

the next morning, and on the following day he took Mr. Balfour and Thede down the river, and delivered them to the man whom he found waiting for them. The programme was carried out in all its details, and two days afterward the two boys were sitting side by side in the railway-car that was hurrying them toward the great city.

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## CHAPTER XI.

WHICH RECORDS MR. BELCHER'S CONNECTION WITH A GREAT SPECULATION AND BRINGS TO A CLOSE HIS RESIDENCE IN SEVENOAKS.

WHITHER was he going? He had a little fortune in his pockets—more money than prudent men are in the habit of carrying with them—and a scheme in his mind. After the purchase of Palgrave's Folly, and the inauguration of a scale of family expenditure far surpassing all his previous experience, Mr. Belcher began to feel poor, and to realize the necessity of extending his enterprise. To do him justice, he felt that he had surpassed the proprieties of domestic life in taking so important a step as that of changing his residence without consulting Mrs. Belcher. He did not wish to meet her at once; so it was easy for him, when he left New York, to take a wide diversion on his way home.

For several months the reports of the great oil discoveries of Pennsylvania had been floating through the press. Stories of enormous fortunes acquired in a single week, and even in a single day, were rife; and they had excited his greed with a strange power. He had witnessed, too, the effect of these stories upon the minds of the humble people of Sevenoaks. They were

uneasy in their poverty, and were in the habit of reading with avidity all the accounts that emanated from the new centre of speculation. The monsters of the sea had long been chased into the ice, and the whalers had returned with scantier fares year after year; but here was light for the world. The solid ground itself was echoing with the cry: "Here she blows!" and "There she blows!" and the long harpoons went down to its vitals, and were fairly lifted out by the pressure of the treasure that impatiently waited for deliverance.

Mr. Belcher had long desired to have a hand in this new business. To see a great speculation pass by without yielding him any return was very painful to him. During his brief stay in New York he had been approached by speculators from the new field of promise; and had been able by his quick wit and ready business instinct to ascertain just the way in which money was made and was to be made. He dismissed them all, for he had the means in his hands of starting nearer the sources of profit than themselves, and to be not only one of the "bottom ring," but to be the bottom man. No moderate profit and no legitimate income would satisfy him. He would gather the investments of the multitude into his own capacious pockets, or he would have nothing to do with the matter. He would sweep the board, fairly or foully, or he would not play.

As he travelled along westward, he found that the company was made up of men whose tickets took them to his own destination. Most of them were quiet, with ears open to the few talkers who had already been there, and were returning. Mr. Belcher listened to them, laughed at them, scoffed at their schemes, and laid up carefully all that they said. Before he arrived at Corry he had acquired a tolerable knowledge of the oil-fields, and determined upon his scheme of operations.

As he drew nearer the great centre of excitement, he



came more into contact with the masses who had gathered there, crazed with the spirit of speculation. Men were around him whose clothes were shining with bitumen. The air was loaded with the smell of petroleum. Derricks were thrown up on every side; drills were at work piercing the earth; villages were starting among stumps still fresh at the top, as if their trees were cut but yesterday; rough men in high boots were ranging the country; the depots were glutted with portable steam-engines and all sorts of mining machinery, and there was but one subject of conversation. Some new well had begun to flow with hundreds of barrels of petroleum *per diem*. Some new man had made a fortune. Farmers, who had barely been able to get a living from their sterile acres, had become millionnaires. The whole region was alive with fortune-hunters, from every quarter of the country. Millions of dollars were in the pockets of men who were ready to purchase. Seedy, crazy, visionary fellows were working as middle-men, to talk up schemes, and win their bread, with as much more as they could lay their hands on. The very air was charged with the contagion of speculation, and men seemed ready to believe anything and do anything. It appeared, indeed, as if a man had only to buy, to double his money in a day; and half the insane multitude believed it.

Mr. Belcher kept himself quiet, and defended himself from the influences around him by adopting and holding his scoffing mood. He believed nothing. He was there simply to see what asses men could make of themselves; but he kept his ears open. The wretched hotel at which he at last found accommodations was thronged with fortune-seekers, among whom he moved self-possessed and quite at home. On the second day his mood began to tell on those around him. There were men there who knew about him and his great wealth—men who

had been impressed with his sagacity. He studied them carefully, gave no one his confidence, and quietly laid his plans. On the evening of the third day he returned to the hotel, and announced that he had had the good fortune to purchase a piece of property that he proposed to operate and improve on his own account.

