

THE DIVIDED HEART

BY GEORGE HIBBARD

I T was some time in the spring when I encountered Bentley. At least I remember that they were putting out the flowers in the beds in Madison Square and in the small parterres before the great hotel farther up the Avenue. I had not seen him for some time, though I had heard of his engagement to Miss Guinevere Robinson, and I hastened forward to congratulate him.

"How are you?" he said, with evident constraint. "Yes, yes," he added. "I know—they all think that I am to be congratulated."

I saw at once that there was something wrong, for his round, rosy face did not have its accustomed smile, and his rather high voice was low and despondent.

Now I am one of those who always maintain that one should take an interest in a man for something besides even his money, and in spite of his considerable fortune, I have always had a sincere regard for Bentley. I can see the man beyond the millions, and if I did spend those very pleasant months in his yacht not more than a year or two ago, why, I had almost forgotten it, so that no one can accuse me of speaking interestedly when I say that he was a very good fellow.

"Come into the club," he said. "It's only a block, and we can talk more comfortably."

And until we were seated in the long window we did not, indeed, exchange a word. Even then I did not speak, for I saw that he had something on his mind, and I was afraid of making an unfortunate beginning.

"I know every one thinks I am to be congratulated," he repeated, gloomily, "but there never was a more miserable dog. I say," he went on, "I'm glad that I met you. I know every one says that you always do things from 'policy,' but, hang it, I know that you're good-natured enough to be sorry for a fellow when he's in a fix. And I'm like that chap—what's his name?—that had a sword hanging over his head."

"Damocles," I suggested.

"I've no doubt," he went on. "Well, you know I adore Guinevere, and I am sure that within the next twenty-four hours I shall get word from her breaking our engagement."

I uttered an appropriate exclamation.

"And naturally," he concluded, in a tone of resignation, "I couldn't feel worse about it."

"Can't anything be done?"

"Nothing," he replied, helplessly. "It's this way—"

Just then I chanced to look up, and saw Uncle Horace approaching. He made his way slowly through the room, frowning slightly as he saw that his favorite place at the window was already occupied.

"The devil!" exclaimed Bentley, starting up.

"No; only Uncle Horace," I murmured.

"But they say," cried Bentley, "that he has helped no end of people out of no end of scrapes. But it's impossible; he couldn't do anything for me."

"As you were going to tell me," I suggested, "it wouldn't do any harm to let him hear what you have to say too."

"Well," said Bentley; then rising, as Uncle Horace approached, he added, "Won't you take this place?" I saw that Uncle Horace was in two minds. He always liked it when the younger men treated him with deference, but still was inclined to resent the implication that he was of an age that made such deference proper. However, the bright spring morning had evidently put him in a good humor, and he sat down amicably enough.

"I was going," continued Bentley, "to tell Jim about the difficulty in which I find myself, and he suggested that we should ask you to listen also—though I cannot feel that I have any right to intrude my troubles upon your attention."

"My dear boy," said Uncle Horace, "didn't I know your father? And if I can be of any service—"

"But that's just the difficulty—you can't; no one can," interrupted Bentley.

I saw that this piqued Uncle Horace a little, and when he spoke again it was with some slight acerbity.

"Oh, well," he said, "I have nothing to do, and if you should care to tell me—"

"It's about my engagement," said Bentley, quite unable to hold in any longer.

"With Miss—Robinson?" suggested Uncle Horace, mildly.

"Yes," groaned Bentley, "only it won't be an engagement for long—even if there isn't a message on the way to tell me it's off now."

"A charming young woman," commented Uncle Horace.

"Don't I know that?" said Bentley.

"And don't I love her madly? And am I not perfectly wretched? Oh, it was all my fault! I don't mind admitting that at the start, and I'd tell her so if it would do any good—if, on the other hand, it wouldn't be likely to do a lot of harm—though, to be sure, all the fish is in the fire as it is, and things couldn't be worse. I suppose that I am weak."

He gazed from one to the other of us, but as his appeal was addressed directly to neither of us, we each left the duty of answering to the other, with the result that there was no audible response.

