people. I'm not going to badger him into nice manners and I'm going to be just as much amused with him as anybody is. He isn't like other people, and if he tries to act like other people, it will just spoil him. If there's anything that I do despise above board, it's a woman trying to train a man who loves her. If I were the man, I should hate her."

CHAPTER XXII.

IN WHICH JIM GETS MARRIED, THE NEW HOTEL RECEIVES ITS MISTRESS, AND BENEDICT CONFERS A POWER OF ATTORNEY.

THERE was great commotion in the little Sevenoaks tavern. It was Jim's wedding morning, and on the previous evening there had been a sufficient number of arrivals to fill every room. Mr. and Mrs. Balfour, with the two boys, had come in by the evening stage; Jim and Mr. Benedict had arrived from Number Nine. Friends of Miss Butterworth from adjoining towns had come, so as to be ready for the ceremony of the morning. Villagers had thronged the noisy bar-room until midnight, scanning and discussing the strangers, and speculating upon the event which had called them together. Jim had moved among them, smiling, and returning their good-natured badinage with imperturbable coolness, so far as appearances went, though he acknowledged to Mr. Balfour that he felt very much as he did about his first moose.

"I took a good aim," said he, "restin' acrost a stump, but the stump was oneasy like; an' then I blazed away, an' when I obsarved the moose sprawlin', I was twenty feet up a tree, with my gun in the snow; an' if they don't find me settin' on the parson's chimbly about nine

o'clock to-morrer mornin', it won't be on account o' my not bein' skeered."

But the wedding morning had arrived. Jim had had an uneasy night, with imperfect sleep and preposterous dreams. He had been pursuing game. Sometimes it was a bear that attracted his chase, sometimes it was a deer, sometimes it was a moose, but all the time it was Miss Butterworth, flying and looking back, with robes and ribbons vanishing among the distant trees, until he shot and killed her, and then he woke in a great convulsion of despair, to hear the singing of the early birds, and to the realization of the fact that his days of bachelor life were counted.

Mr. Benedict, with his restored boy in his arms, occupied the room next to his, a door opening between them. Both were awake, and were busy with their whispered confidences, when they became aware that Jim was roused and on his feet. In a huge bundle on the table lay Jim's wedding garments, which he eyed from time to time as he busied himself at his bath.

"Won't ye be a purty bird with them feathers on! This makin' crows into bobolinks'll do for oncet, but, my! won't them things spin when I git into the woods agin?"

Benedict and Harry knew Jim's habit, and the measure of excitement that was upon him, and lay still, expecting to be amused by his soliloquies. Soon they heard him say:

"Oh, lay down, lay down, lay *down*, ye misable old mop!"

It was an expression of impatience and disgust.

"What's the matter, Jim?" Mr. Benedict called.

"Here's my har," responded Jim, "actin' as if it was a piece o' woods or a hay-lot, an' there ain't no lodgin' it with nothin' short of a harricane. I've a good mind to git it shingled and san'-papered."

Then, shifting his address to the object of his care and anxiety, he went on :

" Oh, stick up, stick up, if you want to! Don't lay down on my 'count. P'rhaps ye want to see what's goin' on. P'rhaps ye're goin' to stand up with me. P'rhaps ye want to skeer somebody's hosses. If I didn't look no better nor you, I sh'd want to lay low; an', if I'd 'a slep as poor as ye did last night, I'd lop down in the fust bed o' bear's grease I could find. *Hain't* ye got no manners?"

This was too much for Harry, who, in his happy mood, burst into the merriest laughter.

This furnished Jim with just the apology he wanted for a frolic, and rushing into the adjoining bed-room, he pulled Harry from his bed, seated him on the top of his head, and marched with him struggling and laughing about the room. After he had performed sundry acrobatic feats with him, he carried him back to his bed. Then he returned to his room, and entered seriously upon the task of arraying himself in his wedding attire. To get on his collar and neck-tie properly, he was obliged to call for Mr. Benedict's assistance.

Jim was already getting red in the face.

" What on arth folks want to tie theirselves up in this way for in hot weather, is more nor I know," he said. " How do ye s'pose them Mormons live, as is doin' this thing every three days?"

Jim asked this question with his nose in the air, patiently waiting the result of Mr. Benedict's manipulations at his throat. When he could speak again, he added :

" I vow, if I was doin' a big business in this line, I'd git some tin things, an' have 'em soddered on, an' sleep in 'em."

