# THE SIOUX COUNTY JOURNAL.

E. J. SIMMONS, Proprietor

HARRISON, — NEBRASKA.


### Til Favor of Annexation.

WASHINGTON, Feb. 18.—The president's message accompanying the draft of a treaty for the annexation of the Hawaiian islands, transmitted to the senate, says the provisional treaty does not attempt to deal in detail with the questions growing out of annexation. The Hawaiian commissioners have consented to leave the future and to the just and benevolent purposes of the nited States the adjustment of all such questions. The president says it has been the policy of the administration not only to respect but encourage the continuance of the idependent government of the Hawaiian islands so long as it afforded a suitable guarantee for the protection of life and property and maintained a stability and strength and gave the adequate security against the denomination of any other power. The overthrow of the monarchy was not in any way prompted by this government, but had its origin in what seems to have been a reactionary and revolutionary policy on the part of Queen Liliuokalani, which put in serious peril not only the large and prepondering interests of United States in the islands, but all foreign interests and indeed the decent administration of the civil affairs and peace of the islands.

QUEEN CANNOT BE RESORED.

It is quite evident the monarchy effects the government so weak and inadequate as to be a prey to designing and unscrupulous persons. The restoration of the queen to the throne is undesirable, if not possible, and unless actively supported by the United States would be accompanied by serious disaster and the disorgination of all business interests. The influence and interests of the United States in the islands must be increased, and not diminished. Only two courses are now open—one the establishment of a protectorate by the United States, and the other annexation full and complete. The president thinks the latter course, which has been adopted in the treaty, will be highly promotive of the best interests of the Hawaiian people, and the only one that will adequately secure the interests of the United States. These interests are not wholly selfish.

UNITED STATES MUST SECURE CONTROL

It is essential that none of the other great powers secure these islands. Such possession would not consist with our safety and the peace of the world. This view of the situation is so apparent and conclusive that no protest has been heard from any government against the proceedings looking to annexation. Every foreign representative at Honolulu promptly acknowledged the provisional government, "and I think," says the president, "there is general occurrence in the opinion that the deposed queen ought not to be restored. Prompt action upon the treaty is very desirable, if it meets the approval of the senate peace and good order will be secured in the islands under the existing laws, until such time as congress can provide by legislation a permanent form of government for the islands. This legislation should be and I do not doubt, will be, not only just to to the natives and all other residents and citizens of the islands, but should be charaterized by great liberality and a high regard to the right of all the people and all foreigners domiciled there."

OBJECTS OF THE TREATY.

A preamble to the treaty declares that the government of the United States and the provisional government of Hawaii, in view of the natural dependence of those islands upon the United States, their geographical proximity, and the intimate part taken by citizens of the United States in implanting the seed of Christian civilization; of the long continuance of exclusive reciprocal commercial relations, whereby mutual interests have been developed; of the preponderant and paramount share thus acquired by the United States in the productions, industries and trade of said island, and especially in view of the desire expressed by said government of Hawaii that those islands shall be incorporated into the United States as an integral part thereof, and under their sovereignty, in order to provide for and assure the security and prosperity of said islands, the high contracting parties have determined to accomplish, by treaty, the object so important to their permanent welfare, and to this end conferred full power upon their respective plenipotentiaries, who agreed upon a treaty.

LIKELY TO BE RATIFIED.

A careful canvass of the senate appears to indicate that the Hawaiian treaty will be ratified, with several votes more than the necessary two-thirds to spare. The limit of the opposition is put at twenty votes.

### Arrested for Selling Worthless Stock.

KANSAS CITY, Mo., Feb. 18.—Elmer Williams, ex-president of the defunct Continental National bank, arrived in the city yesterday morning and was arrested on the warrants sworn out by John J. Porter of Hannibal, Mo., several days ago. Porter charges Williams with selling him $5,000 worth of Continental bank stocks under false pretenses, as told in these dispatches yesterday.

Some of the London street preacher [illegible] humorous. They are sleeply [illegible] talk to attract a crowd [illegible] generally their skill as

### NEBRASKA LEGISLATURE.

Since the election of United States senator the number of visitors in the Capital city has greatly diminished.

