Her tone and what she said recalled to him their last night on board the ship, but there was no relenting on this occasion. He realized that for a moment he had been on the verge of telling the girl that he loved her, and he realized, too, that she had divined his impulse and prevented the disclosure; but he registered a vow that he would know before he saw her again whether he might consistently tell her his love, and win or lose upon the touch.

Miss Blake made several inaccurate efforts to introduce her needle at the exact point desired, and when that endeavor was accomplished broke the silence by saying, "Speaking of 'October,' have you read the novel? I think it is charming."

"Yes," said John, with his vow in his mind, but not sorry for the diversion, "and I enjoyed it very much. I thought it was immensely clever, but I confess that I didn't quite sympathize with the love affairs of a hero who was past forty, and I must also confess that I thought the girl was, well—to put it in plain English—a fool."

Mary laughed, with a little quaver in her voice. "Do you know," she said, "that sometimes it seems to me that I am older than you are?"

"I know you're awfully wise," said John with a laugh, and from that their talk drifted off into the safer channels of their usual intercourse until he rose to say good night.

"Of course, we shall see you again before we go," she said as she gave him her hand.

"Oh," he declared, "I intend regularly to haunt the place."

CHAPTER XI.

When John came down the next morning his father, who was, as a rule, the most punctual of men, had not appeared. He opened the paper and sat down to wait. Ten minutes passed, fifteen, twenty. He rang the bell. "Have you heard my father this morning?" he said to Jeffrey, remembering for the first time that he himself had not.

"No, sir," said the man. "He most generally coughs a little in the morning, but I don't think I heard him this morning, sir."

"Go up and see why he doesn't come down," said John, and a moment later he followed the servant upstairs, to find him standing at the chamber door with a frightened face.

"He must be very sound asleep, sir," said Jeffrey. "He hasn't answered to my knockin' or callin', sir." John tried the door. He found the chain bolt on, and it opened but a few inches. "Father!" he called, and then again, louder. He turned almost unconsciously to Jeffrey, and found his own apprehensions reflected in the man's face. "We must break in the door," he said. "Now, together!" and the bolt gave way.

His father lay as if asleep. "Go for the doctor at once! Bring him back with you. Run!" he cried to the servant. Custom and instinct

said, "Send for the doctor," but he knew in his heart that no ministrations would ever reach the still figure on the bed, upon which, for the moment, he could not look. It was but a few minutes (how long such minutes are!) before the doctor came—Doctor Willis, who had brought John into the world, and had been a lifelong friend of both father and son. He went swiftly to the bed without speaking, and made a brief examination, while John watched him with fascinated eyes; and as the doctor finished, the son dropped on his knees by the bed, and buried his face in it. The doctor crossed the room to Jeffrey, who was standing in the door with an awe-stricken face, and in a low voice gave him some directions. Then, as the man departed, he first glanced at the kneeling figure and then looked searchingly about the room. Presently he went over to the grate in which were the ashes of an extinct fire, and, taking the poker, pressed down among them and covered over a three or four ounce vial. He had found what he was looking for.

There is no need to speak of the happenings of the next few days, nor is it necessary to touch at any length upon the history of some of the weeks and months which ensued upon this crisis in John Lenox's life, a time when it seemed to him that everything he had ever cared for had been taken. And yet, with that unreason which may perhaps be more easily understood than accounted for, the one thing upon which his mind most often dwelt was that he had had no answer to his note to Mary Blake. We know what happened to her missive. It turned up long afterward in the pocket of Master Jacky Carling's overcoat; so long afterward that John, so far as Mary was concerned, had disappeared altogether. The discovery of Jacky's dereliction explained to her, in part at least, why she had never seen him or heard from him after that last evening at Sixty-ninth Street. The Carlings went away some ten days later, and she did, in fact, send another note to his house address, asking him to see them before their departure; but John had considered himself fortunate in getting the house off his hands to a tenant who would assume the lease if given possession at once, and had gone into the modest apartment which he occupied during the rest of his life in the city, and so the second communication failed to reach him. Perhaps it was as well. Some weeks later he walked up to the Carlings' house one Sunday afternoon, and saw that it was closed, as he had expected. By an impulse which was not part of his original intention—which was, indeed, pretty nearly aimless—he was moved to ring the door-bell; but the maid, a stranger to him, who opened the door could tell him nothing of the family's whereabouts, and Mr. Betts (the house man in charge) was "hout." So John retraced his steps with a feeling of disappointment wholly disproportionate to his hopes or expectations so far as he had defined them to himself, and never went back again.

He has never had much to say of the months that followed.

It came to be the last of October. An errand from the office had sent him to General Wolsey, of the Mutual Trust Company, of whom men-

tion has been made by David Harum. The general was an old friend of the elder Lenox, and knew John well and kindly. When the latter had discharged his errand and was about to go, the general said: "Wait a minute. Are you in a hurry? If not, I want to have a little talk with you."

"Not specially," said John.

"Sit down," said the general, pointing to a chair. "What are your plans? I see you are still in the Careys' office, but from what you told me last summer I conclude that you are there because you have not found anything more satisfactory."

"That is the case, sir," John replied. "I can't be idle, but I don't see how I can keep on as I am going now, and I have been trying for months to find something by which I can earn a living. I am afraid," he added, "that it will be a longer time than I can afford to wait before I shall be able to do that out of the law."