This sent Harry into another giggle, and, with many soliloquies and much merriment, the dressing in both

rooms went on, until, in Jim's room, all became still. When Benedict and his boy had completed their toilet, they looked in upon Jim, and found him dressed and seated on his trunk.

"Good morning, Mr. Fenton," said Benedict, cheerfully.

Jim, who had been in deep thought, looked up, and said :

" Do ye know that that don't seem so queer to me as it used to? It seems all right fur pertickler friends to call me Jim, but clo'es is what puts the Mister into a man. I felt it comin' when I looked into the glass. Says I to myself: 'Jim, that's Mr. Fenton as is now afore ye. Look at 'im sharp, so that, if so be ye ever seen 'im agin' ye'll know 'im.' I never knowed exactly where the Mister come from afore. Ye have to be measured for't. A pair o' shears, an' a needle an' thread, an' a hot goose is what changes a man into a Mister. It's a nice thing to find out, but it's uncomf'table. It ain't so bad as it would be if ye couldn't strip it off when ye git tired on't, an' it's a good thing to know."

" Do clothes make Belcher a gentleman?" inquired Mr. Benedict.

"Well, it's what makes him a Mister, any way. When ye git his clo'es off thar ain't nothin' left of 'im. Dress 'im up in my old clo'es, as has got tar enough on 'em to paint a boat, an' there wouldn't be enough man in 'im to speak to."

How long Jim would have indulged in his philosophy of the power of dress had he not been disturbed will never be known, for at this moment Mr. Balfour knocked at his door, and was admitted. Sam Yates followed, and both looked Jim over and pronounced him perfect. Even these familiar friends felt the power of dress, and treated Jim in a way to which he had been unaccustomed. The stalwart figure, developed in every mus-

cle, and becomingly draped, was well calculated to excite their admiration. The refractory hair which had given its possessor so much trouble, simply made his head impressive and picturesque. There was a man before them—humane, brave, bright, original. All he wanted was culture. Physical and mental endowments were in excess, and the two men, trained in the schools, had learned to love—almost to revere him. Until he spoke, they did not feel at home with him in his new disguise.

They all descended to breakfast together. Jim was quiet under the feeling that his clothes were an unnatural expression of himself, and that his words would make them a mockery. He was awed, too, by the presence of Mrs. Balfour, who met him at the table for the first time in her life. The sharp-eyed, smiling Yankee girls who waited at the meal, were very much devoted to Jim, who was ashamed to receive so much attention. On the whole, it was the most uncomfortable breakfast he had ever eaten, but his eyes were quick to see all that was done, for he was about to open a hotel, and wished particularly to learn the details of the table service.

There was great excitement, too, at the parsonage that morning. The Misses Snow were stirred by the romance of the occasion. They had little enough of this element in their lives, and were disposed to make the most of it when it came. The eldest had been invited to accompany the bride to Number Nine, and spend a few weeks with her there. As this was accounted a great privilege by the two younger sisters, they quietly shelved her, and told her that they were to have their own way at home; so Miss Snow became ornamental and critical. Miss Butterworth had spent the night with her, and they had talked like a pair of school-girls until the small hours of the morning. The two younger girls had slept together, and discussed at length the duties of

their respective offices. One was to do the bride's hair and act as the general supervisor of her dress, the other was to arrange the flowers and take care of the guests. Miss Butterworth's hair was not beautiful, and how it was to be made the most of was the great question that agitated the hair-dresser. All the possibilities of braid and plait and curl were canvassed. If she only had a switch, a great triumph could be achieved, but she had none, and, what was worse, would have none. A neighbor had sent in a potted white rose, full of buds and bloom, and over this the sisters quarrelled. The hair would not be complete without the roses, and the table would look "shameful" if the pot did not stand upon it, unshorn of a charm. The hair-dresser proposed that the stems which she was bent on despoiling should have some artificial roses tied to them, but the disgraceful project was rejected with scorn. They wrangled over the dear little rose-bush and its burden until they went to sleep—the one to dream that Miss Butterworth had risen in the morning with a new head of hair that reached to her knee, in whose luxuriance she could revel with interminable delight, and the other that the house was filled with roses; that they sprouted out of the walls, fluttered with beads of dew against the windows, strewed the floor, and filled the air with odor.

Miss Butterworth was not to step out of the room—not to be seen by any mortal eye—until she should come forth as a bride. Miss Snow was summarily expelled from the apartment, and only permitted to bring in Miss Butterworth's breakfast, while her self-appointed lady's maid did her hair, and draped her in her new gray silk.