During the sessions of the legislature the hotels seem almost deserted. There are a few anxious gentlemen from various parts of the state, who are waiting the governor's somewhat tardy action, in regard to appointments, and there is quite an apparent feeling of discontent among them and their friends at the long delay. They point to the celerity with which Gov. Boyd bounced out the republicans, and say it was just the thing to do, and that Gov. Crounse ought to follow his example. Nearly a month and a half has elapsed since Jan. 1, and yet only one appointment has been made outside of the governor's own office, to any position of emolument. Allen D. Beemer, of Cumming county, has been appointed warden of the penitentiary. There was some talk that the independents and democrats in the senate would refuse to confirm the appointment, but their action Friday morning, in voting unanimously for his confirmation, quieted all uneasiness on that score. The Governor has also appointed B. E. B. Kennedy, Church Howe and T. J. Majors, members of the state Board of Education.

A Bill has been introduced to repeal capital puishment in the state of Nebraska.

There is very strong opposition in all quarters to the bill repealing state oil inspection. It is urged that it is a measure of the Standard Oil Company which desires to make Nebraska a dumping ground for its poor and dangerous oil, that cannot be sold in adjacent states where they have a reasonable test and inspectors to see to it that the oil sold in the state is up to the test. The state oil inspector's office, during the last term, has paid all of its own expenses, including all salaries and in addition had a balance left to go into the state treasury, so that the inspection costs the state nothing, protects the people from the great danger of bad oil, and pays a revenue to the state.

Considerable interest is felt in House roll No. 281, by Dimmick, which provides that it shall be unlawful for any individual, or member of any firm, or an agent, officer or employe of any company or corporation to prevent employes from forming, joining and belonging to any labor organization, and any such individual, member, agent, officers or employer that coerces or attempts to coerce employes by discharging or threatening to discharge any person from their employ or the employ of any firm, company or corporation because of their connection with such lawful labor organization, shall be fined in any sum not exceeding $300 or imprisonment for not more than six months or both, in the discretion of the court. The report of the committee recommending the passage of the bill was adopted.

House Roll No. 112, by Mr. Jensen is a bill for an act to recount the ballots cast for and against the amendment to the constitution relating to executive officers, and the amendment to the constitution relative to the permanent school fund, on the 8th day of November, 1892, and to declare the result. Bill passed with emergency clause and title agreed to.

This bill, house roll No. 112, is the first bill to pass both houses with the single exception of the bill for an appropriation of money for the payment of members and employes of this session of the legislature. Gov. Crounse has signed the bill and it is now a settled fact that the votes cast on the constitutional amendments will be recounted. Following is a portion of the bill:

Section 1. The county clerks of each county within this state are hereby required to forward to the secretary of state, on or before this 15th day of February, 1893, all the ballots and poll books returned to said clerks by the judge and clerks of the election held on the 8th day of November, 1892.

Sec. 2. The receetary and auditor of state, together with two senators, to be appointed be the senate, and three members of the house of representatives, to be appointed by the house, shall constitute a board to inspect, count and compare, and they shall open, cocnt and compare said ballots and poll books so returned by the clerks of the several counties, so far as said ballots relate to the amendments to the constitution of the state of Nebraska, submitted at said election, relating to the executive officers and relating to the permanent school fund, and transmit to the governor their find thereon, and declare the result on or before the 1st day of March, 1893.

House roll, No. 230, by Fulton, provides that the judicial power of this state shall be vested in the supreme court, appellate court, district court, county courts, justices of the peace, police magistrates, and in such other courts inferior to the district courts, as may be creased by law and cities and incorporated towns, and that this state shall be divided into two or more appellate districts. Recommended to pass as reported by committee.

House roll, No. 222, by Withnell, provides that a person of foreign birth now exercising the right of suffrage in this state on his declaration of intention to become a citizen, may continue to do so until the expiration of five years from the time of such declaration; after which time he must become a citizen of the United States to be entitled to exercise the elective franchise. The report of the committee that it do pass was adopted.