Then he was approached with propositions for forming a company. He had paid fifty thousand dollars for a farm—paid the money—and before morning he had sold half of it for what he gave for the whole, and formed a company with the nominal capital of half a million of dollars, a moiety of the stock being his own at no cost to him whatever. The arrangements were all made for the issue of stock and the commencement of operations, and when, three days afterward, he started from Titusville on his way home, he had in his satchel blank certificates of stock, all signed by the officers of the Continental Petroleum Company, to be limited in its issue to the sum of two hundred and fifty thousand dollars. He never expected to see the land again. He did not expect that the enterprise would be of the slightest value to those who should invest in it. He expected to do just what others were doing—to sell his stock and pocket the proceeds, while investors pocketed their losses. It was all an acute business operation with him; and he intended to take advantage of the excitement of the time to “clean out” Sevenoaks and all the region round about his country home, while his confrères operated in their own localities. He chuckled over his plans as if he contemplated some great, good deed that would be of incalculable benefit to his neighbors. He suffered no qualm of conscience, no revolt of personal honor, no spasm of sympathy or pity.

As soon as he set out upon his journey homeward he began to think of his New York purchase. He had taken a bold step, and he wished that he had said some-



thing to Mrs. Belcher about his plans, but he had been so much in the habit of managing everything in his business without consulting her, that it did not occur to him before he started from home that any matter of his was not exclusively his own. He would just as soon have thought of taking Phipps into his confidence, or of deferring to his wishes in any project, as of extending those courtesies to his wife. There was another consideration which weighed somewhat heavily upon his mind. He was not entirely sure that he would not be ashamed of Mrs. Belcher in the grand home which he had provided for himself. He respected her, and had loved her in his poor, sensual fashion, some changeable years in the past; he had regarded her as a good mother, and, at least, as an inoffensive wife; but she was not Mrs. Dillingham. She would not be at home in the society of which he had caught a glimpse, or among the splendors to which he would be obliged to introduce her. Even Talbot, the man who was getting rich upon the products of his enterprise, had a more impressive wife than he. And thus, with much reflection, this strange, easy-natured brute without a conscience, wrought up his soul into self-pity. In some way he had been defrauded. It never could have been intended that a man capable of winning so many of his heart's desires as he had proved himself to be, should be tied to a woman incapable of illuminating and honoring his position. If he only had a wife of whose person he could be proud! If he only had a wife whose queenly presence and manners would give significance to the splendors of the Palgrave mansion!

There was no way left for him, however, but to make the best of his circumstances, and put a brave face upon the matter. Accordingly, the next morning after his arrival, he told, with such display of enthusiasm as he could assume, the story of his purchase. The children

were all attention, and made no hesitation to express their delight with the change that lay before them. Mrs. Belcher grew pale, choked over her breakfast, and was obliged to leave the table. At the close of the meal, Mr. Belcher followed her to her room, and found her with dry eyes and an angry face.

"Robert, you have determined to kill me," she said, almost fiercely.

"Oh, no, Sarah; not quite so bad as that."

"How could you take a step which you knew would give me a life-long pain? Have I not suffered enough? Is it not enough that I have ceased practically to have a husband?—that I have given up all society, and been driven in upon my children? Am I to have no will, no consideration, no part or lot in my own life?"

"Put it through, Sarah; you have the floor, and I'm ready to take it all now."

"And it is all for show," she went on, "and is disgusting. There is not a soul in the city that your wealth can bring to me that will give me society. I shall be a thousand times lonelier there than I have been here; and you compel me to go where I must receive people whom I shall despise, and who, for that reason, will dislike me. You propose to force me into a life that is worse than emptiness. I am more nearly content here than I can ever be anywhere else, and I shall never leave here without a cruel sense of sacrifice."

"Good for you, Sarah!" said Mr. Belcher. "You're more of a trump than I thought you were; and if it will do you any good to know that I think I've been a little rough with you, I don't mind telling you so. But the thing is done, and it can't be undone. You can have your own sort of life there as you do here, and I can have mine. I suppose I could go there and run the house alone; but it isn't exactly the thing for Mrs. Bel-



cher's husband to do. People might talk, you know, and they wouldn't blame me."

"No; they would blame me, and I must go, whether I wish to go or not."