"Make just as big a fool of me, my dear, as you choose," said the prospective bride to the fussy little girl who fluttered about her. "It's only for a day, and I don't care."

Such patient manipulation, such sudden retiring for the study of effects, such delicious little experiments with a curl, such shifting of hair-pins, such dainty adjustments of ruffles and frills as were indulged in in that little room can only be imagined by the sex familiar with them. And then, in the midst of it all, came a scream of delight that stopped everything. Mrs. Balfour had sent in a great box full of the most exquisite flowers, which she had brought all the way from the city. The youngest Miss Snow was wild with her new wealth, and there were roses for Miss Butterworth's hair, and her throat, and a bouquet for her hand. And after this came wonderful accessions to the refreshment table. Cake, with Miss Butterworth's initials; tarts, marked "Number Nine," and Charlotte de Russe, with a "B" and an "F" hopelessly twisted together in a monogram. The most excited exclamations reached Miss Butterworth's ears in her imprisonment:

"Goodness, gracious me!"

"If there isn't another cake as big as a flour barrel!"

"Tell your mother she's an angel. She's coming down to help us eat it, I hope."

"Just look at this basket of little cakes! I was saying to mother this minute that that was all we wanted."

So the good things came, and the cheerful givers went, and Miss Butterworth took an occasional sip at her coffee, with a huge napkin at her throat, and tears in her eyes, not drawn forth by the delicate tortures in progress upon her person. She thought of her weary years of service, her watchings by sick-beds, her ministry to the poor, her long loneliness, and acknowledged to herself that her reward had come. To be so loved and petted, and cared for, and waited upon, was payment for every sacrifice and every service, and she felt that she and the world were at quits.

Before the finishing touches to her toilet were given,

there was a tumult at the door. She could hear new voices. The guests were arriving. She heard laughter and merry greetings; and still they poured in, as if they had come in a procession. Then there was a hush, followed by the sound of a carriage, the letting down of steps, and a universal murmur. Jim had arrived, with Mr. and Mrs. Balfour and the boys. They had had great difficulty in getting him into the one hackney coach which the village possessed, on account of his wish to ride with the driver, "a feller as he knowed;" but he was overruled by Mrs. Balfour, who, on alighting, took his arm. He came up the garden walk, smiling in the faces and eyes of those gathered around the door and clustered at the windows. In his wedding dress he was the best figure in the crowd, and many were the exclamations of feminine admiration.

On entering the door, he looked about him, saw the well-dressed and expectant company, the dainty baskets of flowers, the bountifully loaded table in the little dining-room, all the preparations for his day of happiness, but he saw nowhere the person who gave to him the significance of the occasion.

Mr. Snow greeted him cordially, and introduced him to those who stood near.

"Well, parson, where's the little woman?" he said at last, in a voice so loud that all heard the startling question. Miss Butterworth heard him, and laughed.

"Just hear him!" she exclaimed to the busy girl, whose work was now hurrying to a close. "If he doesn't astonish them before he gets through, I shall be mistaken. I do think it's the most ridiculous thing. Now isn't it! The idea!"

Miss Snow, in the general character of outside manager and future companion of the bride, hurried to Jim's side at once, and said:

"Oh, Mr. Fenton!"

"Jest call me Jim."

"No, no, I won't. Now, Mr. Fenton, really! you can't see her until she is ready!"

"Oh, can't I!" and Jim smiled.

Miss Snow had the impression, prevalent among women, that a bridegroom has no rights so long as they can keep him out of them, and that it is their privilege to fight him up to the last moment.

"Now, really, Mr. Fenton, you *must* be patient," she said, in a whisper. "She is quite delicate this morning, and she's going to look so pretty that you'll hardly know her."

"Well," said Jim, "if you've got a ticket into the place whar she's stoppin', tell her that kingdom-come is here an' waitin'."

A ripple of laughter went around the circle, and Jim, finding the room getting a little close, beckoned Mr. Snow out of the doors. Taking him aside and removing his hat, he said:

"Parson, do you see my har?"

"I do," responded the minister, good-naturedly.

"That riz last night," said Jim, solemnly.

"Is it possible?" and Mr. Snow looked at the intractable pile with genuine concern.

"Yes, riz in a dream. I thought I'd shot 'er. I was follerin' 'er all night. Sometimes she was one thing an' sometimes she was another, but I drew a bead on 'er, an' down she went, an' up come my har quicker nor lightnin'. I don't s'pose it looks very purty, but I can't help it."