## DOINGS OF CONGRESS.

### MEASURES CONSIDERED AND ACTED UPON.

**At the Nation's Capital—What Is Being Done by the Senate and House—Old Matters Disposed Of and New Ones Considered.**

**The Senate and House.**

The periods of the Senate Monday were of a character at once interesting and important. The junior representative from New York, Senator Hill, made the motion of which he had given notice last Friday—to proceed to the consideration of the bill to repeal the Sherman silver-purchase act—and in support of the motion delivered a carefully prepared speech, in which he declared himself unconditionally a friend of free bimetallic coinage. The motion was defeated by nearly a two-thirds majority, the vote being yeas 23, nays 42. Afterward the quarantine bill was taken up and passed without a division, also a bill for the payment out of the treasury of local taxes on lands held by Indians in severality. Finally the automatical-coupler bill was taken up and discussed for a time, when it went over. Senator Hill presented a petition of the business men of Rochester, N. Y., irrespective of party, in favor of the repeal of the Sherman act. Senate bill to authorize a bridge over the Monongahela River from Pittsburgh to Homestead was passed. This was suspension day in the House, and Mr. Kilgore, of Texas, soon began filibustering motions. His apparent object was to prevent the consideration of the anti-option bill, but deeper than this was his antagonism to the bankruptcy bill, which public rumor had put down on the slate for the day. It was after 1 o'clock when the various filibustering motions of Mr. Kilgore were disposed of and the journal approved. Then Mr. Bunn moved to suspend the rules and pass a bill appropriating $32,000 for the relief of the heirs of Adelicia Cho eau. Mr. Burrows demanded a second, and, as no quorum voted, on motion of Mr. Kilgore a call of the House was ordered. The call showed the presence of a quorum and tellers were again ordered. Again no quorum voted and again a call of the House was ordered. After several other roll calls the House adjourned without having reached the anti-option or the bankruptcy bill.

The House Tuesday made fair progress with one of the great appropriation bills. That legislative bill appropriates upward of $21,500,000. Aside from a review of the condition of the treasury by Messrs. Dingley and Dockery—divergent views—and an attack on the civil-service law by Mr. Dearmond the proceedings were uninteresting. Senator Chandler managed to give a political twist to the debate in the Senate on the automatic-coupler bill. He brought up a resolution in the National Democratic platform which denounces the Republican party and the Republican Senate for not having provided legislation for the protection of railroad employes, and he insisted that the position of so many Democratic Senators against the bill was inconsistent with their party fealty. He twitted them with the fact that only seven of them had voted to take up the bill for the repeal of the Sherman act, knowing the declaration of the National Democratic Convention on the subject of silver, and knowing the entreaties of the President-elect to have the Sherman act repealed before March 4. Mr. Wolcott, while arguing against the automatic-coupler bill, said that no other Senator than Mr. Chandler could have found a political advantage in it. After a great deal of talk back and forth no action was taken on the bill.

On Wednesday the Senate resumed consideration of the railway car-coupler bill. Mr. Peffer took exception to some remarks made by Mr. Wolcott, reflecting, as Mr. Peffer thought, on the farmers and workingmen of the country, and he hoped that the bill would pass, no matter how much it might cost the railway companies. He had no qualms of conscience on that point. Mr. Gorman argued that the organization of railway employes could accomplish more in the way of improvement than all the legislation that could be piled on the statute book. Mr. Cullom declared it had got to be a question whether Congress would put money against the blood of railroad employes, and whether money was more valuable than the lives of these men. Various amendments were offered, but without action the Senate, after an executive session, adjourned. The Speaker laid before the House the House quarantine bill, with Senate amendment, and Mr. Raynor moved a concurrence. A few moments before 1 o'clock Doorkeeper Turner announced the presence of the Vice President and Senate of the United States, and the vast assemblage rose with one accord to do them honor. The Vice President took the chair assigned to him at the right of the Speaker, and the Senators occupied the first four rows of the seats to the right of the presiding officer. The counting of the electoral vote was then proceeded with, and at its completion the Senate returned to its own hall. When the Senate retired the House resumed in committee the consideration of the legislative appropriation bill. Without disposing of the bill the committee and the House adjourned.

Thursday was silver day in the House, and the friends of silver were victorious in the fight by a majority of 9. They sustained the demand for the previous question on the resolution setting apart Thursday and Friday for the consideration of the bill repealing the Sherman act. The whole of the day's session of the Senate after the morning hour was devoted to a discussion of the railway automatic car-coupler bill. At noon the Senate went into executive session, and the doors remained closed for more than half an hour. When they were reopened the unfinished business, the automatic car-coupler bill, was taken up, but, without concluding the consideration of the bill the Senate adjourned.

