

## VIII.

## A NIGHT ON THE BATTERY.

THE BATTERY AS IT WAS. — A SUICIDE. — A DARK STORY. — THE TEMPTATION. — A RESCUE. — FORCED LOANS. — TRAFFIC IN FLESH AND BLOOD. — MADDENING EXTORTIONS.

## THE BATTERY AS IT WAS.

FORMERLY the Battery was the pride of New York. It was never large, but it was a spot of great beauty. It opened on to our splendid bay. A granite promenade ran by the water-side. It was traversed by paths in all directions. Trees, the growth of centuries, afforded a fine shade. A sea breeze came from the ocean, with health on its wings. Castle Garden was the resort of the fashionable and gay. The wealthy citizens of New York and vicinity filled the Battery every pleasant afternoon. On every side were costly houses, the residences of the wealthy merchants. But now all is changed! Trade has driven families up town. Castle Garden is an emigrant depot. The grass has disappeared, the iron fence is broken, the wall promenade near the sea gone to decay, freshly-arrived foreigners, ragged, tattered, and drunken men and women sit under the old trees, and the Battery is now as unsafe a place at night as can be found in the city.

## A SUICIDE.

One night an officer, in citizen's clothes, was walking on the Battery. His attention was directed to a man walking back and forth on the old sea wall. His appearance indicated great sorrow and desperation. The officer thought he intended suicide. He went up to the man, touched him lightly on the shoulder, and in a kind tone said, "Not to-night; not now. The water is cold. You must not leave your wife and children. Don't take that great leap in the dark. Don't do it to-night." Aroused as from a reverie, in angry tones the man demanded of the officer, "Who are you?" In an instant they recognized each other. The suicide exclaimed, "Good God! is it you? How came you here? How did you know what I intended to do? Let us go and sit down. You shall know why I propose to throw away a life that is not worth keeping. I am daily in hell. I can endure my tortures no longer. I determined to-night to seek rest beneath the quiet waters. You shall hear my tale, and judge for yourself."

## A DARK STORY.

Seated on a bench by the side of the officer, the young man told his griefs. He said, "I came from my mountain home in New England, to seek my fortune in this city. My mother's prayers and blessing followed me. I resolved to do no dishonor to those who loved me and looked for my success. I entered a large mercantile store, and for a time did the menial work. I was industrious and ambitious, and resolved to rise. I did cheerfully and faithfully what was allotted to me. My advance was slow at first. I gained the confidence

of my employers, and have risen to the position of confidential clerk. I married a noble-hearted girl, whom I love better than life, and for a time all things went well with me.

"One day, while at the store, I received a letter, written in a fine, delicate hand, asking for a loan of money for a short time. The writer regretted that necessity which made it needful for her to ask for the loan; but she was greatly reduced, had money to pay, and could not escape from her present difficulty, unless her friends (underscoring the word *friends*) would loan her a small sum, say fifty dollars, for a short time. The letter was signed by a name unknown to me. The letter hinted at some indiscretions of mine, and threatened an exposure unless the money was forthcoming. On inquiry, I found the woman to be one of those cold-blooded and heartless wretches that abound in New York, who live on black mail. She was a notorious woman, and passed sometimes under one name and sometimes under another. I had seen her once, in company with some associates, but that was many years ago. She kept a list of all her acquaintances, even of those who were casually introduced. My name is on that list. Since the fatal hour I saw her, her eye has never been off from me. She could afford to wait. She has watched my rise, and when I dare not refuse, has made a levy on me, under the specious pretext of a loan.

#### THE TEMPTATION.

"My true course would have been to have taken the letter to my employer, stated all the circumstances, and followed his advice. I should have taken the letter to

my wife, and then bade the vile creature do her worst; or I should have seen you, placed the case in your hands, and ended the infamous career of this woman, at least for a time. I had not courage to do either. I was afraid of the exposure. Fifty dollars was a small sum, and if I could buy her silence for that, it would be cheaply bought. I sent the money, and bade the woman trouble me no more. With the money I was fool enough to send a letter. Armed with this evidence that I had complied with her demand, another loan was requested of a hundred dollars. For two years the leech has drawn upon me, keeping pace with my supposed business success. I have paid over two thousand dollars, and received yesterday a new call. I have taken money from my employers. My accounts are not correct. I expect every day that an exposure will take place. I cannot witness the shame and agony of my family."

