negotiations for harmony would have to begin with her. Finally she said in a quiet voice:

"'Thanks, very much,' is an entirely polite expression, but it isn't very responsive."

"I thought it met your cordiality quite half way," was the rejoinder. "Of course, I am glad to be assured of Mr. and Mrs. Carling's regard, and that they would be glad to see me, but I think I might have been justified in hoping that you would go a little further, don't you think?"

He looked at her as he asked the question, but she did not turn her head. Presently she said in a low voice, and slowly, as if weighing her words:

"Will it be enough if I say that I shall be very sorry if you do not come?" He put his left hand upon her right, which was resting on the rail, and for two seconds she let it stay.

"Yes," he said, "thanks—very—much!"

"I must go now," she said, turning toward him, and for a moment she looked searchingly in his face. "Good night," she said, giving him her hand, and John looked after her as she walked down the deck, and he knew how it was with him.

CHAPTER VI.

JOHN saw Miss Blake the next morning in the saloon among the passengers in line for the customs official. It was an easy conjecture that Mr. Carling's nerves were not up to committing himself to a "declaration" of any sort, and that Miss Blake was undertaking the duty for the party. He did not see her again until he had had his luggage passed and turned it over to an expressman. As he was on his way to leave the wharf he came across the group, and stopped to greet them and ask if he could be of service, and was told that their houseman had everything in charge, and that they were just going to their carriage, which was waiting. "And," said Miss Blake, "if you are going up town, we can offer you a seat."

"Sha'n't I discommode you?" he asked. "If you are sure I shall not, I shall be glad to be taken as far as Madison Avenue and Thirty-third Street, for I suppose that will be your route."

"Quite sure," she replied, seconded by the Carlings, and so it happened that John went directly home instead of going first to his father's office. The weather was a chilly drizzle, and he was glad to be spared the discomfort of going about in it with hand-bag, overcoat, and umbrella, and felt a certain justification in conclud-

ing that, after two years, a few hours more or less under the circumstances would make but little difference. And then, too, the prospect of half or three-quarters of an hour in Miss Blake's company, the Carlings notwithstanding, was a temptation to be welcomed. But if he had hoped or expected, as perhaps would have been not unnatural, to discover in that young woman's air any hint or trace of the feeling she had exhibited, or, perhaps it should be said, to a degree permitted to show itself, disappointment was his portion. Her manner was as much in contrast with that of the last days of their voyage together as the handsome street dress and hat in which she was attired bore to the dress and headgear of her steamer costume, and it almost seemed to him as if the contrasts bore some relation to each other. After the question of the carriage windows—whether they should be up or down, either or both, and how much—had been settled, and, as usual in such dilemmas, by Miss Blake, the drive up town was comparatively a silent one. John's mind was occupied with sundry reflections and speculations, of many of which his companion was the subject, and to some extent in noting the changes in the streets and buildings which an absence of two years made noticeable to him.

Mary looked steadily out of window, lost in her own thoughts save for an occasional brief response to some casual comment or remark of John's. Mr. Carling had muffled himself past all talking, and his wife preserved the silence which was characteristic of her when unurged.

John was set down at Thirty-third Street, and, as he made his adieus, Mrs. Carling said, "Do come and see us as soon as you can, Mr. Lenox"; but Miss Blake simply said "Good-by" as she gave him her hand for an instant, and he went on to his father's house.

He let himself in with the latch-key which he had carried through all his absence, but was at once encountered by Jeffrey, who, with his wife, had for years constituted the domestic staff of the Lenox household.

"Well, Jeff," said John, as he shook hands heartily with the old servant, "how are you? and how is Ann? You don't look a day older, and the climate seems to agree with you, eh?"

"You're welcome home, Mr. John," replied Jeffrey, "and thank you, sir. Me and Ann is very well, sir. It's a pleasure to see you again and home. It is, indeed."

"Thank you, Jeff," said John. "It's rather nice to be back. Is my room ready?"

"Yes, sir," said Jeffrey, "I think it's all right, though we thought that maybe it 'd be later in the day when you got here, sir. We thought maybe you'd go to Mr. Lenox's office first."

"I did intend to," said John, mounting the stairs, followed by Jeffrey with his bag, "but I had a chance to drive up with some friends, and the day is so beastly that I took advantage of it. How is my father?" he asked after entering the chamber, which struck him as being so strangely familiar and so familiarly strange.

"Well, sir," said Jeffrey, "he's much about the same most ways, and then again he's different, too. Seeing him every day, perhaps I wouldn't notice so much; but if I was to say that he's kind of quieter, perhaps that'd be what I mean, sir."

"Well," said John, smiling, "my father was

about the quietest person I ever knew, and if he's grown more so—what do you mean?"

"Well, sir," replied the man, "I notice at table, sir, for one thing. We've been alone here off and on a good bit, sir, and he used always to have a pleasant word or two to say to me, and may be to ask me questions and that, sir; but for a long time lately he hardly seems to notice me. Of course, there ain't any need of his saying anything, because I know all he wants, seeing I've waited on him so long, but it's different in a way, sir."

"Does he go out in the evening to his club?" asked John.

"Very rarely, sir," said Jeffrey. "He mostly goes to his room after dinner, an' oftentimes I hear him walking up an' down, up an' down, and, sir," he added, "you know he often used to have some of his friends to dine with him, and that ain't happened in, I should guess, for a year."

"Have things gone wrong with him in any way?" said John, a sudden anxiety overcoming some reluctance to question a servant on such a subject.

"You mean about business, and such like?" replied Jeffrey. "No, sir, not so far as I know. You know, Mr. John, sir, that I pay all the house accounts, and there hasn't never been no—no shortness, as I might say, but we're living a bit simpler than we used to—in the matter of wine and such like—and, as I told you, we don't have comp'ny no more."

