

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,

was done, and it had been very pleasant—oh, yes, very dear to him. He wondered if she was finding the day as interminable as it seemed to him, and if the interval before they saw each other again would seem as long as his impatience would make it for him. Finally, the restless dullness became intolerable. He sallied forth into the weather and went to his club, having been on non-resident footing during his absence, and, finding some men whom he knew, spent there the rest of the afternoon.

His father was at home and in his room when John got back.

"Well, father," he said, "the prodigal has returned."

"He is very welcome," was the reply, as the elder man took both his son's hands and looked at him affectionately. "You seem very well."

"Yes," said John; "and how are you, sir?"

"About as usual, I think," said Mr. Lenox.

They looked at each other for a moment in silence. John thought that his father seemed thinner than formerly, and he had instantly observed that a white beard covered the always hitherto smooth-shaven chin, but he made no comment.

"The old place appears very familiar," he remarked. "Nothing is changed or even moved, as I can see, and Ann and Jeff are just the same old sixpences as ever."

"Yes," said his father, "two years make less difference with old people and their old habits than with young ones. You will have changed more than we have, I fancy."

"Do we dress for dinner?" asked John, after some little more unimportant talk.

"Yes," said his father, "in honor of the occasion, if you like. I haven't done it lately," he added, a little wearily.

"I haven't had such a glass of wine since I left home," John remarked as they sat together after dinner.

"No," said his father, looking thoughtfully at his glass, "it's the old 'Mouton,' and pretty nearly the last of it; it's very old and wants drinking," he observed as he held his glass up to get the color. "It has gone off a bit even in two years."

"All right," said John cheerfully, "we'll drink it to save it, if needs be." The elder man smiled and filled both glasses.

There had been more or less talk during the meal, but nothing of special moment. John sat back in his chair, absently twirling the stem of his glass between thumb and fingers. Presently he said, looking straight before him at the table: "I have been thinking a good deal of late—more than ever before, positively, in fact—that whatever my prospects may be" (he did not see the momentary contraction of his father's brow) "I ought to begin some sort of a career in earnest. I'm afraid," he continued, "that I have been rather unmindful, and that I might have been of some use to you as well as myself if I had stayed at home instead of spending the last two years in Europe."

"I trust," said his father, "that they have not been entirely without profit."

"No," said John, "perhaps not wholly, but their cash value would not be large, I'm afraid."

"All value is not to be measured in dollars and cents," remarked Mr. Lenox. "If I could

have acquired as much German and French as I presume you have, to say nothing of other things, I should look back upon the time as well spent at almost any cost. At your age a year or two more or less—you don't realize it now, but you will if you come to my age—doesn't count for so very much, and you are not too old," he smiled, "to begin at a beginning."

"I want to begin," said John.

"Yes," said his father, "I want to have you, and I have had the matter a good deal in my mind. Have you any idea as to what you wish to do?"

"I thought," said John, "that the most obvious thing would be to go into your office." Mr. Lenox reached over for the cigar-lamp. His cigar had gone out, and his hand shook as he applied the flame to it. He did not reply for a moment.

"I understand," he said at last. "It would seem the obvious thing to do, as you say, but," he clicked his teeth together doubtfully, "I don't see how it can be managed at present, and I don't think it is what I should desire for you in any case. The fact is," he went on, "my business has always been a sort of specialty, and, though it is still worth doing perhaps, it is not what it used to be. Conditions and methods have changed—and," he added, "I am too old to change with them."

"I am not," said John.

"In fact," resumed his father, ignoring John's assertion, "as things are going now, I couldn't make a place for you in my office unless I displaced Melig and made you my manager, and for many reasons I couldn't do that. I am too de-

pendent on Melig. Of course, if you came with me it would be as a partner, but——"

"No," said John, "I should be a poor substitute for old Melig for a good while, I fancy."

"My idea would be," said Mr. Lenox, "that you should undertake a profession—say the law. It is a fact that the great majority of men fail in business, and then most of them, for lack of training or special aptitude, fall into the ranks of clerks and subordinates. On the other hand, a man who has a profession—law, medicine, what not—even if he does not attain high rank, has something on which he can generally get along, at least after a fashion, and he has the standing. That is my view of the matter, and though I confess I often wonder at it in individual cases, it is my advice to you."

"It would take three or four years to put me where I could earn anything to speak of," said John, "even providing that I could get any business at the end of the time."

"Yes," said his father, "but the time of itself isn't of so much consequence. You would be living at home, and would have your allowance—perhaps," he suggested, "somewhat diminished, seeing that you would be here——"

"I can get on with half of it," said John confidently.

"We will settle that matter afterward," said Mr. Lenox.

They sat in silence for some minutes, John staring thoughtfully at the table, unconscious of the occasional scrutiny of his father's glance. At last he said, "Well, sir, I will do anything that you advise."

"Have you anything to urge against it?" asked Mr. Lenox.

"Not exactly on my own account," replied John, "though I admit that the three years or more seems a long time to me, but I have been drawing on you exclusively all my life, except for the little money I earned in Rush & Company's office, and——"

"You have done so, my dear boy," said his father gently, "with my acquiescence. I may have been wrong, but that is a fact. If in my judgment the arrangement may be continued for a while longer, and in the mean time you are making progress toward a definite end, I think you need have no misgivings. It gratifies me to have you feel as you do, though it is no more than I should have expected of you, for you have never caused me any serious anxiety or disappointment, my son."

Often in the after time did John thank God for that assurance.

"Thank you, sir," he said, putting down his hand, palm upward, on the table, and his eyes filled as the elder man laid his hand in his, and they gave each other a lingering pressure.

Mr. Lenox divided the last of the wine in the bottle between the two glasses, and they drank it in silence, as if in pledge.

"I will go in to see Carey & Carey in the morning, and if they are agreeable you can see them afterward," said Mr. Lenox. "They are not one of the great firms, but they have a large and good practice, and they are friends of mine. Shall I do so?" he asked, looking at his son.

"If you will be so kind," John replied, returning his look. And so the matter was concluded.

CHAPTER VIII.

THIS history will not concern itself to any extent with our friend's career as a law clerk, though, as he promised himself, he took it seriously and laboriously while it lasted, notwithstanding that after two years of being his own master, and the rather desultory and altogether congenial life he had led, he found it at first even more irksome than he had fancied. The novice penetrates but slowly the mysteries of the law, and, unless he be of unusual aptitude and imagination, the interesting and remunerative part seems for a long time very far off. But John stuck manfully to the reading, and was diligent in all that was put upon him to do; and after a while the days spent in the office and in the work appointed to him began to pass more quickly.

He restrained his impulse to call at Sixty-ninth Street until what seemed to him a fitting interval had elapsed; one which was longer than it would otherwise have been, from an instinct of shyness not habitual to him, and a distrustful apprehension that perhaps his advent was not of so much moment to the people there as to him. But their greeting was so cordial on every hand that Mrs. Carling's remark that they had been almost afraid he had forgotten them embarrassed