"Oh, well, I know it, and it all happened coming across just now. I'm always particularly well on shipboard, and remember how dull it is. There was a girl—an awfully pretty girl—who was, I'd been given to understand, in London engaged to another fellow."

"It's a little complicated," said Uncle Horace, blandly; "but then, real life always is."

"She didn't speak to me of her engagement," continued Bentley, "so I thought I wouldn't say anything to her about mine."

"You naturally felt," said my uncle, serenely, "that when a confidence was not reposed voluntarily, it would be unfitting to force one in return."

"Y-e-s," said Bentley, looking suspiciously at Uncle Horace; "as I tell you, neither of us said anything—and, well, though I loved Guinevere all the time, there were moments in the moonlight—At last, though, it was evident that Phœbe seemed to consider herself engaged to me. Then I discovered that she and her Englishman had had a row, and that she had been telling me the truth all the time."

"While you hadn't," said my uncle.

Bentley glared at Uncle Horace as fiercely as the naturally amiable expression of his countenance would permit.

"Oh," Uncle Horace hastened to assure him, "I merely refer to your—reticence, of course;" and he added, sweetly, "for you did suppress the truth, didn't you?"

"I suppose I did," said Bentley. "But the worst of it was that she told every one she knew in the ship. It seemed as if she wanted it to be known—in fact, she did—wanted the Englishman to hear of it—for the night before we landed she confessed that she had only taken me out of pique—and as much as said she didn't care a hang for me. And there I was."

"Still—" began my uncle.

"Don't you see," continued Bentley, "as soon as we were on shore it was all over town. Of course I went at once to see Guinevere, and she hadn't heard then; but she has by now, and I'm expecting my dismissal hourly."

"Why don't you go and tell her that you loved her all the time?"

"She wouldn't believe it," said Bentley, and from his tone I judged that his respect for my uncle's wisdom was falling perceptibly. "She isn't that kind of a girl. She'd just think that I'd had some trouble with the other, and was trying to win her back again."

"And you haven't done anything?" asked my uncle.

"Yes," answered Bentley, wearily, drawing two envelopes from his pocket. "It's all up, I know, but before I go away to hide my head in some South Sea island, or somewhere, I thought I'd better make a clean sweep of it. There's nothing like having things all clean and clear and understood."

"No," said my uncle, thoughtfully, "there isn't, is there?"

"I've written these two letters," said Bentley, drawing the contents from the two envelopes, which he threw on an empty chair. "One's to Guinevere, telling her that I have always adored her, that I do now, and that if I go away it is with a broken heart, to drag out the miserable remnant of a useless life. And it's the truth."

"I see," said my uncle, nodding his head.

"But she won't believe it," added Bentley. "And then I wrote this other to Phœbe, telling her exactly how it was."

"Not such an easy letter to write," said my uncle.

"It was deuced hard," admitted Bentley. "And I'll be hanged if I can tell whether it's commendable or just caddish—but she's as much as told me she didn't care a rap about me—though I didn't say anything about that, but just told her that it had all been a mistake, and that I loved Guinevere, and that all had better be forgotten. Here," said Bentley, throwing the notes on the chair with the envelopes. "You might look at them."

"No," said my uncle, taking up the missives and merely glancing at the pages. "I don't think that is necessary. I've no doubt that what you've said is all right."

And he threw the letters back upon the cushion with the envelopes.

"Really," he continued, "I can understand that you should feel distressed."

"And it was all so useless," exclaimed Bentley, desperately. "I might have saved myself all this so easily. That's the maddening part of it. Though, hang it! there's no doubt but the girl did lead me on—did it, of course, because she wanted the other fellow to think that she didn't care. I can see it all now," he said, brushing his hand through his hair. "And you don't think there is any chance for me?"

"I don't go so far as that," replied my uncle, judicially.

"I knew you couldn't do anything," said Bentley. "But it's been very good of you to listen to me."

"As I told you, this narrative has interested me exceedingly. And if I can say nothing at present, why, you must put it down not to lack of interest, but to the exceptional character of the case."

