While Jonathan Hill was being made a hero of in the little two-by-four office of the feed store the morning after the mass meeting (though nobody offered to take over his mortgage), Mr. Dodd was complaining to his wife of shooting pains, and "callated" he would stay at home that day.

"Shootin' fiddlesticks!" said Mrs. Dodd. "Get along down to the store and face the music, Levi Dodd. You'd have had shootin' pains if you'd a went to the meetin'."

"I might stop by at Mr. Worthington's house and explain how powerless I was —"

"For goodness' sake git out, Levi. I guess he knows how powerless you are with your shootin' pains. If you only could forget Isaac D. Worthington for three minutes, you wouldn't have 'em."

Mr. Dodd's two clerks saw him enter the store by the back door and he was very much interested in the new ploughs which were piled up in crates outside of it. Then he disappeared into his office and shut the door, and supposedly became very much absorbed in book-keeping. If any one called, he was out — any one. Plenty of people did call, but he was not disturbed — until ten o'clock. Mr. Dodd had a very sensitive ear, and he could often recognize a man by his step, and this man he recognized.

"Where's Mr. Dodd?" demanded the owner of the step, indignantly.

"He's out, Mr. Worthington. Anything I can do for you, Mr. Worthington?"

"You can tell him to come up to my house the moment he comes in."

Unfortunately Mr. Dodd in the office had got into a strained position. He found it necessary to move a little; the day-book fell heavily to the floor, and the perspiration popped out all over his forehead. Come out, Levi Dodd. The Bastille is taken, but there are other fortresses still in the royal hands where you may be confined.

"Who's in the office?"

"I don't know, sir," answered the clerk, winking at his companion, who was sorting nails.

In three strides the great man had his hand on the office door and had flung it open, disclosing the culprit cowering over the day-book on the floor.

"Mr. Dodd," cried the first citizen, "what do you mean by —?"

Some natures, when terrified, are struck dumb. Mr. Dodd's was the kind which bursts into speech.

"I couldn't help it, Mr. Worthington," he cried, "they would have it. I don't know what got into 'em. They lost their senses, Mr. Worthington, plumb lost their senses. If you'd a b'en there, you might have brought 'em to. I tried to git the floor, but Ezry Graves —"

"Confound Ezra Graves, and wait till I have done, can't you," interrupted the first citizen, angrily. "What do you mean by putting a bath-tub into my house with the tin loose, so that I cut my leg on it?"

Mr. Dodd nearly fainted from sheer relief.

"I'll put a new one in to-day, right now," he gasped.

"See that you do," said the first citizen, "and if I lose my leg, I'll sue you for a hundred thousand dollars."

"I was a-goin' to explain about them losin' their heads at the mass meetin' —"

"Damn their heads!" said the first citizen. "And yours, too," he may have added under his breath as he stalked out. It was not worth a swing of the executioner's axe in these times of war. News had arrived from the state capital that morning of which Mr. Dodd knew nothing. Certain feudal chiefs from the North Country, of whose allegiance Mr. Worthington had felt sure, had obeyed the summons of their old sovereign, Jethro Bass, and had come South to hold a conclave under him at the Pelican. Those chiefs of the North Country, with their clans behind them as one man, what a power they were in the state! What magnificent qualities they had, in battle or strategy, and how cunning and shrewd was their generalship! Year after year they came down from their mountains and fought shoulder to shoulder, and year after year they carried back the lion's share of the spoils between them. The great South, as a whole, was powerless to

resist them, for there could be no lasting alliance between Harwich and Brampton and Newcastle and Gosport. Now their king had come back, and the North Country men were rallying again to his standard. No wonder that Levi Dodd's head, poor thing that it was, was safe for a while.

"Organize what you have left, and be quick about it," said Mr. Flint, when the news had come, and they sat in the library planning a new campaign in the face of this evident defection. There was no time to cry over spilt milk or reinstated school-teachers. The messages flew far and wide to the manufacturing towns to range their guilds into line for the railroads. The seneschal wrote the messages, and sent the summons to the sleek men of the cities, and let it be known that the coffers were full and not too tightly sealed, that the faithful should not lack for the sinews of war. Mr. Flint found time, too, to write some carefully worded but nevertheless convincing articles for the *Newcastle Guardian*, very damaging to certain commanders who had proved unfaithful.

"Flint," said Mr. Worthington, when they had worked far into the night, "if Bass beats us, I'm a crippled man."

"And if you postpone the fight now that you have begun it? What then?"

