

he chose not to renew the engagement. The maddened man could not be controlled. In the lull of his paroxysms he moaned for his old friend. At length the doctor relented. He would go back for a salary of ten thousand dollars, secured to him for a term of years. The bargain was closed. The old eye and the familiar voice subdued the patient, and there was no outbreak afterwards.

## XX.

## CORNELIUS VANDERBILT.

EARLY LIFE.—MR. VANDERBILT IN HIS OFFICE.—PERSONAL.—AS A RAILROAD MAN.—MR. VANDERBILT ON THE OCEAN.—GREAT GIFT TO THE NATION.

THIS gentleman, known as Commodore Vanderbilt, is one of the self-made millionnaires of the city. He began life a penniless boy. He took to the water early. He began life on his own account by rowing a boat from Staten Island to this city. He took command of a North River steamboat when quite young, and was distinguished at the start for his resolute, indomitable, and daring will. He began his moneyed success by chartering steamboats, and running opposition to all the old lines, up the North River, up the East River, up the Connecticut River, everywhere. Making a little money, he invested it in stocks which were available in cash, and always ready for a bargain. Honorable in trade, prompt, firm, and reliable, he was decided in his business, and could drive as hard a bargain as any man in the city. His custom has been to conduct his business on the cash principle, and never allow a Saturday night to close without every man in his employ getting his money. If anybody was about to fail, wanted money, had a bargain to offer, he knew where to call.



Nothing came amiss. A load of lumber, coal, or cordage; a cargo of a ship, or a stock of goods in a factory; glassware, merchandise, or clothing;— the Commodore was sure to find a use for them.

MR. VANDERBILT IN HIS OFFICE.

From nine to eleven the Commodore is in his up-town office; at one, in his down-town office. Between these hours he visits the Harlem and Hudson River stations. He is now nearly eighty years of age. He is erect as a warrior. He is tall, very slim, genteel in his make up, with a fine presence, hair white as the driven snow, and comes up to one's idea of a fine merchant of the olden time. He is one of the shrewdest merchants, prompt and decided. In one of the down-town mansions, where the aristocracy used to reside, he has his place of business. He drives down through Broadway in his buggy drawn by his favorite horse, celebrated for his white feet, one of the fleetest in the city, which no money can buy. His office consists of a single room, quite large, well furnished, and adorned with pictures of favorite steamboats, ferry-boats, and ocean steamers. The entrance to the office is through a narrow hall-way, which is made an outer room for his confidential clerk. He sees personally all who call, rising to greet the comer, and seldom sits till the business is discharged and the visitor gone. But for this he would be overrun and bored to death. His long connection with steamboats and shipping brings to him men from all parts of the world who have patents, inventions, and improvements, and who wish his indorsement. If a man has anything

to sell, he settles the contract in a very few words. The visitor addresses the Commodore, and says, "I have a stock of goods for sale: what will you give?" A half dozen sharp inquiries are made, and a price named. The seller demurs, announcing that such a price would ruin him. "I don't want your goods. What did you come here for if you did not want to sell? If you can get more for your goods, go and get it." Not a moment of time will be wasted, not a cent more be offered; and if the man leaves with the hope of getting a better price, and returns to take the first offer, he will not, probably, sell the goods at all.

PERSONAL.

Mr. Vanderbilt lives in a down-town location. It was once very fashionable. It is near the New York University; a very large but very plain brick mansion; a good type of the dwellings of the millionnaires of the old school, before the jaunty freestone houses, with their florid painting and gaudy trimmings, came into vogue. Everything about it is solid, substantial, comfortable. But there is no North River steamboat about the fitting up. His stables are in his yard. They are unrivalled for convenience and comfort. He has also a small trotting course, around which he drives in rainy weather, when his horses are exercised and their speed exhibited. He rises early, takes a plain breakfast, and then spends an hour in his stables, after which he goes to his office. What he calls *business* consists in riding. Every afternoon he can be seen at Central Park, and on the road where fast nags are put to their mettle. His great passion is for horse-flesh. He handles his own team,



and is probably the best driver, except Bonner, in the state. He had the fastest team in the state till Bonner's Flatbush Maid and her companion distanced all competitors. The Commodore has swept the horizon since then for a fast team. He keeps a standing offer of ten thousand dollars for one of the required speed. He would give twenty thousand dollars to own the leading team of the city. He is a most daring driver; and to see him on the road with his flying steeds, passing everything, distancing everything, cool, erect, and skilful, one would hardly suppose he was nearly eighty years of age. Not long since he invited a friend to ride with him. He proposed to cross Harlem Railroad. The express train was in sight. In spite of remonstrance, he gave the well-known word, and his steeds started with the fleetness of deers. The wheels had scarcely left the track when whiz went the locomotive by as on the wings of the wind, lifting the hats of Vanderbilt and his friend by the current which it created. "There is not another man in New York that could do that!" the Commodore said. "And you will never do it again with me in your wagon!" the friend replied.

AS A RAILROAD MAN.