"Have you tried anything on it?" inquired Mr. Snow with a puzzled look.

"Yis, everything but a hot flat-iron, an' I'm a little afraid o' that. If wust comes to wust, it'll have to be did, though. It may warm up my old brains a little, but if my har is well sprinkled, and the thing is handled lively, it'll pay for tryin'."

The perfect candor and coolness of Jim's manner were too much for the unsuspicious spirit of the minister, who thought it all very strange. He had heard of such things, but this was the first instance he had ever seen.

"Parson," said Jim, changing the topic, "what's the damage for the sort o' thing ye're drivin' at this mornin'?"

"The what?"

"The damage—what's the—well—damage? What do ye consider a fa'r price?"

"Do you mean the marriage fee?"

"Yes, I guess that's what ye call it."

"The law allows us two dollars, but you will permit me to perform the ceremony for nothing. It's a labor of love, Mr. Fenton. We are all very much interested in Miss Butterworth, as you see."

"Well, I'm a little interested in 'er myself, an' I'm a goin' to pay for the splice. Jest tuck that X into yer jacket, an' tell yer neighbors as ye've seen a man as was five times better nor the law."

"You are very generous."

"No; I know what business is, though. Ye have to get somethin' to square the buryins an' baptizins with. When a man has a weddin', he'd better pay the whole thing in a lump. Parsons have to live, but how the devil they do it in Sevenoaks is more nor I know."

"Mr. Fenton! excuse me!" said Mr. Snow, coloring, "but I am not accustomed to hearing language of that kind."

"No, I s'pose not," said Jim, who saw too late that he had made a mistake. "Your sort o' folks knuckle to the devil more nor I do. A good bein' I take to, but a bad bein' I'm careless with; an' I don't make no more o' slingin' his name round nor I do kickin' an old boot."

Mr. Snow was obliged to laugh, and half a dozen others, who had gathered about them, joined in a merry chorus.

Then Miss Snow came out and whispered to her father, and gave a roguish glance at Jim. At this time the house was full, and the little yard was full, and there was a crowd of boys at the gate. Mr. Snow took Jim by the arm and led him in. They pressed through the crowd at the door, Miss Snow making way for them, and so, in a sort of triumphal progress, they went through the room, and disappeared in the apartment where "the little woman," flushed and expectant, waited their arrival.

It would be hard to tell which was the more surprised as they were confronted by the meeting. Dress had wrought its miracle upon both of them, and they hardly knew each other.

"Well, little woman, how fare ye?" said Jim, and he advanced, and took her cheeks tenderly between his rough hands, and kissed her.

"Oh, don't! Mr. Fenton! You'll muss her hair!" exclaimed the nervous little lady's maid of the morning, dancing about the object of her delightful toils and anxieties, and readjusting a rose, and pulling out the fold of a ruffle.

"A purty job ye've made on't! The little woman 'll never look so nice again," said Jim.

"Perhaps I shall—when I'm married again," said Miss Butterworth, looking up into Jim's eyes, and laughing.

"Now, ain't that sassy!" exclaimed Jim, in a burst of admiration. "That's what took me the first time I seen 'er."

Then Miss Snow Number Two came in, and said it really was time for the ceremony to begin. Such a job as she had had in seating people!

Oh, the mysteries of that little room! How the people outside wondered what was going on there! How the girls inside rejoiced in their official privileges!

Miss Snow took Jim by the button-hole:

"Mr. Fenton, you must take Miss Butterworth on your arm, you know, and lead her in front of the sofa, and turn around, and face father, and then do just what he tells you, and remember that there's nothing for you to say."

The truth was, that they were all afraid that Jim would not be able to hold his tongue.

"Are we all ready?" inquired Mr. Snow, in a pleasant, official tone.

All were ready, and then Mr. Snow, going out with a book in his hand, was followed by Jim and his bride, the little procession being completed by the three Misses Snow, who, with a great deal of care upon their faces, slipped out of the door, one after another, like three white doves from a window. Mr. Snow took his position, the pair wheeled and faced him, and the three Misses Snow supported Miss Butterworth as impromptu bridesmaids. It was an impressive tableau, and when the good pastor said: "Let us pray," and raised his thin, white hands, a painter in search of a subject could have asked for nothing better.

When, at the close of his prayer, the pastor inquired if there were any known obstacles to the union of the pair before him in the bonds of holy matrimony, and bade all objectors to speak then, or forever after hold their peace, Jim looked around with a defiant air, as if he would like to see the man who dared to respond to the call. No one did respond, and the ceremony proceeded.