Mrs. Belcher had talked until she could weep, and brushing her eyes she walked to the window. Mr. Belcher sat still, casting furtive glances at her, and drumming with his fingers on his knees. When she could sufficiently command herself, she returned, and said:

"Robert, I have tried to be a good wife to you. I helped you in your first struggles, and then you were a comfort to me. But your wealth has changed you, and you know that for ten years I have had no husband. I have humored your caprices; I have been careful not to cross your will. I have taken your generous provision, and made myself and my children what you desired; but I am no more to you than a part of your establishment. I do not feel that my position is an honorable one. I wish to God that I had one hope that it would ever become so."

"Well, by-by, Sarah. You'll feel better about it."

Then Mr. Belcher stooped and kissed her forehead, and left her.

That little attention—that one shadow of recognition of the old relations, that faint show of feeling—went straight to her starving heart. And then, assuming blame for what seemed, at the moment of reaction, her unreasonable selfishness, she determined to say no more, and to take uncomplainingly whatever life her husband might provide for her.

As for Mr. Belcher, he went off to his library and his cigar with a wound in his heart. The interview with his wife, while it had excited in him a certain amount of pity for her, had deepened his pity for himself. She had ceased to be what she had once been to him; yet his experience in the city had proved that there were

still women in the world who could excite in him the old passion, and move him to the old gallantries. It was clearly a case of incipient "incompatibility." It was "the mistake of a lifetime" just discovered, though she had borne his children and held his respect for fifteen years. He still felt the warmth of Mrs. Dillingham's hands within his own, the impression of her confiding clasp upon his arm, and the magnetic influence of her splendid presence. Reason as he would, he felt defrauded of his rights; and he wondered whether any combination of circumstances would ever permit him to achieve them. As this amounted to wondering whether Mrs. Belcher would die, he strove to banish the question from his mind; but it returned and returned again so pertinaciously that he was glad to order his horses and ride to his factory.

Before night it became noised through the village that the great proprietor had been to the oil regions. The fact was talked over among the people in the shops, in the street, in social groups that gathered at evening; and there was great curiosity to know what he had learned, and what opinions he had formed. Mr. Belcher knew how to play his cards, and having set the people talking, he filled out and sent to each of the wives of the five pastors of the village, as a gift, a certificate of five shares of the stock of the Continental Petroleum Company. Of course, they were greatly delighted, and, of course, twenty-four hours had not passed by when every man, woman, and child in Sevenoaks was acquainted with the transaction. People began to revise their judgments of the man whom they had so severely condemned. After all, it was the way in which he had done things in former days, and though they had come to a vivid apprehension of the fact that he had done them for a purpose, which invariably terminated in himself, they could not see what there was to be gained by so munifi-



cent a gift. Was he not endeavoring, by self-sacrifice, to win back a portion of the consideration he had formerly enjoyed? Was it not a confession of wrong-doing, or wrong judgment? There were men who shook their heads, and "didn't know about it;" but the preponderance of feeling was on the side of the proprietor, who sat in his library and imagined just what was in progress around him—nay calculated upon it, as a chemist calculates the results of certain combinations in his laboratory. He knew the people a great deal better than they knew him, or even themselves.

Miss Butterworth called at the house of the Rev. Solomon Snow, who, immediately upon her entrance, took his seat in his arm-chair, and adjusted his bridge. The little woman was so combative and incisive that this always seemed a necessary precaution on the part of that gentleman.

"I want to see it!" said Miss Butterworth, without the slightest indication of the object of her curiosity.

Mrs. Snow rose without hesitation, and, going to a trunk in her bedroom, brought out her precious certificate of stock, and placed it in the hands of the tailoress.

It certainly was a certificate of stock, to the amount of five shares, in the Continental Petroleum Company, and Mr. Belcher's name was not among the signatures of the officers.

"Well, that beats me!" exclaimed Miss Butterworth. "What do you suppose the old snake wants now?"

"That's just what I say—just what I say," responded Mrs. Snow. "Goodness knows, if its worth anything, we need it; but what *does* he want?"

"You'll find out some time. Take my word for it, he has a large axe to grind."