Turning from steamboats, Mr. Vanderbilt long ago became interested in railroads. So great has been his success, that he can control the stock market when he will. An attempt was made some time since to break him down by cornering the stock. He wanted to consolidate the Harlem Railroad with the Hudson. Enough of the Legislature was supposed to have been secured to carry the measure. The parties who had agreed to

pass the bill intended to play foul. Besides this, they thought they would indulge in a little railroad speculation. They sold Harlem, to be delivered at a future day, right and left. These men let their friends into the secret, and allowed them to speculate. Clear on to Chicago there was hardly a railroad man who was not selling Harlem short. The expected consolidation ran the stock up. The failure of the project would, of course, run it down. A few days before the vote was taken, some friends called upon Commodore Vanderbilt, and gave him proof that a conspiracy existed to ruin him, if possible, in this matter of consolidation. He took all the funds he could command, and, with the aid of his friends, bought all the Harlem stock that could be found, and locked it up in his safe. True to the report, the bill was rejected. The men who had pledged themselves for it openly and unblushingly voted against it. They waited anxiously for the next morning, when they expected their fortune would be made by the fall of Harlem. But it did not fall. To the surprise of everybody, the first day it remained stationary. Then it began to rise steadily, to the consternation and terror of speculators. There was no stock to be had at any price. Men were ruined on the right hand and on the left. Fortunes were swept away, and the cries of the wounded were heard all up and down the Central Road. An eminent railroad man near Albany, worth quite a pretty fortune, who confidently expected to make fifty thousand dollars by the operation, became penniless. One of the sharpest and most successful operators in New York lost over two hundred thousand dollars, which he refused to pay, on the



ground of conspiracy. His name was immediately stricken from the Stock Board, which brought him to his senses. He subsequently settled. Thousands were ruined. But Vanderbilt made money enough out of this attempt to ruin him, to pay for all the stock he owned in the Harlem Road.

When he first got possession of the Harlem, there was a strong feeling of hostility against him manifested by the Hudson River Road. The Commodore was snubbed by the aristocracy that controlled the Hudson. It was a great political machine, ruled by a ring. He told the managers to be civil, or he would make them trouble. The managers laughed at the idea. The first thing they knew, at one of their annual meetings, was, that Samuel Sloane, the old president, was turned out, and Tobin, Vanderbilt's right hand man, put in his place. From that hour to this Vanderbilt has controlled both the Hudson and Harlem Roads. Tobin soon became unmindful of the power that made him. He refused to obey the dictation of his chief, and, confident of his position, set up for himself. He was soon removed, and Mr. Vanderbilt's son, William H., was put in his place.

#### MR. VANDERBILT ON THE OCEAN.

Not satisfied with his achievements on the land and on the rivers, Mr. Vanderbilt resolved to try the ocean. He built a fine steamer at his own cost, and equipped her completely. The Collins line was then in its glory. Mr. Collins, with his fine fleet of steamers and his subsidy from the government, was greatly elated and very imperious. It was quite difficult to approach him.

Any day, on the arrival of a steamer, he could be seen pacing the dock, the crowd falling back, and making space for the tread of the important personage. One of his ships was lost. Vanderbilt applied to Collins to allow his steamer to take the place vacant on the line for a time. He promised to make no claim for the subsidy, and to take off his ship as soon as Collins built one to take her place. Collins refused to do this. He was afraid if Vanderbilt got his foot into this ocean business, he would get in his whole body. If Vanderbilt could run an ocean steamship without subsidy, government would require Collins to do it. He saw only mischief any way. He not only refused, but refused very curtly. In the sharp Doric way that Vanderbilt has of speaking when he is mad, he told Collins that he would run his line off of the ocean if it took all of his own fortune and the years of his life. He commenced his opposition in a manner that made it irresistible, and a work of short duration. He offered the government to carry the mails for a term of years without a dollar's cost to the nation. He offered to bind himself under the heaviest bonds the government could exact to perform this service for a term of years more promptly and faithfully than it had ever been done before. His well-known business tact, energy, and wealth were conceded. His ability to do what he said no one could deny. His proposition was not only laid before the members of Congress, but pressed home by a hundred agencies that he employed. The subsidy was withdrawn; Collins became bankrupt; his splendid fleet of steamers, the finest the world had ever seen, were moored at the wharves, where they lie rotting.



Had Collins conceded to Vanderbilt's wishes, or divided with him the business on the ocean, the Collins line would not only have been a fact to-day, but would have been as prosperous as the Cunard line.

GREAT GIFT TO THE NATION.

When the rebellion broke out, the navy was in a feeble condition. Every ship in the South was pressed into the rebel service. The men-of-war at Norfolk were burned. At Annapolis they were mutilated and made unfit for service. The efficient portion of the navy was cruising in foreign seas beyond recall. The need of ships-of-war and gunboats was painfully apparent. The steamship Vanderbilt was the finest and fleetest vessel that floated in our waters. Her owner fitted her up as a man-of-war at his own expense, and fully equipped her. He then offered her for sale to the government at a reasonable price. Mr. Vanderbilt found that there were certain men standing between the government and the purchase, who insisted on a profit on every vessel that the government bought. He refused to pay the black-mail that was exacted of him if his vessel became the property of the nation. He was told that unless he acceded to these demands, he could not sell his ship. Detesting the conduct of the men who, pretending to be patriots, were making money out of the necessities of the nation, he proceeded at once to Washington, and made a donation of the Vanderbilt, with all her equipments, a free gift to the nation.

There are few men who attend more closely to business than Mr. Vanderbilt. His property is estimated

at thirty millions. He is very liberal where he takes an interest, but very fitful in his charities. I have seen him not only subscribe liberally to a cause presented to him, but compel all his friends present to make a liberal donation. He is prompt, sharp, and decisive in his manner of doing business. He is punctual to his engagements to a minute. He is clear in his intellect, and buys and sells on the spot. He is very intelligent, well informed, and in commercial and national affairs has no rival in shrewdness and good judgment. He is affable, puts on no airs, and is pleasant and genial as a companion. Time is doing its work on his iron frame. He feels the decrepitude of age, and is heeding its admonitions. He enters into no new speculations, for he wishes to leave no unfinished business to his children. His immense estate is already settled. He has divided his property among his children, and allotted to his heirs what each is to receive. Financially he is ready for his last great change.