob,' said Lorrie, a little troubled. 'There's nothing the matter with Paula, only — well, her mother has never gone out here and does n't know many people, and that makes it hard for Paula, you see. And then living in hotels and boarding-houses all the time must be horrid; *nobody* lives in a hotel, here — *nobody*. I think poor Paula has a pretty hard time.'

'Why, she dresses out of sight, does n't she? That's what all the girls say. I guess she's too pretty — that's what's the matter,' said Robert, shaking his head profoundly.

'You know better, Bob Gilbert — you're just teasing —'

'Is Miss Jameson so pretty?' said Cortwright, in a tone of slight surprise. He thought it diplomatic never to express admiration for one girl to another girl. 'It seemed to me she lacked animation a little. Did n't talk much, you know.'

'She does n't need to talk — she can just *look*,' said Bob. 'Why, yes, Cort,

she's a stunning beauty. Funny you have n't noticed it. Don't I tell you that's the reason all the girls are so down on her? *Wow*, look out for Lorrie!

He riotously dodged an imaginary thunderbolt; and Mrs. Gilbert came mildly in to see what all the noise was about.

The visit, the holidays, came to an end; all the young people vanished in a twinkling, Cinderella-fashion, when the tocsin sounded; no more tearing-off from luncheon to card-party, from card-party to dinner, from dinner to cotillion, no more coming in at four o'clock in the morning, and yawning down to breakfast at noon. Bob's father and mother felt, with a formless disquiet, that they had scarcely seen the boy at all; there had been no time for the long, intimate, kind talks they had planned, not one quiet evening, not one meal in private. Perhaps a tear or two fell and damaged Robert's shirts as Mrs. Gilbert folded them into the trunk; it had all been so hurried and noisy and hilarious — *too* hilarious that night while that young Mr. Cortwright was here, and the boys had come home at dawn, and the cabman came up the steps with them, and Samuel himself had to go down and let them in. The mother thought of that night with shrinking. Young men must be young men, of course, but — She got up suddenly from the midst of the clothes strewed all about, and went and took from her desk a tintype of Robert when he was four years old, in his first funny little breeches, with a top in his hand, and stood looking at it a long while. He had been her little boy then — all hers. Mrs. Gilbert put the picture down with a sigh, and went back to her packing.

Bob did actually get through his Freshman year and pass the examinations without serious mishap, some-

how or other; and returned to Eureka the next fall, a Sophomore, as exuberantly sanguine and care-free as ever. His letters, which were not so regular as they had been, and very much briefer, now began to be filled with a disconcerting variety of schemes and dreams relating to his career upon leaving college — vast fortunes he would acquire by manœuvres based upon all sorts of airy possibilities. His friend Cortwright, it seemed, had already finished, and was now entering upon brokerage and insurance in his home town. Robert did n't believe Phil would stay in Paris long; he was already talking of moving to some bigger place and maybe would come to Cin. Would n't that be bully?

There was more in the same strain, over which the parents exchanged worried glances. It was different from all that wholesome chatter about frats and athletics; the boy talked too much about money; what was all this jargon of 'fliers' and 'sure things'? And as for classes —! Professor Gilbert girded himself up, and wrote a letter, sternly reminding Robert of his age, his duties, the value of his time and education; and suffered tortures of anxiety and self-reproach during the weeks that went by before any answer came. 'Have I hopelessly antagonized him?' thought poor Samuel, wretchedly; 'why did n't I let him alone? But I said nothing but what I've said over and over again, and Bob never got hurt, or angry, or sulky at it. Something else must have happened. I *know* Bob's all right — but you can't tell anything about boys.'

In the end, Lorrie, who had a certain affectionate understanding of her brother's character, though her own was so different, was visited by an intuition on which she acted in her usual prompt and direct fashion. 'Dearest Bobs, I'm afraid you are bothered about your allowance,' she wrote. 'I don't see how

you get along on it, because you must *have* to do certain things, you can't get out of doing them; and you have n't got much to do with. I should think even with the greatest care, you'd get behind sometimes; and then it's always so hard to get straight again —' And so on without a word about duty and ambition and self-sacrifice, which, indeed, were subjects Lorrie would have considered altogether too lofty for *her*.

She got a reply by return post full of bad spelling and contrition and confession and promises of amendment in Bob's big, loose scrawl, the pages decorated with one or two blobs and smears which looked as if Master Robert, in spite of his sex and his twenty years, had had to wipe his eyes at times over this composition. The lad was really honest, really loving. Yes, he acknowledged, he had 'got in bad'; he *could n't* tell Dad; Dad never could see things *his* way. But it was like her to guess it. She always *understood*, somehow; there was n't anybody like her — no fellow ever had such a sister. Would she tell Dad and Mums for him now? He hoped he could get through without asking them for any more money; they were so good, and scraped and pinched and stinted themselves to give him what they did, and his allowance would have been plenty for anybody but a fool, and he was n't worth what they did for him. His friend Cortwright was going to fix up some kind of

a loan for him (Phil was in that business, you know), get him some money so he could pay the fellows and the other people he owed, that is; and afterwards Bob could pay the loan off by degrees, and he guessed it would be all right. Cortwright was an awfully good fellow. But Bob could n't make the exams this year — he was way behind — Would Lorrie tell Father that, too? And he was going to take a brace from this minute *right on* — he was n't going to have anything like this happen again — just give him a chance, and he'd *prove* it — he was going to get even, you *see*!