"I think," said Mr. Snow judicially, "that it is quite possible that we have been unjust to Mr. Belcher. He is certainly a man of generous instincts, but with great

eccentricities. Before condemning him *in toto* (here Mr. Snow opened his bridge to let out the charity that was rising within him, and closed it at once for fear Miss Butterworth would get in a protest), let us be sure that there is a possible selfish motive for this most unexpected munificence. When we ascertain the true state of the case, then we can take things as they air. Until we have arrived at the necessary knowledge, it becomes us to withhold all severe judgments. A generous deed has its reflex influence; and it may be that some good may come to Mr. Belcher from this, and help to mould his character to nobler issues. I sincerely hope it may, and that we shall realize dividends that will add permanently to our somewhat restricted sources of income."

Miss Butterworth sat during the speech, and trotted her knee. She had no faith in the paper, and she frankly said so.

"Don't be fooled," she said to Mrs. Snow. "By and by you will find out that it is all a trick. Don't expect anything. I tell you I know Robert Belcher, and I know he's a knave, if there ever was one. I can feel him—I can feel him now—chuckling over this business, for business it is."

"What would you do if you were in my place?" inquired Mrs. Snow. "Would you send it back to him?"

"Yes, or I'd take it with a pair of tongs and throw it out of the window. I tell you there's a nasty trick done up in that paper; and if you're going to keep it, don't say anything about it."

The family laughed, and even Mr. Snow unbent himself so far as to smile and wipe his spectacles. Then the little tailoress went away, wondering when the mischief would reveal itself, but sure that it would appear in good time. In good time—that is, in Mr. Belcher's good time—it did appear.

To comprehend the excitement that followed, it must



be remembered that the people of Sevenoaks had the most implicit confidence in Mr. Belcher's business sagacity. He had been upon the ground, and knew personally all about the great discoveries. Having investigated for himself, he had invested his funds in this company. If the people could only embark in his boat, they felt that they should be safe. He would defend their interests while defending his own. So the field was all ready for his reaping. Not Sevenoaks alone, but the whole country was open to any scheme which connected them with the profits of these great discoveries, and when the excitement at Sevenoaks passed away at last, and men regained their senses, in the loss of their money, they had the company of a multitude of ruined sympathizers throughout the length and breadth of the land. Not only the simple and the impressible yielded to the wave of speculation that swept the country, but the shrewdest business men formed its crest, and were thrown high and dry beyond all others, in the common wreck, when it reached the shore.

On the evening of the fourth day after his return, Mr. Belcher was waited upon at his house by a self-constituted committee of citizens, who merely called to inquire into the wonders of the region he had explored. Mr. Belcher was quite at his ease, and entered at once upon a narrative of his visit. He had supposed that the excitement was without any good foundation, but the oil was really there; and he did not see why the business was not as legitimate and sound as any in the world. The whole world needed the oil, and this was the one locality which produced it. There was undoubtedly more or less of wild speculation connected with it, and, considering the value of the discoveries, it was not to be wondered at. On the whole, it was the biggest thing that had turned up during his lifetime.

Constantly leading them away from the topic of invest-

ment, he regaled their ears with the stories of the enormous fortunes that had been made, until there was not a man before him who was not ready to invest half the fortune he possessed in the speculation. Finally, one of the more frank and impatient of the group informed Mr. Belcher that they had come prepared to invest, if they found his report favorable.

"Gentlemen," said Mr. Belcher, "I really cannot take the responsibility of advising you. I can act for myself, but when it comes to advising my neighbors, it is another matter entirely. You really must excuse me from this. I have gone into the business rather heavily, but I have done it without advice, and you must do the same. It isn't right for any man to lead another into experiments of this sort, and it is hardly the fair thing to ask him to do it. I've looked for myself, but the fact that I am satisfied is no good reason for your being so."

"Very well, tell us how to do it," said the spokesman. "We cannot leave our business to do what you have done, and we shall be obliged to run some risk, if we go into it at all."

"Now, look here," said the wily proprietor, "you are putting me in a hard place. Suppose the matter turns out badly: are you going to come to me, and charge me with leading you into it?"

"Not at all," was responded almost in unison.

"If you want to go into the Continental, I presume there is still some stock to be had. If you wish me to act as your agent, I will serve you with a great deal of pleasure, but, mark you, I take no responsibility. I will receive your money, and you shall have your certificates as soon as the mail will bring them; and, if I can get no stock of the Company, you shall have some of my own."

They protested that they did not wish to put him to inconvenience, but quietly placed their money in his



hands. Every sum was carefully counted and recorded, and Mr. Belcher assured them that they should have their certificates within five days.

