

# CECIL DREEME



*Theodore Winthrop*

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# **Cecil Dreeme**

**Queer Classic Novel**

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# BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THE AUTHOR

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by  
George William Curtis

Theodore Winthrop's life, like a fire long smouldering, suddenly blazed up into a clear, bright flame, and vanished. Those of us who were his friends and neighbors, by whose firesides he sat familiarly, and of whose life upon the pleasant Staten Island, where he lived, he was so important a part, were so impressed by his intense vitality, that his death strikes us with peculiar strangeness, like sudden winter-silence falling upon these humming fields of June.

As I look along the wooded brook-side by which he used to come, I should not be surprised if I saw that knit, wiry, light figure moving with quick, firm, leopard tread over the grass, — the keen gray eye, the clustering fair hair, the kind, serious smile, the mien of undaunted patience. If you did not know him, you would have found his greeting a little constrained, — not from shyness, but from genuine modesty and the habit of society. You would have remarked that he was silent and observant, rather than talkative; and whatever he said, however gay or grave, would have had the reserve of sadness upon which his whole character was drawn. If it were a woman who saw him for the first time, she would inevitably see him through a slight cloud of misapprehension; for the man and his manner were a little at variance. The chance is, that at the end of five minutes she would have thought him conceited. At the end of five months she would have known him as one of the simplest and most truly modest of men.

And he had the heroic sincerity which belongs to such modesty. Of a noble ambition, and sensitive to applause, — as every delicate nature veined with genius always is, — he would not provoke the applause by doing anything which, although it lay easily within his power, was yet not wholly approved by him as worthy. Many men are ambitious and full of talent, and when the prize does not fairly come they snatch at it unfairly. This was precisely what he could not do. He would strive and deserve; but if the crown were not laid upon his head in the clear light of day and by confession of absolute merit, he could ride to his place again and wait, looking with no envy, but in patient wonder and with critical curiosity, upon the victors. It is this which he expresses in the paper in the July number of the Atlantic Monthly Magazine, “Washington as a Camp,” when he says, “I have heretofore been proud of my individuality, and resisted, so far as one may, all the world’s attempts to merge me in the mass.”

It was this which made many who knew him much, but not truly, feel that he was purposeless and restless. They knew his talent, his opportunities. Why does he not concentrate? Why does he not bring himself to bear? He did not plead his ill-health; nor would they have allowed the plea. The difficulty was deeper. He felt that he had shown his credentials, and they were not accepted. “I can wait, I can wait,” was the answer his life made to the impatience of his friends.

We are all fond of saying that a man of real gifts will fit himself to the work of any time; and so he will. But it is not necessarily to the first thing that offers. There is always latent in civilized society a certain amount of what may be called Sir Philip Sidney genius, which will seem elegant and listless and aimless enough until the congenial chance appears. A plant may grow in a cellar; but it will flower only under the due sun and warmth. Sir Philip Sidney was but a

lovely possibility, until he went to be Governor of Flushing. What else was our friend, until he went to the war?

The age of Elizabeth did not monopolize the heroes, and they are always essentially the same. When, for instance, I read in a letter of Hubert Lariguet's to Sidney, "You are not over-cheerful by nature," or when, in another, he speaks of the portrait that Paul Veronese painted of Sidney, and says, "The painter has represented you sad and thoughtful," I can believe that he is speaking of my neighbor. Or when I remember what Sidney wrote to his younger brother, — "Being a gentleman born, you purpose to furnish yourself with the knowledge of such things as may be serviceable to your country and calling," — or what he wrote to Languet, — "Our Princes are enjoying too deep a slumber: I cannot think there is any man possessed of common understanding who does not see to what these rough storms are driving by which all Christendom has been agitated now these many years," — I seem to hear my friend, as he used to talk on the Sunday evenings when he sat in this huge cane-chair at my side, in which I saw him last, and in which I shall henceforth always see him.

Nor is it unfair to remember just here that he bore one of the few really historic names in this country. He never spoke of it; but we should all have been sorry not to feel that he was glad to have sprung straight from that second John Winthrop who was the first Governor of Connecticut, the younger sister colony of Massachusetts Bay, — the John Winthrop who obtained the charter of privileges for his colony. How clearly the quality of the man has been transmitted! How brightly the old name shines out again!