The time of the House Friday was taken up by the pension debate. The bill proposes an expenditure of $160,000,000, a cut of $6,000,000 from what was asked. Mr. Mutchler argued in support of the changes in the pension laws recommended by the committee. There were, he said, thousands and many thousands of men who were on the pension rolls to-day who had never heard the whistle of the bullet or yet the roar of artillery. Mr. Grout admitted that the amount of money required for the payment of pensions was a large one. But it must be remembered that the bulk of it was for invalid veterans or for the widows of men who had lain down their lives for their country. He was opposed to the transfer of the Pension Bureau as proposed by the bill. Without closing the general debate the committee rose and the House took a recess. The debate in the Senate on the automatic car-coupler bill was not of an enlivening or even an interesting character. The Vice President presented the memorial of the Chicago Chamber of Commerce favoring the annexation of the Hawaiian Islands, and it was referred to the Committee on Foreign Relations. The bill to provide for sundry lighthouses and other aids to navigation was passed as it came from the House. The calendar was taken up and several minor bills were passed. The conference report on the bill to restore to the public domain a portion of the White Mountain Apache Indian Reservation was presented and agreed to, and the Senate adjourned.

### James G. Blaine.

A MYSTERIOUS man.—Toronto Mail.

WAS not born to die.—Minneapolis Tribune.

THE most illustrious American.—Boston Record.

BIG-HEARTED, generous, and bitter.—New Orleans States.

THE greatest American of recent times.—New York Tribune.

THE foremost private citizen of the republic.—Boston Journal.

AMERICA has produced few more brilliant men.—Richmond State.

# FLORA MERWYN'S FORTUNE.

BY GEORGE HENRY MORSE

### CHAPTER XI.

IN ONE ACT.

Ray Webster!

A visible menace, a weird, haunting dread, as the full truth burst upon the mind of the astounded, overwhelmed Arnold Dacre, for the first time in his bold, evil experience of wrong-doing, he quailed and weakened like the veriest craven.

To dispose of a foe effectually, to map out a straight course of progress for a new career, and to have that foe appear, silently, secretly, and score the first point in the game, was enough to dismay a more resolute soul than that of the over-confident plotter.

In a flash he discerned the truth. The tell-tale ticket had revealed all. A good-conduct badge, entitling an inmate of the state penitentiary to certain privileges as a reward for meritorious behavior, who could have possessed it but the owner of that number, 2,324, who could have dropped it in the carriage seat, but the driver of the vehicle?

And convict No. 2,324, as Arnold Dacre well knew, was no other than the ex-clerk of the bank, the alleged embezzler, the disgraced lover of Flora Merwyn—Ray Webster!

He had escaped, that was certain. He had returned to Ridgefield. He had arrived at an opportune moment, at a critical climax in the affairs of the bank—and he had acted!

Struck dumb with a full realization of what that meant, the villain chilled with vague augury and dread. He had been mistaken when he had said that but two persons in the world possessed a knowledge of the vault combination, the dead banker and himself. There was yet another, but so securely had he wound a net of seeming guilt about that third person, so strongly had he shut him in to a loathsome prison cell, that he had never remembered that Ray Webster also knew the secret key to the massive vault door. That knowledge had probably saved Flora Merwyn's life, and had robbed the schemer of his victim. He had appeared mysteriously, he must have witnessed the interview between the schemer and his confederate, John Wharton. The ladder, the carriage! Rescuing the imperiled girl, conveying her to the vehicle, he had removed her from the power of her enemies.

Then—

Then! The strong man shivered as he recalled the awful debt of blight and wrong the innocent Ray Webster owed him—as he recalled, too, the firm, resolute nature of the escaped convict. A worthier champion Flora Merwyn could not have found, for what vengeance and duty might fail to accomplish love would certainly attain.

"Baffled—beaten!" he found voice to hiss forth at last, and he staggered into the open air with a wild impulse to fly the scene precipitately, ere the avenger appeared to betray, to unmask, to punish him.

"The money, the fortune—the package I entrusted to John Wharton, that first!" he gasped. "It is folly to remain here now. The story of Ray Webster would raise a storm of suspicion that the corroborative evidence of Flora Merwyn would augment to certainty. No, every hour's delay is fraught with danger. It is flight now—flight only. I must see Wharton, and at once."

A bitter scowl darkened the sinister face. Fortune was much; luxury the key-note of this man's nature, but the fair face of Flora Merwyn had been a lode-star in the past. He was susceptive of at least one genuine emotion—he valued her love, he had craved it, he had sworn to possess it, and now, with a muttered malediction he hurried forward. All that must be abandoned.