As they retired, he confidentially told them that they had better keep the matter from any but their particular friends. If there was any man among those friends who would like "a chance in," he might come to him, and he would do what he could for him.

Each of these men went off down the hill, full of dreams of sudden wealth, and, as each of them had three or four particular friends to whom Mr. Belcher's closing message was given, that gentleman was thronged with visitors the next day, each one of whom he saw alone. All of these, too, had particular friends, and within ten days Mr. Belcher had pocketed in his library the munificent sum of one hundred and fifty thousand dollars. After a reasonable period, each investor received a certificate of his stock through the mail.

It was astonishing to learn that there was so much money in the village. It came in sums of one hundred up to five hundred dollars, from the most unexpected sources—little hoards that covered the savings of many years. It came from widows and orphans; it came from clergymen; it came from small tradesmen and farmers; it came from the best business men in the place and region.

The proprietor was in daily communication with his confederates and tools, and the investors were one day electrified by the information that the Continental had declared a monthly dividend of two per cent. This was what was needed to unload Mr. Belcher of nearly all the stock he held, and, within one month of his arrival from the oil-fields, he had realized a sum sufficient to pay for his new purchase in the city, and the costly furniture with which he proposed to illuminate it.

Sevenoaks was happy. The sun of prosperity had

dawned upon the people, and the favored few who supposed that they were the only ones to whom the good fortune had come, were surprised to find themselves a great multitude. The dividend was the talk of the town. Those who had invested a portion of their small means invested more, and those whose good angel had spared them from the sacrifice yielded to the glittering temptation, and joined their lot with their rejoicing neighbors. Mr. Belcher walked or drove among them, and rubbed his hands over their good fortune. He knew very well that if he were going to reside longer among the people, his position would be a hard one; but he calculated that when the explosion should come, he should be beyond its reach.

It was a good time for him to declare the fact that he was about to leave them; and this he did. An earthquake would not have filled them with greater surprise and consternation. The industries of the town were in his hands. The principal property of the village was his. He was identified with the new enterprise upon which they had built such high hope, and they had come to believe that he was a kindlier man than they had formerly supposed him to be.

Already, however, there were suspicions in many minds that there were bubbles on their oil, ready to burst, and reveal the shallowness of the material beneath them; but these very suspicions urged them to treat Mr. Belcher well, and to keep him interested for them. They protested against his leaving them. They assured him of their friendship. They told him that he had grown up among them, and that they could not but feel that he belonged to them. They were proud of the position and prosperity he had won for himself. They fawned upon him, and when, at last, he told them that it was too late—that he had purchased and furnished a home for himself in the city—they called a public meeting, and, after



a dozen regretful and complimentary speeches, from clergy and laity, resolved :

"1st. That we have learned with profound regret that our distinguished fellow-citizen, ROBERT BELCHER, Esq., is about to remove his residence from among us, and to become a citizen of the commercial emporium of our country.

"2d. That we recognize in him a gentleman of great business enterprise, of generous instincts, of remarkable public spirit, and a personal illustration of the beneficent influence of freedom and of free democratic institutions.

"3d. That the citizens of Sevenoaks will ever hold in kindly remembrance a gentleman who has been identified with the growth and importance of their beloved village, and that they shall follow him to his new home with heartiest good wishes and prayers for his welfare.

"4th. That whenever in the future his heart and his steps shall turn toward his old home, and the friends of his youth, he shall be greeted with voices of welcome, and hearts and homes of hospitality.

"5th. That these resolutions shall be published in the county papers, and that a copy shall be presented to the gentleman named therein, by a committee to be appointed by the chairman."

As was quite natural, and quite noteworthy, under the circumstances, the committee appointed was composed of those most deeply interested in the affairs of the Continental Petroleum Company.

Mr. Belcher received the committee very graciously, and made them a neat little speech, which he had carefully prepared for the occasion. In concluding, he alluded to the great speculation in which they, with so many of their fellow-citizens, had embarked.

"Gentlemen," said he, "there is no one who holds so large an interest in the Continental as myself. I have parted with many of my shares to gratify the desire of

the people of Sevenoaks to possess them, but I still hold more than any of you. If the enterprise prospers, I shall prosper with you. If it goes down, as I sincerely hope it may not—more for your sakes, believe me, than my own—I shall suffer with you. Let us hope for the best. I have already authority for announcing to you that another monthly dividend of two per cent. will be paid you before I am called upon to leave you. That certainly looks like prosperity. Gentlemen, I bid you farewell."