#### A RESCUE.

The officer led the young man to the police station. A note was dictated, and sent to the address of the woman, inviting her to an interview at a place named, where the business would be completed to the satisfaction of all parties. Prompt on the time the woman made her appearance. She was attended by a "friend," a noted pugilist of the city, burly, brazen, and strong, able to pummel the young clerk to a jelly if he resisted the demands made upon him. Out of sight, but within hearing, were two officers. The whole matter was talked over, the past and the future. The whole story was given, confirming that told to the officer on the Battery. The bargain was made, that if the young man

would pay one thousand dollars in instalments he should be troubled no more. At the right moment the officers appeared and arrested the parties. Rather than go to the Tombs, the friend agreed to refund all the money that had been extorted from the clerk, signed a paper acknowledging all the facts in the case, and agreed to quit the city, which was done.

#### FORCED LOANS.

Women and men, in New York, live in style by loans forced from business men in the city. Young men who want to see New York life while they are young, and who think it is a very fine thing to sow their wild oats in early life, little know what a harvest they are to reap. On one of the very fashionable avenues in the city there stands the most fashionable and costly house of infamy on the continent, which was built and furnished by loans exacted from business men. It is a palace, unequalled except by the marble house of Stewart, and is adorned by statuary, paintings, and all that art and taste can suggest or money purchase. The proprietor of the mansion is one of the most notorious and infamous of women. She began life on the lowest round of the ladder. Soon she set up for a nurse. She opened a house for the reception of women who were about to become mothers before they were wives. Her next step was that of a female physician, whose practice was among the most debased and degraded. She had practice in Boston, Philadelphia, and the South. She was often before the court on criminal charges. She was never convicted, though her hands were often stained with the blood of her victims. As

she rose in wealth, she opened a home for the unfortunate. In it, the sick that could pay had the most tender and delicate nursing. A young, sensitive, and intelligent girl, who had been enticed from home, found a kind and considerate friend in the hostess. It paid well to have this repute; and when such an one was introduced by a man of substance or standing, the kind attention was doubled. Elegant rooms, costly furniture, delicacies of all kinds, quiet, well-dressed and obsequious attendants waited the call of the invalid. No mother could watch the delicate and sobbing girl with more care than this vile woman. When rooms were engaged, they were taken by some person without a name. As they were paid for the term of confinement in advance, it would make no difference to the keeper of the house who made the arrangements. Why should she care, so long as her pay is sure? But there is a future for her; and the party who comes in the darkness of the night, without a name, to engage rooms, will know that future to his cost.

#### TRAFFIC IN FLESH AND BLOOD.

Heavy as is the sum paid to this woman for the present care of the patient, the future is richer in gain. It is not the policy of these women to harm mother or child; avarice demands that the child live. In the hour of deep anguish and trial, all alone in a strange room, with the visions of home looming up, with shame and remorse burning their impress on the alabaster brow, with the prospect of death before her, the bewildered child repays the tender care by becoming confidential. She names the party to whom her ruin

is ascribed, and bids the woman take care of the little comer should the young mother die. All the facts in the case gleaned from this death-pillow are carefully noted in a book kept for that purpose, with the names of the parties, their residence, place of business, and all needed particulars. The child is carefully protected. It is a living witness, and will be a source of great profit when the day of reckoning comes. The party who takes the child is interested in the establishment. When loans are called for, it can be produced and identified at any moment.

#### MADDENING EXTORTIONS.

Cured and discharged, the patient returns to society, marries, and settles down in life. The man pursues his business career with success. He becomes honored among merchants. His name stands high on 'change. He has a high social position. He becomes an officer in some one of our benevolent, philanthropic, or religious institutions. If he thinks of his early indiscretions, he is glad to know that the great secret is locked in his own bosom. All this while his name is written in a book. There is one human eye that knows his down-sitting and his up-rising. With a hundred other names his can be read in the fatal list. He is at the mercy of one of the shrewdest, most abandoned, and desperate of women. She knows the mercantile value of every name on that list whom she has served; knows their domestic, social, and commercial standing. Each one is her banker. She draws when she will. A man of business is surprised on receiving a call from a lady, who comes in her carriage on pressing business.

Has he forgotten the person he met in a small, half-lighted room, with whom he transacted some business some months or years before? Or a polite note is received, signed by the woman, inviting him to an interview on urgent business; or, in polite terms, a loan is requested of a certain sum for a short time. Astonished and in terror, the demand is acceded to, only to be repeated with increased amount every year. Bankruptcy has followed this system of extortion. Men have fled their country, and gone into strange lands. Men have sought relief in suicide, rather than be disgraced. Not long since, an honored man, who had been elevated to the highest trusts our city can confer, sunk beneath the tyranny of extortion; his brain softened, and he passed prematurely away. Few have the least idea of the extent of this business, or of the number and standing of the parties implicated. Elegant mansions are builded and maintained; splendid teams and gilded equipages roll through Central Park; liveried servants excite the envy of those less exalted;—all which are supported by tributes wrung from persons who have a fair outside social standing. Could the roll be read, and the names pronounced, New York would be astonished, alarmed and convulsed,—hollow deceitful and wicked as the city is.