He arrived at John Wharton's lodgings. At the foot of the stairs stood a little group. They were discussing the old clerk's queer behavior. Dacre glided into the shadow and listened to them unseen.

"He's gone clear daft," spoke one. "Why! when I asked him if the bank would pay a dividend of ten cents on the dollar, he laughed in a silly way and said he expected two millions from the government in new gold coin to-morrow."

"Yes," spoke up a second, "and he's been cutting pasteboard into bits, and pretending they were drafts on New York. Oh! his troubles have certainly driven him witless. Poor, honest fellow! little he dreamed of the villainy of others, that was to drive him out in the world a pauper in his old age."

A covert smile crossed Dacre's face as he stole noiselessly up the stairs. The court would scarcely attempt to question a lunatic as to the affairs of the bank. Oh! it was a royal game, admirably played. Pitty for it, that, after all this shrewd, careful plotting, flight should be necessary, with but half the precious prey at stake attained!

The sounds of an excited voice raised in frantic, incoherent tumult quickened Dacre's steps. He pressed the knob of the door that led into the old clerk's sleeping apartment. A vivid picture filled his vision as he did so.

There stood the Sheriff, a cloud of concern and distress on his brow, regarding a wild, uncouth figure, crouching against the bed, John Wharton's ashen face glowered forth strangely. Even Dacre, believing it all a farce, all pretence, lost sight of the superb acting of his subordinate, in the awful frenzy the miserable wretch portrayed.

"Checks—drafts—bills of exchange. Step up gentlemen, take your choice, millions in fresh, crisp bank-notes, billions in government bonds and foreign securities, and in the vaults—gold!"

Thus prated the old clerk, quietly enough. Of a sudden, however, he fixed his eyes on vacancy. With a terrible scream, he sprang to the other side of the room.

"Gold? No! no!" he shrieked wildly, "it is not gold. It is Flora Merwyn's golden tresses. Get her out—get her out! Mercy! do not cross the checks with red ink—it is the life-blood of Banker Merwyn—murdered! murdered! Gold! gold! gold! my heart is filled with it, and I am sinking, sinking, sinking to perdition!"

A quick token of alarm came into Arnold Dacre's eyes. Was this shamming—acting? Why this illusion to the missing girl, this terribly realistic horror, in the haunted eyes of the old clerk? Had the weak, vacillating mind, in acting a part, overstepped the boundary line of reality, and drifted a hopeless wreck upon the blank sea of insanity?

"What shall we do with him?" asked the Sheriff, in an awed whisper.

"Leave me alone with him," returned Dacre, assuming a confidence he scarcely experienced.

The Sheriff bowed assentingly, and with a sigh of relief left the apartment. Dacre closed and locked the door after him. Then he approached his crouching, muttering hireling.

"Wharton!"

Something in the stern domineering tone of the tyrant, potent as of old to sway him for the moment, fixed the mind of the man addressed.

"Well, faithful old partner" cried Dacre, slapping the trembling wretch familiarly on the shoulder. "You've pulled the wool over their eyes, all of them. Why, man! you would make your fortune on the mimic stage. And now, to business!"

"Business? Yes! yes! Rothschild cabled me yesterday—"

"Shut up that jargon! Your part of the farce is over now," interrupted Dacre. "We're to leave, Wharton, we're to divide, depart, and enjoy our fortune in foreign lands. Worth the plotting and the waiting, eh! old friend? Quick, John! the package."

"The package," repeated Wharton, like an automaton. "There was one of drafts—from the Bank of England."

Arnold Dacre started. He regarded his companion sharply. Something in the dazed, uncertain eyes chilled him with a sudden, sickening sense of disaster. He shook him roughly.

"Come, Wharton! collect your scattered wits," he ordered impatiently. "The package! I want it. Where have you hidden it?"

"It sunk!" With a shriek that filled his auditor, John Wharton screamed forth the word, and sprang to the floor with eyes of terror once more. "There was Webster starving to death in a prison cell, there was Merwyn murdered by us, there was pretty, golden-haired Flora choked to death in the vault. They took it, and sunk, dancing, dancing, dancing!"