When they had departed, having first heartily shaken the proprietor's hand, that gentleman locked his door, and gazed for a long time into his mirror.

"Robert Belcher," said he, "are you a rascal? Who says rascal? Are you any worse than the crowd? How badly would any of these precious fellow-citizens of yours feel if they knew their income was drawn from other men's pockets? Eh? Wouldn't they prefer to have somebody suffer rather than lose their investments? Verily, verily, I say unto you, they would. Don't talk to me about being a rascal! You're just a little sharper than the rest of them—that's all. They wanted to get money without earning it, and wanted me to help them to do it. I wanted to get money without earning it, and I wanted them to help me to do it. It happens that they will be disappointed and that I am satisfied. Don't say rascal to me, sir. If I ever hear that word again I'll throttle you. Is that question settled? It is? Very well. Let there be peace between us. . . . List! I hear the roar of the mighty city! Who lives in yonder palace? Whose wealth surrounds him thus with luxuries untold? Who walks out of yonder door and gets into that carriage, waiting with impatient steeds? Is that gentleman's name Belcher? Take a good look at him as he rolls away, bowing right and left to the gazing multitude. He is gone. The abyss of heaven swallows



up his form, and yet I linger. Why lingerest thou? Farewell! and again I say, farewell!"

Mr. Belcher had very carefully covered all his tracks. He had insisted on having his name omitted from the list of officers of the Continental Petroleum Company. He had carefully forwarded the names of all who had invested in its stock for record, so that, if the books should ever be brought to light, there should be no apparent irregularity in his dealings. His own name was there with the rest, and a small amount of money had been set aside for operating expenses, so that something would appear to have been done.

The day approached for his departure, and his agent, with his family, was installed in his house for its protection; and one fine morning, having first posted on two or three public places the announcement of a second monthly dividend to be paid through his agent to the stockholders in the Continental, he, with his family, rode down the hill in his coach, followed by an enormous baggage-wagon loaded with trunks, and passed through the village. Half of Sevenoaks was out to witness the departure. Cheers rent the air from every group; and if a conqueror had returned from the most sacred patriotic service he could not have received a heartier ovation than that bestowed upon the graceless fugitive. He bowed from side to side in his own lordly way, and flourished and extended his pudgy palm in courtly courtesy.

Mrs. Belcher sat back in her seat, shrinking from all these demonstrations, for she knew that her husband was unworthy of them. The carriages disappeared in the distance, and then—sad, suspicious, uncommunicative—the men went off to draw their last dividend and go about their work. They fought desperately against their own distrust. In the proportion that they doubted the proprietor they were ready to defend him; but

there was not a man of them who had not been fairly warned that he was running his own risk, and who had not sought for the privilege of throwing away his money.

## CHAPTER XII.

IN WHICH JIM ENLARGES HIS PLANS FOR A HOUSE,  
AND COMPLETES HIS PLANS FOR A HOUSE-KEEPER.

WHEN, at last, Jim and Mr. Benedict were left alone by the departure of Mr. Balfour and the two lads, they sat as if they had been stranded by a sudden squall after a long and pleasant voyage. Mr. Benedict was plunged into profound dejection, and Jim saw that he must be at once and persistently diverted.

"I telled Mr. Balfour," said he, "afore he went away, about the house. I telled him about the stoop, an' the chairs, an' the ladder for posies to run up on, an' I said somethin' about cubberds and settles, an' other thingem-bobs that have come into my mind; an' says he: 'Jim, be ye goin' to splice?' An' says I: 'If so be I can find a little stick as'll answer, it wouldn't be strange if I did.' 'Well,' says he, 'now's yer time, if ye're ever goin' to, for the hay-day of your life is a passin' away.' An' says I: 'No, ye don't. My hay-day has jest come, and my grass is dry an' it'll keep. It's good for fodder, an' it wouldn't make a bad bed.'"

"What did he say to that?" inquired Mr. Benedict.

"Says he: 'I shouldn't wonder if ye was right. Have ye found the woman?' 'Yes,' says I. 'I have found a genuine creetur.' An' says he: 'What is her name?' An' says I: 'That's tellin'. It's a name as oughter be changed, an' it won't be my fault if it ain't.' An' then