The answer, Mr. Worthington knew, was the same either way. He did not repeat it. He went to his bed, but not to sleep for many hours, and when he came down to his breakfast in the morning, he was in no mood to read the letter from Cambridge which Mrs. Holden had put on his plate. But he did read it, with what anger and bitterness may be imagined. There was the ultimatum, — respectful, even affectionate, but firm. "I know that you will, in all probability, disinherit me as you say, and I tell you honestly that I regret the necessity of quarrelling with you more than I do the money. I do not pretend to say that I despise money, and I like the things that it buys, but the woman I love is more to me than all that you have."

Mr. Worthington laid the letter down, and there came irresistibly to his mind something that his wife had said to

him before she died, shortly after they had moved into the mansion. "Dudley, how happy we used to be together before we were rich!" Money had not been everything to Sarah Worthington, either. But now no tender wave of feeling swept over him as he recalled those words. He was thinking of what weapon he had to prevent the marriage beyond that which was now useless — disinheritance. He would disinherit Bob, and that very day. He would punish his son to the utmost of his power for marrying the ward of Jethro Bass. He wondered bitterly, in case a certain event occurred, whether he would have much to alienate.

When Mr. Flint arrived, fresh as usual in spite of the work he had accomplished and the cigars he had smoked the night before, Mr. Worthington still had the letter in his hand, and was pacing his library floor, and broke into a tirade against his son.

"After all I have done for him, building up for him a position and a fortune that is only surpassed by young Duncan's, to treat me in this way, to drag down the name of Worthington in the mire. I'll never forgive him. I'll send for Dixon and leave the money for a hospital in Brampton. Can't you suggest any way out of this, Flint?"

"No," said Flint, "not now. The only chance you have is to ignore the thing from now on. He may get tired of her — I've known such things to happen."

"When she hears that I've disinherited him, she will get tired of him," declared Mr. Worthington.

"Try it and see, if you like," said Flint.

"Look here, Flint, if the woman has a spark of decent feeling, as you seem to think, I'll send for her and tell her that she will ruin Robert if she marries him." Mr. Worthington always spoke of his son as "Robert."

"You ought to have thought of that before the mass meeting. Perhaps it would have done some good then."

"Because this Penniman woman has stirred people up — is that what you mean? I don't care anything about that. Money counts in the long run."

"If money counted with this school-teacher, it would be a simple matter. I think you'll find it doesn't."

"I've known you to make some serious mistakes," snapped Mr. Worthington.

"Then why do you ask for my advice?"

"I'll send for her, and appeal to her better nature," said Mr. Worthington, with an unconscious and sublime irony.

Flint gave no sign that he heard. Mr. Worthington seated himself at his desk, and after some thought wrote on a piece of note-paper the following lines: "My dear Miss Wetherell, I should be greatly obliged if you would find it convenient to call at my house at eight o'clock this evening," and signed them, "Sincerely Yours." He sealed them up in an envelope and addressed it to Miss Wetherell, at the schoolhouse, and handed it to Mr. Flint. That gentleman got as far as the door, and then he hesitated and turned.

"There is just one way out of this for you, that I can see, Mr. Worthington," he said. "It's a desperate measure, but it's worth thinking about."

"What's that?"

It took some courage, even for Mr. Flint, to make the suggestion.

"The girl's a good girl, well educated, and by no means bad looking. Bob might do a thousand times worse. Give your consent to the marriage, and Jethro Bass will go back to Coniston."

It was wisdom such as few lords get from their seneschals, but Isaac D. Worthington did not so recognize it. His anger rose and took away his breath as he listened to it.

"I will never give my consent to it, never—do you hear?—never. Send that note!" he cried.

Mr. Flint walked out, sent the note, and returned and took his place silently at his own table. He was a man of concentration, and he put his mind on the arguments he was composing to certain political leaders. Mr. Worthington merely pretended to work as he waited for the answer to come back. And presently, when it did come back, he tore it open and read it with an expression not often on his lips. He flung the paper at Mr. Flint.

"Read that," he said.

This is what Mr. Flint read: "Miss Wetherell begs to inform Mr. Isaac D. Worthington that she can have no communication or intercourse with him whatsoever."

Mr. Flint handed it back without a word. His opinion of the school-teacher had risen mightily, but he did not say so. Mr. Worthington took the note, too, without a word. Speech was beyond him, and he crushed the paper as fiercely as he would have liked to have crushed Cynthia, had she been in his hands.

One accomplishment which Cynthia had learned at Miss Sadler's school was to write a letter in the third person, Miss Sadler holding that there were occasions when it was beneath a lady's dignity to write a direct note. And Cynthia, sitting at her little desk in the schoolhouse during her recess, had deemed this one of the occasions. She could not bring herself to write, "My dear Mr. Worthington." Her anger, when the note had been handed to her, was for the moment so great that she could not go on with her classes; but she had controlled it, and compelled Silas to stand in the entry until recess, when she sat with her pen in her hand until that happy notion of the third person occurred to her. And after Silas had gone she sat still, though trembling a little at intervals, picturing with some satisfaction Mr. Worthington's appearance when he received her answer. Her instinct told her that he had received his son's letter, and that he had sent for her to insult her. By sending for her, indeed, he had insulted her irrevocably, and that is why she trembled.