The wild outburst terminated in a yell of agony. Frothing at the mouth, torn in a terrible convulsion, the old bank clerk sank helpless at the feet of the appalled plotter.

White to the lips, that plotter reeled where he stood. With a heart of lead, and a brain whirling, he realized that he had sold his soul for a glittering bribe that had eluded his eager grasp at last.

For this was no acting—this was no feirned lunacy.

He had given his hireling a part to play, and full-well had old John Wharton enacted the role.

He would never be called on to testify in court—no fear of that now! No danger of complications arising from what those witless lips might utter!

For Wharton was stark, raving mad.

### CHAPTER XII.

DISGUISED.

With empty hands and empty heart, Arnold Dacre stood regarding the wreck of his last hope. Sin had brought its fit reward.

His soul sank as he realized that those babbling lips might never betray the secret of the missing package, or, if ever, too late to avail him, for flight was now more imperative than ever. With an abundance of money, he could pick his path to safety, penniless, he was as forlorn a fugitive as the escaped ex-convict himself.

"The money—the money!—where was it—would it escape him after all his careful plotting? The thought burned into his reeling brain, and coupled with it was the bitter knowledge that he had lost Flora Merwyn, that every waning hour might be bringing the resolute avenger, Ray Webster, closer and closer upon his track.

For Ray Webster was alive—he knew it, circumstances proved it, and the fair, crushed girl who had seen her lover seemingly dashed to his doom, and had frantically rushed away to share the fate of a beloved father, had mourned him vainly.

Stunned, benumbed, helpless, Ray Webster had been flung by the treacherous waters of the river upon a broad rock. There, panting, nerveless, he had lain for an hour or more.

What the scheming scoundrel Arnold Dacre had theorized as to his latter movements, was practically correct. He had finally gained sufficient strength to swim ashore to find Flora gone, and too late to overtake and warn her imperiled father, but not too late to resolve to defeat the schemes of the man whose false testimony had placed upon him the brand of the convict.

He knew—ah! how surely he knew! that careful plotting had robbed him of his good name. He knew that the failure of the bank must be the work of his enemy, Arnold Dacre. By secluded lanes, stealing from shelter to shelter, fearing recognition, pursuit, arrest, he finally gained the stables of the Merwyn homestead, and thence the court that terminated directly under the windows of the private office of the bank.

His had been the hand that had placed the ladder against the window sill, his the face that had peered in on a scene that fully evidenced the villainy of the faint-hearted cashier. He heard his injunction to Wharton, he realized the peril of Flora, he discerned his own weakness as a champion—he, a hunted fugitive! He saw Flora shut into the dark vault. Then, his pulses throbbing, he sprang into the room, once it was vacated. Memory supplied the old combination to the lock. Still senseless, he bore Flora from the apartment, down the ladder, across the court, and, placing her tenderly among the soft cushions of the carriage, tried to think out the difficult problem of the hour.

Confinement and suffering had sharpened his reasoning faculties. As he reflected on the boldness and power of his unscrupulous enemy, he decided that his first move must be to convey Flora to a place of safety. He dared not even trust the housekeeper. Planning swiftly, he attached the horses to the vehicle. Drawing its curtains and donning the enveloping cloak and sheltering slouch hat of the driver, he boldly sped from the scene. Mile after mile he traversed. He had a definite point of progress in view. He reached it finally—a lonely, sequestered cabin in the woods. Removing Flora, he placed her tenderly on a rustic bench. Then, turning the horses' heads homewards again, he struck them a sharp blow, and steeds and vehicle soon disappeared in the distance.

He approached the open, vine embowered window of the cottage with an eager face. It brightened quickly as he peered in.

Seated in an old-fashioned rocker, humming a homely tune and sewing, sat an old woman whose sad, patient smile and silvered hair formed an aureole of angelic beauty to that careworn face.

She looked up with a nervous start as he stepped across the threshold. Then the slight token of fear disappeared from her face, and she arose with extended arms and beaming eyes.

"Oh! Mr. Webster, my friend, it is you? Welcome! welcome."

Ray Webster looked earnestly into the tear-stained, friendly face.

"Mrs. Alden," he said gravely, "I see you are surprised, you wonder how I, a convict—"

"A convict? A martyr! Oh, Mr. Webster! do you think that I for a moment believed you guilty? I have written you, I tried to see you—"

"Yes, yes, I know. We will talk of that later," interrupted Ray seriously. "Do you remember telling me once, that if ever I was in trouble you would help me?"