He was born in New Haven on the 22d of September, 1828, and was a grave, delicate, rather precocious child. He was at school only in New Haven, and entered Yale College just as he was sixteen. The pure, manly morality which was the substance of his character, and his brilliant exploits of scholarship, made him the idol of his college friends, who

saw in him the promise of the splendid career which the fond faith of students allots to the favorite class-mate. He studied for the Clark scholarship, and gained it; and his name, in the order of time, is first upon the roll of that foundation. For the Berkeleian scholarship he and another were judged equal, and, drawing lots, the other gained the scholarship; but they divided the honor.

In college his favorite studies were Greek and mental philosophy. He never lost the scholarly taste and habit. A wide reader, he retained knowledge with little effort, and often surprised his friends by the variety of his information. Yet it was not strange, for he was born a scholar. His mother was the great-granddaughter of old President Edwards; and among his relations upon the maternal side, Winthrop counted six Presidents of colleges. Perhaps also in this learned descent we may find the secret of his early seriousness. Thoughtful and self-criticising, he was peculiarly sensible to religious influences, under which his criticism easily became self-accusation, and his sensitive seriousness grew sometimes morbid. He would have studied for the ministry or a professorship, upon leaving college, except for his failing health.

In the later days, when I knew him, the feverish ardor of the first religious impulse was past. It had given place to a faith much too deep and sacred to talk about, yet holding him always with serene, steady poise in the purest region of life and feeling. There was no franker or more sympathetic companion for young men of his own age than he; but his conversation fell from his lips as unsullied as his soul.

He graduated in 1848, when he was twenty years old; and for the sake of his health, which was seriously shattered, — an ill-health that colored all his life, — he set out upon his travels. He went first to England, spending much time at Oxford, where he made pleasant acquaintances, and walking through Scotland. He then crossed over to France and Germany, exploring Switzerland



very thoroughly upon foot, — once or twice escaping great dangers among the mountains, — and pushed on to Italy and Greece, still walking much of the way. In Italy he made the acquaintance of Mr. W. H. Aspinwall, of New York, and upon his return became tutor to Mr. Aspinwall's son. He presently accompanied his pupil and a nephew of Mr. Aspinwall, who were going to a school in Switzerland; and after a second short tour of six months in Europe he returned to New York, and entered Mr. Aspinwall's counting-house. In the employ of the Pacific Steamship Company he went to Panama and resided for about two years, travelling, and often ill of the fevers of the country. Before his return he travelled through California and Oregon, — went to Vancouver's Island, Puget Sound, and the Hudson Bay Company's station there. At the Dalles he was smitten with the small-pox, and lay ill for six weeks. He often spoke with the warmest gratitude of the kind care that was taken of him there. But when only partially recovered he plunged off again into the wilderness. At another time he fell very ill upon the plains, and lay down, as he supposed, to die; but after some time struggled up and on again.

He returned to the counting-room, but, unsated with adventure, joined the disastrous expedition of Lieutenant Strain. During the time he remained with it his health was still more weakened, and he came home again in 1854. In the following year he studied law and was admitted to the bar. In 1856 he entered heartily into the Fremont campaign, and from the strongest conviction. He went into some of the dark districts of Pennsylvania and spoke incessantly. The roving life and its picturesque episodes, with the earnest conviction which inspired him, made the summer and autumn exciting and pleasant. The following year he went to St. Louis to practise law. The climate was unkind to him, and he returned and began the practice in New York. But he could not be a lawyer. His health was too uncertain, and his tastes and ambition allured him elsewhere. His mind was

brimming with the results of observation. His fancy was alert and inventive, and he wrote tales and novels. At the same time he delighted to haunt the studio of his friend Church, the painter, and watch day by day the progress of his picture, the Heart of the Andes. It so fired his imagination that he wrote a description of it, in which, as if rivalling the tropical and tangled richness of the picture, he threw together such heaps and masses of gorgeous words that the reader was dazzled and bewildered.

The wild campaigning life was always a secret passion with him. His stories of travel were so graphic and warm, that I remember one evening, after we had been tracing upon the map a route he had taken, and he had touched the whole region into life with his description, my younger brother, who had sat by and listened with wide eyes all the evening, exclaimed with a sigh of regretful satisfaction, as the door closed upon our story-teller, "It's as good as Robinson Crusoe!" Yet, with all his fondness and fitness for that kind of life, or indeed any active administrative function, his literary ambition seemed to be the deepest and strongest.