Bentley, to whom my uncle's fame was well known, looked at him with some surprise, and I will confess that I was astonished to hear Uncle Horace so readily acknowledge his inability to cope with the situation, and so willingly admit defeat.

"I will think of the matter," he said, putting the notes into the envelopes and handing them back to Bentley. "For the present, I don't see anything better than to send these, as you intended."

Bentley took the notes and rang for a servant.

"I've left word at my place that any things are to be sent to me, and if any-

thing comes here, why, I'll get it at once. I'll just wait, though to-morrow I don't know whether it will be Paris or Patagonia."

"Oh, well, sir," said Uncle Horace, a little pompously, as he rose, "never put off until to-morrow anything you can do to-day, except worry—and put that off until next week, if you can."

I rose at the same time, and together we passed, without a word, through the hall into the street. Indeed, neither of us spoke until we had advanced several blocks up the avenue, and then I only broke the silence that had fallen on us because my attention happened to be attracted by a face at the window of a passing brougham.

"There she is!" I exclaimed, I think with some excitement.

Uncle Horace's eyes followed my glance.

"Miss Robinson," he said.

But the brougham drew up at the curb, only a few paces in front of us, and by the time the young girl that it contained had opened the door and got out, we were by her side. Uncle Horace stepped briskly up to her, and I followed him more slowly.

"Ah," exclaimed my uncle, "I think we must be going into the same place."

And looking up, he indicated the broad windows of the shop of a great picture-dealer.

"Sundermann's," he continued. "I was just going to look at a portrait."

It was evident to me, from a certain impatient turn of the girl's head, that she resented our appearance, and only too clearly wished to be left alone.

"Oh," she exclaimed, doubtfully, "I was only going to see about something I am having framed, and—and I am in a great hurry."

"At least," said my uncle, suavely, "we can walk up the steps together."

As I fell behind I noticed that her cheeks were pale, and that her whole face had a tired and anxious expression. She appeared very restless, and even excited, while in her evident absorption I doubt if she had noticed me.

"Ye gods!" I half muttered to myself, "can it be that she really cares about the fellow as much as this?"

Then the door slowly closed behind us, and passing through a room or two we found ourselves in the silent, deserted

gallery. There was a certain muffled quiet that is always perceptible in such places, and the sudden cessation from the noise and bustle of the street I think affected all of us. At least the girl seemed suddenly to lose her reserve of controlled containment and sank into a chair. For a moment I thought she was going to cry, but I was mistaken.

"Oh," she said, looking piteously at Uncle Horace, "I only came out because I was so restless, and I didn't want to see any one, but now I'm glad you are here. I might as well begin by telling you," she added, with the deep seriousness of youth—that tragedy in her tone that is only possible at the age when everything seems a finality. "My engagement is broken."

"My dear young lady!" exclaimed my uncle.

"You know I told you the first when I was engaged," she went on. "And I want to tell you now that it is all over—forever."

I don't think that even yet she was conscious that I was in the room, so I withdrew discreetly to a slightly greater distance.

"Oh, come, come!" said my uncle. "I know all about it. Indeed, I've just been talking with the young man, and he's awfully cut up; and indeed he assures me that—ah—his feelings are unchanged—assured me in the strongest language."

"Never!" she said, firmly. "I can't believe him, and I won't. He has told you to try to influence me; but you can't; no one can. I can only try to forget all about it."

"But it's a mistake," remonstrated my uncle, as I thought very weakly, and indeed it seemed to me that in the management of the whole affair he was not displaying his usual ability.

"No, no!" exclaimed the girl. "How do I know that he may not want to go on—just because she has done as she has, and her engagement to Sir John is announced?"

"I doubt if he knows about it," urged Uncle Horace, "and I assure you he loves you—has always loved you."

"I can't believe it," said the girl, recovering. "You see, nothing can prove to me that she hadn't his whole heart. I never can be sure now, and it's no use."

"He—ah—has written a letter to you," murmured Uncle Horace, gently.