"Is that all?" asked John, with some relief.

"Well, sir," was the reply, "perhaps it's because Mr. Lenox is getting older and don't care so much about such things, but I have noticed

that he hasn't had anything new from the tailor in a long time, and really, sir, though perhaps I oughtn't to say it, his things is getting a bit shabby, sir, and he used to be always so partic'lar."

John got up and walked over to the window which looked out at the rear of the house. The words of the old servant disquieted him, notwithstanding that there was nothing so far that could not be accounted for without alarm. Jeffrey waited for a moment and then asked:

"Is there anything I can do for you, Mr. John? Will you be having luncheon here, sir?"

"No, thank you, Jeff," said John; "nothing more now, and I will lunch here. I'll come down and see Ann presently."

"Thank you, sir," said Jeffrey, and withdrew.

The view from the back windows of most city houses is not calculated to arouse enthusiasm at the best of times, and the day was singularly dispiriting: a sky of lead and a drizzling rain, which emphasized the squalor of the back yards in view. It was all very depressing. Jeffrey's talk, though inconclusive, had stirred in John's mind an uneasiness which was near to apprehension. He turned and walked about the familiar room, recognizing the well-known furniture, his mother's picture over the mantel, the bookshelves filled with his boyhood's accumulations, the well-remembered pattern of the carpet, and the wall-paper—nothing was changed. It was all as he had left it two years ago, and for the time it seemed as if he had merely dreamed the life and experiences of those years. Indeed, it was with difficulty that he recalled any of them for the moment. And then suddenly there came

into his mind the thought that he was at the beginning of a new epoch—that on this day his boyhood ended, for up to then he had been but a boy. The thought was very vivid. It had come, the time when he must take upon himself the responsibilities of his own life, and make it for himself; the time which he had looked forward to as to come some day, but not hitherto at any particular moment, and so not to be very seriously considered.

It has been said that life had always been made easy for him, and that he had accepted the situation without protest. To easy-going natures the thought of any radical change in the current of affairs is usually unwelcome, but he was too young to find it really repugnant; and then, too, as he walked about the room with his hands in his pockets, it was further revealed to him that he had recently found a motive and impulse such as he had never had before. He recalled the talk that he had had with the companion of his voyage. He thought of her as one who could be tender to misfortune and charitable to incapacity, but who would have nothing but scorn for shiftlessness and malingering; and he realized that he had never cared for anything as for the good opinion of that young woman. No, there should be for him no more sauntering in the vales and groves, no more of loitering or dallying. He would take his place in the working world, and perhaps—some day——

A thought came to him with the impact of a blow: What could he do? What work was there for him? How could he pull his weight in the boat? All his life he had depended upon some one else, with easy-going thoughtlessness. Hardly had it ever really occurred to him that he might have to make a career for himself. Of business he had thought as something which he should undertake some time, but it was always a business ready made to his hand, with plenty of capital not of his own acquiring—something for occupation, not of necessity. It came home to him that his father was his only resource, and that of his father's affairs he knew next to nothing.

In addition to his affection for him, he had always had an unquestioning confidence in his father. It was his earliest recollection, and he still retained it to almost a childish extent. There had always been plenty. His own allowance, from time to time increased, though never extravagant, had always been ample, and on the one occasion when he had grievously exceeded it the excess had been paid with no more protest than a gentle "I think you ought not to have done this." The two had lived together when John was at home without ostentation or any appearance of style, but with every essential of luxury. The house and its furnishings were old-fashioned, but everything was of the best, and when three or four of the elder man's friends would come to dine, as happened occasionally, the contents of the cellar made them look at each other over their glasses. Mr. Lenox was very reticent in all matters relating to himself, and in his talks with his son, which were mostly at the table, rarely spoke of business matters in general, and almost never of his own. He had read well, and was fond of talking of his reading when he felt in the vein of talking, which was not always; but John had invariably found him ready with comment and sympathy upon the topics in

which he himself had interest, and there was a strong if undemonstrative affection between the father and son.

It was not strange, perhaps, all things considered, that John had come even to nearly six-and-twenty with no more settled intentions; that his boyhood should have been so long. He was not at all of a reckless disposition, and, notwithstanding the desultory way in which he had spent time, he had strong mental and moral fiber, and was capable of feeling deeply and enduringly. He had been desultory, but never before had he had much reason or warning against it. But now, he reflected, a time had come. Work he must, if only for work's sake, and work he would; and there was a touch of self-reproach in the thought of his father's increasing years and of his lonely life. He might have been a help and a companion during those two years of his not very fruitful European sojourn, and he would lose no time in finding out what there was for him to do, and in setting about it.

CHAPTER VII.

THE day seemed very long. He ate his luncheon, having first paid a visit to Ann, who gave him an effusive welcome. Jeffrey waited, and during the meal they had some further talk, and among other things John said to him, "Does my father dress for dinner nowadays?"

"No, sir," was the reply, "I don't know when I've seen your father in his evenin' clothes, sir. Not for a long time, and then maybe two or three times the past year when he was going out to dinner, but not here, sir. Maybe it'll be different now you're back again, sir."

After luncheon John's luggage arrived, and he superintended the unpacking, but that employment was comparatively brief. The day dragged with him. Truly his home-coming was rather a dreary affair. How different had been yesterday, and the day before, and all those days before when he had so enjoyed the ship life, and most of all the daily hour or more of the companionship which had grown to be of such surpassing interest to him, and now seemed so utterly a thing of the past.

Of course, he should see her again. (He put aside a wonder if it would be within the proprieties on that evening or, at latest, the next.) But, in any case, "the episode," as he had said to her,