"James," said Mr. Snow.

"Jest call me ——"

Miss Butterworth pinched Jim's arm, and he recalled Miss Snow's injunction in time to arrest his sentence in mid-passage.

"James," the pastor repeated, and then went on to

ask him, in accordance with the simple form of his sect, whether he took the woman whom he was holding by the hand to be his lawful and wedded wife, to be loved and cherished in sickness and health, in prosperity and adversity, cleaving to her, and to her only.

"Parson," said Jim, "that's jest what I'm here for."

There would have been a titter if any other man had said it, but it was so strong and earnest, and so much in character, that hardly a smile crossed a face that fronted him.

Then "Keziah" was questioned in the usual form, and bowed her response, and Jim and the little woman were declared to be one. "What God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."

And then Mr. Snow raised his white hands again, and pronounced a formal benediction. There was a moment of awkwardness, but soon the pastor advanced with his congratulations, and Mrs. Snow came up, and the three Misses Snow, and the Balfours, and the neighbors; and there were kisses and hand-shakings and good wishes. Jim beamed around upon the fluttering and chattering groups like a great, good-natured mastiff upon a playful collection of silken spaniels and smart terriers. It was the proudest moment of his life. Even when standing on the cupola of his hotel, surveying his achievements, and counting his possessions, he had never felt the thrill which moved him then. The little woman was his, and his forever. His manhood had received the highest public recognition, and he was as happy as if it had been the imposition of a crown.

"Ye made purty solemn business on't Parson," said Jim.

"It's a very important step, Mr. Fenton," responded the clergyman.

"Step!" exclaimed Jim. "That's no name for't; it's a whole trip. But I sh'll do it. When I said it I meaned it. I sh'll take care o' the little woman, an' atween you an' I, Parson, it's about the best thing as a man can do. Takin' care of a woman is the nateral thing for a man, an' no man ain't much as doesn't do it, and glad o' the job."

The capacity of a country assembly for cakes, pies, and lemonade, is something quite unique, especially at a morning festival. If the table groaned at the beginning, it sighed at the close. The abundance that asserted itself in piles of dainties was left a wreck. It faded away like a bank of snow before a drift of southern vapor. Jim, foraging among the solids, found a mince-pie, to which he devoted himself.

"This is the sort o' thing as will stan' by a man in trouble," said he, with a huge piece in his hand.

Then, with a basket of cake, he vanished from the house, and distributed his burden among the boys at the gate.

"Boys, I know ye're hungry, 'cause ye've left yer breakfast on yer faces. Now git this in afore it rains."

The boys did not stand on the order of the service, but helped themselves greedily, and left his basket empty in a twinkling.

"It beats all nater," said Jim, looking at them sympathetically, "how much boys can put down when they try. If the facks could be knowed, without cuttin' into 'em, I'd be willin' to bet somethin' that their legs is holler."

While Jim was absent, the bride's health was drunk in a glass of lemonade, and when he returned, his own health was proposed, and Jim seemed to feel that something was expected of him.

"My good frens," said he, "I'm much obleeged to ye. Ye couldn't 'a' treated me better if I'd 'a' been the President of this country. I ain't used to yer ways, but I know when I'm treated well, an' when the little woman

is treated well. I'm obleeged to ye on her 'count. I'm a goin' to take 'er into the woods, an' take care on 'er. We are goin' to keep a hotel—me and the little woman—an' if so be as any of ye is took sick by overloadin' with cookies 'arly in the day, or bein' thinned out with lemonade, ye can come into the woods, an' I'll send ye back happy."

There was a clapping of hands and a flutter of handkerchiefs, and a merry chorus of laughter, and then two vehicles drove up to the door. The bride bade a tearful farewell to her multitude of friends, and poured out her thanks to the minister's family, and in twenty minutes thereafter, two happy loads of passengers went pounding over the bridge, and off up the hill on the way to Number Nine. The horses were strong, the morning was perfect, and Jim was in possession of his bride. They, with Miss Snow, occupied one carriage, while Mr. Benedict and the Balfours filled the other. Not a member of the company started homeward until the bridal party was seen climbing the hill in the distance, but waited, commenting upon the great event of the morning, and speculating upon the future of the pair whose marriage they had witnessed. There was not a woman in the crowd who did not believe in Jim; and all were glad that the little tailoress had reached so pleasant and stimulating a change in her life.