It is a sorry task to write or read of these years of Robert's — a sorry and a wearisome one to rehearse the schedule of failure and disappointment and folly; let us leave it! In the middle of his third term (by which time Professor Gilbert was perceptibly grayer and more stooped, and his wife looked ten years older) the young man came home. One of the first persons he fell in with was Van Cleve Kendrick, who must have been scrubbing along in the shoe factory, the distillery, Heaven knows where, all this while, and acquiring experience of a very different order from Robert's. Cortwright was here, too, with Steinberger and Hirsch down on Third Street.

And I suppose all these events must have taken place about the year '92 — or was it '93? How time flies!

(*To be continued.*)

THE DRIFT TOWARD GOVERNMENT OWNERSHIP OF RAILWAYS

BY B. L. WINCHELL

I

THERE is an unmistakable drift toward government ownership of railways in the United States. This tendency is probably most apparent to those closely identified with railway affairs; but it is also evident to many who are interested in the railway business chiefly, or only, as observers and students of economic, industrial, and political problems.

In the first place, there has been for some years a rather unsteady but certain increase in the number of socialists in the country; and those who thus favor public ownership and management of all of the means of both production and distribution must be counted in with those others who favor public acquisition of the principal means of distribution. There has also been an increase in the number of those who advocate public ownership of all public utilities, of which steam railways are the largest. Finally, there has been a mighty growth in the number who favor very stringent regulation of railways, and who have succeeded in getting this policy adopted. The last-named class, which is much the largest, may finally turn the scale for public ownership. For its members now expect much from regulation—lower rates, better service, smaller railway dividends, complete elimination of traffic discriminations, shorter hours and higher wages for

labor, higher railway taxes, fewer accidents, and all the rest.

There is, however, a limit to the amount along these lines that any railway policy, whether that of unregulated private management, regulated private management, or public management, can accomplish. It is to be feared that public regulation, however submissive to it the railways may be, will accomplish less than many expect; and that, disappointed, these will join the ranks of those who believe in government ownership.

Furthermore, the opposition to public ownership from the men who, in past years, have had the strongest incentive to oppose it, namely, the officers and stockholders of railways, may decrease—nay, is decreasing—just when the tendency toward it becomes strongest. Whether rightly or wrongly, many railway officers and stockholders feel that unless present tendencies of regulation are checked, the time will soon come when, regardless of what their attitude as citizens may or should be, they will have no good reason, as railway officers and stockholders, for opposing public ownership.

The main thing about any employment that makes it attractive to strong men is the opportunity, under conditions affording much freedom of action, to exercise their best initiative, put forth their best energy, and thereby achieve the best results of which they

are capable; and many railway officers feel that the ever-increasing restrictions that regulation is putting on railway management are depriving them of this opportunity. The public has small conception how the hundreds of federal and state laws regulating railways, passed in recent years, and the innumerable orders that are constantly being issued by the Interstate Commerce Commission and the forty-two state commissions, tie the hands of railway officers. Doubtless much of the regulation is needed; perhaps all of it is well intended: but the public has unfortunately tried to adopt a policy of regulation that will prevent railway officers from doing anything that they ought not to do, and has overlooked the fact that to hedge men about with restrictions of this sort may, at the same time, so narrow their freedom of action as to make it impossible for them to do many things that they ought to do.

Those who have bought railway stock — as distinguished from those who have really loaned their money to the roads by buying their bonds — have done so in order that, while incurring the risk of business loss if the venture did not pay, they might get a business profit if it did pay; and the tendency of regulation to limit and reduce railway profits is making many investors wonder if they would not be better off financially if government ownership should be adopted. With an outstanding capitalization of less than \$63,000 a mile, or lower than that of the railways of any other first-rate country in the world, the railways of the United States have never been able in any year to pay as much as 4 per cent on both their bonds and their stock. In 1910 their average interest was 3.79 per cent and their average dividends 3.64 per cent. It is in the face of this fact that the state and

national governments are pursuing a policy under which net earnings are declining instead of increasing. In the calendar year 1907, net earnings per mile were \$3,359; in 1908, following the panic of 1907, they were \$2,869; in 1909, \$3,441; in 1910, \$3,344; in 1911, \$3,152. Now, railway stockholders know that no government has ever, in acquiring railways, paid an improperly low price for them; they feel confident that the government of the United States will not be the first to set the example of railway confiscation; and if they could get their money out of railways they could invest it elsewhere with more chance of large profits.

In these circumstances, the time may soon come when the only persons who will oppose public ownership will be those who will do so solely from a disinterested belief that it would be a bad thing for the republic, and we all know that disinterested zeal is seldom active, strenuous, and effective.

A change to government ownership in the United States, whether the results were bad or good, would be a revolution of stupendous proportions. The mileage of the railways of this country, amounting to more than 240,000 miles, is greater than the combined mileages of all the railways now owned by governments in the world. The net capitalization of our railways is about fourteen and a half billions of dollars; they certainly could not be acquired for less than this; the purchase price, very likely, would be nearer twenty billions; and all this immense sum would be added to the national debt. The 1,700,000 employees would all become government employees, with what political consequences no one can foretell. We should arouse ourselves to a clear recognition of present tendencies, cease drifting, and determine by investigation, thought, and discussion whether government ownership