"I would die for you!" cried the old woman, her wan face flushing with the earnestness of love and devotion." When my poor crippled husband and myself were turned from our little home in Ridgefield, you nobly saved us from the poor house. Your means purchased us this quiet paradise, you crowned our old age with peace and plenty, my husband died blessing you, and I—command! my life is yours."

Briefly, rapidly but coherently, Ray Webster told his story to the old woman. She listened with a shudder as he depicted the blackness of Arnold Dacre's heart, the misery he had wrought, her eyes were one great glow of sympathy and love, as he asked her to care for Flora Merwyn for a few days.

"She must not return to Ridgefield," he said.

"But when she wakens the thought of her father will impel her to hasten thither."

"It must not be—you will tell her that a friend—a true friend rescued her from the bank vault. She thinks me dead. You must not enlighten her yet. Keep her here until I return."

"You are going away? You may be recognized!"

"I will be careful," replied Ray, solemnly. "I have a great work to do, and and for the sake of this beloved, bereaved, creature, I will not court danger. But I need money to prosecute my plans against Arnold Dacre, I need a disguise—"

The woman started.

"Stay!" she spoke quite excitedly. "A disguise? The gypsies taught me a curious art once. Mr. Webster, will you consent to remain here until to-morrow morning, if I agree to furnish you with a disguise that your own friends would never pierce?"

"Can you do this?" queried Webster, skeptically.

"Yes."

He gave a dubious consent. Flora, still white and helpless, was brought into the hut, and Mrs. Alden placed her on her own snowy bed.

"She has suffered a severe shock, that is all," she said comforting to the anxious Ray. "Do not fear. I shall revive and control her. Come with me now."

She led the way to a shed and to its attic.

"You will be safe here if traced," she said. "There is a cot upon which you can rest."

"But I can not sleep, Mrs. Alden," demurred Webster. "Every moment is precious."

"Trust me," smiled his hostess encouragingly. "You will not regret it. Drink this," and she tendered a cup, into which she poured a mixture from a bottle.

Drug or sedative, it sent Ray Webster's wearied senses into dense but refreshing slumber almost immediately. It was daylight again when he awoke.

"A night—a whole precious night gone!" he cried, springing in dismay to his feet.

"Do not excite yourself," spoke a reassuring voice, and he looked up to see his faithful hostess putting away a cloth mask, shears, pigments and some saucers containing stains of various hues.

"Flora!" ejaculated Ray in a palpitating breath.

"She is sleeping quietly. She revived during the night, but I gave her a composing draught. Do not fear. I will carry out your wishes regarding her. And now you can go if you like, and heaven guide you in the battle of right against wrong!"

"Yes, I must go," repeated Ray slowly! "I must secure a disguise, I must get some money."

The old woman pointed to a suit of neat, home-spun clothes lying across a a chair, and to a little bag heavy with coin.

"Both are provided for you," she smiled, "I am thankful my little savings come in so appropriately, and, believe me, I can spare them."

"How shall I thank you?" murmured Webster gratefully, "but the disguise—these clothes will aid it, but my face—"

The old woman extended a pair of dark blue spectacles with a curious smile.

"Put them on," she directed.

Ray Webster obeyed mechanically and wonderingly.

"Now, look."

As she spoke, she held a small mirror before his face.

"I told you the gypsies had taught me some curious things," she reiterated. "They showed the play actor's art—how, with peculiar pigments and stains, a face could be masked. I could disguise any one. Look, Mr. Webster. You wanted a disguise. Is it safe?"

Ray Webster did look. For a moment, utter consternation filled his soul. He could scarcely credit the evidence of his senses. The face that reflected back at him from the little mirror, was utterly unfamiliar and strange.

And then, a fierce, wild joy supervened. He had sought a disguise. The deft hand of a faithful friend had supplied it marvelously.

It was more than disguise, it was a total change of his previous identity. Why! even Flora would not know him.

He was safe to go out into the world now—secure to follow his enemy into his very lair.

Like a young knight arrayed for combat, he sprang up ready for battle.

Man to man at even odds, the race to the swiftest runner. Let Arnold Dacre look well to himself, in the coming conflict of wrong against right, in the unrelenting warfare of the champion of love, honor, and duty!

[TO BE CONTINUED.]