"If you don't mind my asking," said the general, "what are your resources? I don't think you told me more than to give me to understand that your father's affairs were at a pretty low ebb. Of course, I do not wish to pry into your affairs——"

"Not at all," John interposed; "I am glad to tell you, and thank you for your interest. I have about two thousand dollars, and there is some silver and odds and ends of things stored. I don't know what their value might be—not very much, I fancy—and there were a lot of mining stocks and that sort of thing which have no value so far as I can find out—no available value, at any rate. There is also a tract of half-

wild land somewhere in Pennsylvania. There is coal on it, I believe, and some timber; but Melig, my father's manager, told me that all the large timber had been cut. So far as available value is concerned, the property is about as much of an asset as the mining stock, with the disadvantage that I have to pay taxes on it."

"H'm," said the general, tapping the desk with his eyeglasses. "H'm—well, I should think if you lived very economically you would have about enough to carry you through till you can be admitted, provided you feel that the law is your vocation," he added, looking up.

"It was my father's idea," said John, "and if I were so situated that I could go on with it, I would. But I am so doubtful with regard to my aptitude that I don't feel as if I ought to use up what little capital I have, and some years of time, on a doubtful experiment, and so I have been looking for something else to do."

"Well," said the general, "if you were very much interested—that is, if you were anxious to proceed with your studies—I should advise you to go on, and at a pinch I should be willing to help you out; but, feeling as you do, I hardly know what to advise. I was thinking of you," he went on, "before you came in, and was intending to send for you to come in to see me." He took a letter from his desk.

"I got this yesterday," he said. "It is from an old acquaintance of mine by the name of Harum, who lives in Homeville, Freeland County. He is a sort of a banker there, and has written me to recommend some one to take the place of his manager or cashier whom he is sending away. It's rather a queer move, I think, but

then," said the general with a smile, "Harum is a queer customer in some ways of his own. There is his letter. Read it for yourself."

The letter stated that Mr. Harum had had some trouble with his cashier and wished to replace him, and that he would prefer some one from out of the village who wouldn't know every man, woman, and child in the whole region, and "blab everything right and left." "I should want," wrote Mr. Harum, "to have the young man know something about bookkeeping and so on, but I should not insist upon his having been through a trainer's hands. In fact, I would rather break him in myself, and if he's willing and sound and no vice, I can get him into shape. I will pay a thousand to start on, and if he draws and travels all right, may be better in the long run," etc. John handed back the letter with a slight smile, which was reflected in the face of the general. "What do you think of it?" asked the latter.

"I should think it might be very characteristic," remarked John.

"Yes," said the general, "it is, to an extent. You see he writes pretty fair English, and he can, on occasion, talk as he writes, but usually, either from habit or choice, he uses the most unmitigated dialect. But what I meant to ask you was, what do you think of the proposal?"

"You mean as an opportunity for *me?*" asked John.

"Yes," said General Wolsey, "I thought of you at once."

"Thank you very much," said John. "What would be your idea?"

"Well," was the reply, "I am inclined to

think I should write to him if I were you, and I will write to him about you if you so decide. You have had some office experience, you told me—enough, I should say, for a foundation, and I don't believe that Harum's books and accounts are very complicated."

John did not speak, and the general went on: "Of course, it will be a great change from almost everything you have been used to, and I dare say that you may find the life, at first at least, pretty dull and irksome. The stipend is not very large, but it is large for the country, where your expenses will be light. In fact, I'm rather surprised at his offering so much. At any rate, it is a living for the present, and may lead to something better. The place is a growing one, and, more than that, Harum is well off, and keeps more irons in the fire than one, and if you get on with him you may do well."

"I don't think I should mind the change so much," said John, rather sadly. "My present life is so different in almost every way from what it used to be, and I think I feel it in New York more even than I might in a country village; but the venture seems a little like burning my bridges."

"Well," replied the general, "if the experiment should turn out a failure for any reason, you won't be very much more at a loss than at present, it seems to me, and, of course, I will do anything I can should you wish me to be still on the lookout for you here."

"You are exceedingly kind, sir," said John earnestly, and then was silent for a moment or two. "I will make the venture," he said at length, "and thank you very much."

"You are under no special obligations to the Careys, are you?" asked the general.

"No, I think not," said John with a laugh. "I fancy that their business will go on without me, after a fashion," and he took his leave.

CHAPTER XII.

And so it came about that certain letters were written as mentioned in a previous chapter, and in the evening of a dripping day early in November John Lenox found himself, after a nine hours' journey, the only traveler who alighted upon the platform of the Homeville station, which was near the end of a small lake and about a mile from the village. As he stood with his bag and umbrella, at a loss what to do, he was accosted by a short and stubby individual with very black eyes and hair and a round face, which would have been smooth except that it had not been shaved for a day or two. "Goin' t' the village?" he said.

"Yes," said John, "that is my intention, but I don't see any way of getting there."

"Carry ye over fer ten cents," said the man. "Carryall's right back the deepo. Got 'ny baggidge?"

"Two trunks," said John.

"That'll make it thirty cents," said the native. "Where's your checks? All right; you c'n jest step 'round an' git in. Mine's the only rig that drew over to-night."

It was a long clumsy affair, with windows at each end and a door in the rear, but open at the sides except for enamel cloth curtains, which