Poor Cynthia! her troubles came thick and fast upon her in those days. When she reached home, there was the letter which Ephraim had left on the table addressed in the familiar, upright handwriting, and when Cynthia saw it, she caught her hand sharply at her breast, as if the pain there had stopped the beating of her heart. Well it was for Bob's peace of mind that he could not see her as she read it, and before she had come to the end there were

drops on the sheets where the purple ink had run. How precious would have been those drops to him! He would never give her up. No mandate or decree could separate them — nothing but death. And he was happier now — so he told her — than he had been for months: happy in the thought that he was going out into the world to win bread for her, as became a man. Even if he had not her to strive for, he saw now that such was the only course for him. He could not conform.

It was a manly letter, — how manly Bob himself never knew. But Cynthia knew, and she wept over it and even pressed it to her lips — for there was no one to see. Yes, she loved him as she would not have believed it possible to love, and she sat through the afternoon reading his words and repeating them until it seemed that he were there by her side, speaking them. They came, untrammelled and undefiled, from his heart into hers.

And now that he had quarrelled with his father for her sake, and was bent with all the determination of his character upon making his own way in the world, what was she to do? What was her duty? Not one letter of the twoscore she had received (so she kept their count from day to day) — not one had she answered. His faith had indeed been great. But she must answer this: must write, too, on that subject of her dismissal, lest it should be wrongly told him. He was rash in his anger, and fearless; this she knew, and loved him for such qualities as he had.

She must stay in Brampton and do her work, — so much was clearly her duty, although she longed to flee from it. And at last she sat down and wrote to him. Some things are too sacred to be set forth on a printed page, and this letter is one of those things. Try as she would, she could not find it in her heart at such a time to destroy his hope, — or her own. The hope which she would not acknowledge, and the love which she strove to conceal from him seeped up between the words of her letter like water through grains of sand. Words, indeed, are but as grains of sand to conceal strong feelings, and as Cynthia read the letter over she felt that every line betrayed her,

and knew that she could compose no lines which would not.

She said nothing of the summons which she had received that morning, or of her answer; and her account of the matter of the dismissal and reinstatement was brief and dignified, and contained no mention of Mr. Worthington's name or agency. It was her duty, too, to rebuke Bob for the quarrel with his father, to point out the folly of it, and the wrong, and to urge him as strongly as she could to retract, though she felt that all this was useless. And then — then came the betrayal of hope. She could not ask him never to see her again, but she did beseech him for her sake, and for the sake of that love which he had declared, not to attempt to see her: not for a year, she wrote, though the word looked to her like eternity. Her reasons, aside from her own scruples, were so obvious, while she taught in Brampton, that she felt that he would consent to banishment — until the summer holidays in July, at least: and then she would be in Coniston, and would have had time to decide upon future steps. A reprieve was all she craved, — a reprieve in which to reflect, for she was in no condition to reflect now. Of one thing she was sure, that it would not be right at this time to encourage him — although she had a guilty feeling that the letter had given him encouragement in spite of all the prohibitions it contained. "If, in the future years," thought Cynthia, as she sealed the envelope, "he persists in his determination, what then?" You, Miss Lucretia, of all people in the world, have planted the seeds with your talk about Genesis!

The letter was signed "One who will always remain your friend, Cynthia Wetherell." And she posted it herself.

When Ephraim came home to supper that evening, he brought the Brampton *Clarion*, just out, and in it was an account of Miss Lucretia Penniman's speech at the mass meeting, and of her visit, and of her career. It was written in Mr. Page's best vein, and so laudatory was it that we shall have to spare Miss Lucretia in not repeating it

here: yes, and omit the encomiums, too, on the teacher of the Brampton lower school. Mr. Worthington was not mentioned, and for this, at least, Cynthia drew a long breath of relief, though Ephraim was of the opinion that the first citizen should have been scored as he deserved, and held up to the contempt of his fellow-townsmen. The dismissal of the teacher, indeed, was put down to a regrettable misconception on the part of "one of the prudential committee," who had confessed his mistake in "a manly and altogether praiseworthy speech." The article was as near the truth, perhaps, as the Clarions may come on such matters — which is not very near. Cynthia would have been better pleased if Mr. Page had spared his readers the recital of her qualities, and she did not in the least recognize the paragon whom Miss Lucretia had befriended and defended. She was thankful that Mr. Page did not state that the celebrity had come up from Boston on her account. Miss Penniman had been "actuated by a sudden desire to see once more the beauties of her old home, to look into the faces of the old friends who had followed her career with such pardonable pride." The speech of the president of the literary club, you may be sure, was printed in full, for Mr. Ives himself had taken the trouble to write it out for the editor — by request, of course.