When the voyagers had passed beyond the scattered farm-houses into the lonely country, Jim, with his wife's help, released himself from the collar and cravat that tormented him, and once more breathed freely. On they sped, shouting to one another from carriage to carriage, and Mike Conlin's humble house was reached in a two hours' drive. There was chaffing at the door and romping among the trees while the horses were refreshed, and then they pushed on again with such speed as was possible with poorer roads and soberer horses

and two hours before sunset they were at the river. The little woman had enjoyed the drive. When she found that she had cut loose from her old life, and was entering upon one unknown and untried, in pleasant companionship, she was thoroughly happy. It was all like a fairy story; and there before her rolled the beautiful river, and, waiting on the shore, were the trunks and remnants of baggage that had been started for their destination before daylight, and the guides with their boats, and with wild flowers in their hat-bands.

The carriages were dismissed to find their way back to Mike Conlin's that night, while Jim, throwing off his coat, assisted in loading the three boats. Mr. Balfour had brought along with him, not only a large flag for the hotel, but half a dozen smaller ones for the little fleet. The flags were soon mounted upon little rods, and set up at either end of each boat, and when the luggage was all loaded, and the passengers were all in their places—Jim taking his wife and Miss Snow in his own familiar craft—they pushed out into the stream, and started for a race. Jim was the most powerful man of the three, and was aching for work. It was a race all the way, but the broader chest and harder muscles won. It was a regatta without spectators, but as full of excitement as if the shores had been fringed with a cheering crowd.

The two women chatted together in the stern of Jim's boat, or sat in silence, as if they were enchanted, watching the changing shores, while the great shadows of the woods deepened upon them. They had never seen anything like it. It was a new world—God's world, which man had not marred.

At last they heard the barking of a dog, and, looking far up among the woods, they caught the vision of a new building. The boys in the boats behind yelled with delight. Ample in its dimensions and fair in its outlines, there stood the little woman's home. Her

eyes filled with tears, and she hid them on Miss Snow's shoulder.

"Be ye disap'inted, little woman?" inquired Jim, tenderly.

"Oh, no."

"Feelin's a little too many fur ye?"

The little woman nodded, while Miss Snow put her arm around her neck and whispered.

"A woman is a curi's bein'," said Jim. "She cries when she's tickled, an' she laughs when she's mad."

"I'm not mad," said the little woman, bursting into a laugh, and lifting her tear-burdened eyes to Jim.

"An' then," said Jim, "she cries and laughs all to oncet, an' a feller don't know whether to take off his jacket or put up his umberell."

This quite restored the "little woman," and her eyes were dry and merry as the boat touched the bank, and the two women were helped on shore. Before the other boats came up, they were in the house, with the delighted Turk at their heels, and Mike Conlin's wife courtseying before them.

It was a merry night at Number Nine. Jim's wife became the mistress at once. She knew where everything was to be found, as well as if she had been there for a year, and played the hostess to Mr. and Mrs. Balfour as agreeably as if her life had been devoted to the duties of her establishment.

Mr. Balfour could not make a long stay in the woods, but had determined to leave his wife there with the boys. His business was pressing at home, and he had heard something while at Sevenoaks that made him uneasy on Mr. Benedict's account. The latter had kept himself very quiet while at the wedding, but his intimacy with one of Mr. Balfour's boys had been observed, and there were those who detected the likeness of this boy, though much changed by growth and better conditions, to the

little Harry Benedict of other days. Mr. Balfour had overheard the speculations of the villagers on the strange Mr. Williams who had for so long a time been housed with Jim Fenton, and the utterance of suspicions that he was no other than their old friend, Paul Benedict. He knew that this suspicion would be reported by Mr. Belcher's agent at once, and that Mr. Belcher would take desperate steps to secure himself in his possessions. What form these measures would take—whether of fraud or personal violence—he could not tell.

He advised Mr. Benedict to give him a power of attorney to prosecute Mr. Belcher for the sum due him on the use of his inventions, and to procure an injunction on his further use of them, unless he should enter into an agreement to pay such a royalty as should be deemed equitable by all the parties concerned. Mr. Benedict accepted the advice, and the papers were executed at once.

Armed with this document, Mr. Balfour bade goodbye to Number Nine and its pleasant company, and hastened back to the city, where he took the first opportunity to report to his friends the readiness of Jim to receive them for the summer.

It would be pleasant to follow them into their forest pastimes, but more stirring and important matters will hold us to the city.