"He has?" she said, suddenly. "But why? There's nothing he can say to me that can make me believe, and— Oh, it's cruel!"

"Believe me, I am sincerely sorry," said my uncle, with what seemed to me absolute callousness, for by now the girl's white face and agitated tones had worked upon my sympathies. "But, my dear young lady, take my word for it that you are distressing yourself quite needlessly."

The girl flashed on him a look of indignation.

"In a moment you will tell me," she said, scornfully, "that in a short time I sha'n't think of this."

"I will even go so far as to say that," agreed my uncle.

"Oh!" she cried; "and I thought that you were so sympathetic; and when I told you that I was engaged, you were so nice about it; and I always thought—though I was only a little girl to you—that I was a friend, and that you took an interest in me!"

"But believe me, I do," said my uncle, with a half-twinkle in his eye that seemed to me at that moment nothing short of brutal.

"Oh, I can't believe it any more," she said. "I can't believe anybody or anything any more. I am going home."

"It might be the best thing to do," murmured Uncle Horace.

"Oh," said the girl, as she dragged herself out of the room, "I am so disappointed in you!"

I really felt highly indignant with Uncle Horace. His apparent insensibility was wholly incomprehensible, and when we were alone, I turned to him in astonishment.

"Why didn't you make her believe that he was really true to her, in spite of his divided heart?" I said, indignantly.

"Quite useless," replied my uncle, calmly. "Nothing I could say would have convinced her."

"But she is really suffering," I said.

"So I perceive," he remarked.

"And you're not going to do anything?"

"No, I'm not going to do anything," he replied. "But I assure you that you will be surprised to find how soon her grief will be forgotten."

"Now," I said, hotly, "she doesn't impress me that way at all. Of course she's

young, but she seems to me like a girl with a heart, though, hang it, how she can care so much for a fellow like Bentley I don't see."

"Titania," remarked my uncle, "is an eternal type, and as you go on in life nothing will surprise you so much as to see the man a very nice woman will love; yourself, of course, excepted."

When, later in the afternoon, I again entered the club, the sight of Bentley still sitting in the window was an annoyance, for his aspect showed only too plainly that no hope had come to brighten the prospect for him.

"Hello!" I said.

"Hello!" he replied, gloomily. "What's the time?"

"Half past four," I answered.

"I haven't heard a word," he continued, "and I haven't moved. Hang it, I had an idea that your uncle might do something; but, I say, I don't mind telling you I think he's something of a fraud."

I murmured some reply in which the words "most surprising," "something of a cul-de-sac," "perhaps not sufficiently urgent or important," were alone audible.

"Not sufficiently important!" exclaimed Bentley, starting up. "Why, man, it's my life's happiness!"

Just then a servant entered the room and approached, bearing a note. Bentley seized it with feverish haste, but when he had it in his hand he paused, irresolute.

"It's the end," he said, looking at the envelope. "Well," he added, "better have it over."

And he tore through the paper with his fingers.

At first the expression of dull despair that had settled on his face was unbroken, but gradually I saw a new light in his eyes—a dawning look of amazement spread across his countenance.

"What's this?" he muttered, and then read on.

By this time I was almost as excited as he was, and felt like snatching the paper from his hand to see the words written on it.

At length he finished.

"Whew!" he whistled, looking up as a paper fluttered down to the floor from the folds of the sheet which he had been reading.

"Well, I am a surprised pup!"

"What is it?" I exclaimed, unable to restrain myself any longer.

"It's everything!" he cried, taking a few steps of a dance that would have won for him fame and money on any stage. "It's all right. That old cock of an uncle of yours has fixed it, while we have been abusing him all the time."

"But—how—how?" I exclaimed.

"Read that," he said, handing me the note; and then, not being able to wait until I had glanced through the few words that it contained, he went on: "In the simplest way in the world. You can imagine the first sentence staggered me: 'Dear Mr. Bentley.' I thought it was all up then. But you see what's next: 'It is clear there has been some mistake, and I hasten to return to you the inclosed note that was clearly not meant for me.'"

"Oh!" I exclaimed, weakly.