Cynthia turned over the sheet, and read many interesting items: one concerning the beauty and fashion and intellect which attended the party at Mr. Gamaliel Ives's; in the Clovelly notes she saw that Miss Judy Hatch, of Coniston, was visiting relatives there; she learned the output of the Worthington Mills for the past week. Cynthia was about to fold up the paper and send it to Miss Lucretia, whom she thought it would amuse, when her eyes were arrested by the sight of a familiar name.

"Jethro Bass come to life again.
From the *State Tribune*."

That was the heading. "One of the greatest political surprises in many years was the arrival in the capital on Wednesday of Judge Bass, whom it was thought had

permanently retired from politics. This, at least, seems to have been the confident belief of a faction in the state who have at heart the consolidation of certain lines of railroads. Judge Bass was found by a *Tribune* reporter in the familiar 'Throne Room' at the Pelican, but, as usual, he could not be induced to talk for publication. He was in conference throughout the afternoon with several well-known leaders from the North Country. The return of Jethro Bass to activity seriously complicates the railroad situation, and many prominent politicians are freely predicting to-night that, in spite of the town-meeting returns, the proposed bill for consolidation will not go through. Judge Bass is a man of such remarkable personality that he has regained at a stroke much of the influence that he lost by the sudden and unaccountable retirement which electrified the state some months since. His reappearance, the news of which was the one topic in all political centres yesterday, is equally unaccountable. It is hinted that some action on the part of Isaac D. Worthington has brought Jethro Bass to life. They are known to be bitter enemies, and it is said that Jethro Bass has but one object in returning to the field — to crush the president of the Truro Railroad. Another theory is that the railroads and interests opposed to the consolidation have induced Judge Bass to take charge of their fight for them. All indications point to the fiercest struggle the state has ever seen in June, when the Legislature meets. The *Tribune*, whose sentiments are well known to be opposed to the iniquity of consolidation, extends a hearty welcome to the judge. No state, we believe, can claim a party leader of a higher order of ability than Jethro Bass."

Cynthia dropped the paper in her lap, and sat very still. This, then, was what happened when Jethro had heard of her dismissal — he had left Coniston without writing her a word and passed through Brampton without seeing her. He had gone back to that life which he had abandoned for her sake; the temptation had been too strong, the desire for vengeance too great. He had not dared to see her. And yet the love for her which had been strong enough to

make him renounce the homage of men, and even incur their ridicule, had incited him to this very act of vengeance.

What should she do now, indeed? Had those peaceful and happy Saturdays and Sundays in Coniston passed away forever? Should she follow him to the capital and appeal to him? Ah no, she felt that were a useless pain to them both. She believed, now, that he had gone away from her for all time, that the veil of limitless space was set between them. Silently she arose, — so silently that Ephraim, dozing by the fire, did not awake. She went into her own room and wept, and after many hours fell into a dreamless sleep of sheer exhaustion.

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The days passed, and the weeks; the snow ran from the brown fields, and melted at length even in the moist crotches under the hemlocks of the northern slopes; the robin and bluebird came, the hillsides were mottled with exquisite shades of green, and the scent of fruit blossom and balm of Gilead was in the air. June came as a maiden and grew into womanhood. But Jethro Bass did not return to Coniston.

CHAPTER XVII

WHEN THE PIE WAS OPENED

THE legends which surround the famous war which we are about to touch upon are as dim as those of Troy or Tuscany. Decorous chronicles and biographies and monographs and eulogies exist, bound in leather and stamped in gold, each lauding its own hero: chronicles written in really beautiful language, and high-minded and noble, out of which the heroes come unstained. Horatius holds the bridge, and not a dent in his armor; and swims the Tiber without getting wet or muddy. Castor and Pollux fight in the front rank at Lake Regillus, in the midst of all that gore and slaughter, and emerge all white and pure at the end of the day — but they are gods.

Out of the classic wars to which we have referred sprang the great Roman Republic and Empire, and legend runs into authentic and written history. Just so, *parva componere magnis*, out of the cloud-wrapped conflicts of the five railroads of which our own Gaul is composed, emerged one imperial railroad, authentically and legally written down on the statute books, for all men to see. We cannot go behind that statute except to collect the legends and write homilies about the heroes who held the bridges.

If we were not in mortal terror of the imperial power, and a little fearful, too, of tiring our readers, we would write out all the legends we have collected of this first fight for consolidation, and show the blood, too.

In the statute books of a certain state may be found a number of laws setting forth the various things that a railroad or railroads may do, and on the margin of these pages is invariably printed a date, that being the particular