"Don't you see? The old boy merely changed the notes, and Guinevere got the one to the other girl, saying that it was all over, and that we must both look at it as a 'pleasant episode' and nothing more, for my heart was given to another, and, well, every cursed thing that was so hard to write. And of course, seeing it was a note meant for the other girl, she believed all of it—and it's all right—right!" he cried, slapping me on the shoulder.

"Ah!" I murmured, drawing away from him.

"Of course she writes the beginning of the note formally enough; but don't you see this down at the end? 'Sam dear, I shall be at home at five, as always.'" He suddenly started. "Nearly five now. I'll just have time to get there!" And he rushed from the room, almost upsetting, in his flight, an elderly gentleman who was just entering.

It was my uncle Horace.

"You—you"—I began, shaking my finger at him—"you benevolent old humbug!"

"Of course I wasn't absolutely sure how it would work," he said.

"But was it quite right?" I objected.

"The end justifies the means," he replied.

"Does it always?" I commented.

"Well," Uncle Horace admitted, "of course that depends on how mean it is!"

THE RAILROAD AND THE PEOPLE

A NEW EDUCATIONAL POLICY NOW OPERATING IN THE WEST

BY THEODORE DREISER

WHEN the term "soulless corporation" was first coined, it was used to describe the nature of those largest of the then existing commercial organizations, the railroads. They were declared to be all that the dictionary of iniquity involves—dark, sinister, dishonest associations which robbed the people "right and left," as the old phrase put it, and gave nothing in return. They were, as the public press continually averred, bribe-givers, land-grabbers, political corruptionists, hard-fisted extortionists, thieves—in short, everything that an offended and an outraged opposition could invent or devise in the way of descriptive phraseology. To-day the application of the term has broadened considerably, but the railroads are not by any means exempt. By the masses of the people they are still viewed with suspicion, and everything which they undertake to do is thought to be the evidence of a scheme whereby the people are to be worsted, and the railroad strengthened in its position of opulent despotism.

That so much accusation and opposition has some basis in fact we may well believe, and yet not injure the subject of the present discussion. If we were to assume that all that has ever been said concerning railroads is absolutely true, the fact that a new policy had been adopted by some roads, looking to a cordial and sympathetic relationship with their public, would be all the more remarkable. For if the public has had nothing save greed and rapacity to expect of its railroads, the sight of the latter adopting a reasonable business policy, whereby they seek to educate and make prosperous the public in order that they in turn may be prosperous, is one which, if not inspiring, is at least optimistic. No corporation is soulless, whatever else may be thought of it, which helps all others in helping itself. The philosophy involved in this statement is the enliven-

ing breath of the latest and most successful railroad policy, now being generally adopted.

Like many another good idea, this policy originated in the West, and it is there that it is to be found in its most advanced practical form. There the general freight agent of a road is an official of educational importance. He has associated with him as many as a hundred assistants, who carry out the work of instructing and educating the people in the knowledge that makes for prosperity. He has under him a horticultural agent, who in turn has assistants. There is a poultry agent, a superintendent of dairies, a land inspector, a travelling commercial agent, buyers, salesmen, and so forth, all with assistants, and all working under the direction of the general freight agent.

Through this department the railroads are doing a remarkably broad educational work—not only of inspecting the land, but of educating the farmers and merchants, and helping them to become wiser and more successful. They give lectures on soil-nutrition and vegetable-growing, explain conditions and trade shipments, teach poultry-raising and cattle-feeding, organize creameries for the manufacture of cheese and butter, and explain new business methods to merchants who are slow and ignorant in the matter of conducting their affairs. On two roads there is a poultry department, which buys for cash of all farmers along the route, running poultry-cars, which are scheduled for certain stations on certain days, with cash buyers in charge. On three other roads there are travelling agents who go over the line three times a year, stop at every station, and visit every merchant in the town and every farmer of merchant proclivities in the country. These men make plain the attitude of the railroad toward the citizen, inquire after the state of his business, ask him what his difficulties are, and what, if anything, can be done to strengthen and