He had always been writing. In college and upon his travels he kept diaries; and he has left behind him several novels, tales, sketches of travel, and journals. The first published writing of his which is well known is his description, in the June (1861) number of the Atlantic Monthly Magazine, of the March of the Seventh Regiment of New York to Washington. It was charming by its graceful, sparkling, crisp, off-hand dash and ease. But it is only the practised hand that can "dash off" effectively. Let any other clever member of the clever regiment, who has never written, try to dash off the story of a day or a week in the life of the regiment, and he will see that the writer did that little thing well because he had done large things carefully. Yet, amid all the hurry and brilliant bustle of the articles, the author is, as he was in the most bustling moment of the life

they described, a spectator, an artist. He looks on at himself and the scene of which he is part. He is willing to merge his individuality; but he does not merge it, for he could not.

So, wandering, hoping, trying, waiting, thirty-two years of his life went by, and they left him true, sympathetic, patient. The sharp private griefs that sting the heart so deeply, and leave a little poison behind, did not spare him. But he bore everything so bravely, so silently, — often silent for a whole evening in the midst of pleasant talkers, but not impertinently sad, nor ever sullen, — that we all loved him a little more at such times. The ill-health from which he always suffered, and a flower-like delicacy of temperament, the yearning desire to be of some service in the world, coupled with the curious, critical introspection which marks every sensitive and refined nature and paralyzes action, overcast his life and manner to the common eye with pensiveness and even sternness. He wrote verses in which his heart seems to exhale in a sigh of sadness. But he was not in the least a sentimentalist. The womanly grace of temperament merely enhanced the unusual manliness of his character and impression. It was like a delicate carnation upon the cheek of a robust man. For his humor was exuberant. He seldom laughed loud, but his smile was sweet and appreciative. Then the range of his sympathies was so large, that he enjoyed every kind of life and person, and was everywhere at home. In walking and riding, in skating and running, in games out of doors and in, no one of us all in the neighborhood was so expert, so agile as he. For, above all things, he had what we Yankees call faculty, — the knack of doing everything. If he rode with a neighbor who was a good horseman, Theodore, who was a Centaur, when he mounted, would put any horse at any gate or fence; for it did not occur to him that he could not do whatever was to be done. Often, after writing for a few hours in the morning, he stepped out of doors, and, from pure love of the fun, leaped and turned summersaults on the grass, before going

up to town. In walking about the island, he constantly stopped by the road-side fences, and, grasping the highest rail, swung himself swiftly and neatly over and back again, resuming the walk and the talk without delay.

I do not wish to make him too much a hero. "Death," says Bacon, "openeth the gate to good fame." When a neighbor dies, his form and quality appear clearly, as if he had been dead a thousand years. Then we see what we only felt before. Heroes in history seem to us poetic because they are there. But if we should tell the simple truth of some of our neighbors, it would sound like poetry. Winthrop was one of the men who represent the manly and poetic qualities that always exist around us, — not great genius, which is ever salient, but the fine fibre of manhood that makes the worth of the race.

Closely engaged with his literary employments, and more quiet than ever, he took less active part in the last election. But when the menace of treason became an aggressive act, he saw very clearly the inevitable necessity of arms. We all talked of it constantly, — watching the news, — chafing at the sad necessity of delay, which was sure to confuse foreign opinion and alienate sympathy, as has proved to be the case. As matters advanced and the war-cloud rolled up thicker and blacker, he looked at it with the secret satisfaction that war for such a cause opened his career both as thinker and actor. The admirable coolness, the promptness, the cheerful patience, the heroic ardor, the intelligence, the tough experience of campaigning, the profound conviction that the cause was in truth "the good old cause," which was now to come to the death-grapple with its old enemy, Justice against Injustice, Order against Anarchy, — all these should now have their turn, and the wanderer and waiter "settle himself" at last.

We took a long walk together on the Sunday that brought the news of the capture of Fort Sumter. He was thoroughly alive with a bright, earnest forecast of his part in the coming

work. Returning home with me, he sat until late in the evening talking with an unwonted spirit, saying playfully, I remember, that, if his friends would only give him a horse, he would ride straight to victory. Especially he wished that some competent person would keep a careful record of events as they passed; "for we are making our history," he said, "hand over hand." He sat quietly in the great chair while he spoke, and at last rose to go. We went together to the door, and stood for a little while upon the piazza, where we had sat peacefully through so many golden summer-hours. The last hour for us had come, but we did not know it. We shook hands, and he left me, passing rapidly along the brook-side under the trees, and so in the soft spring starlight vanished from my sight forever.

The next morning came the President's proclamation. Winthrop went immediately to town and enrolled himself in the artillery corps of the Seventh Regiment. During the two or three following days he was very busy and very happy. On Friday afternoon, the 19th of April, 1861, I stood at the corner of Courtland Street and saw the regiment as it marched away. Two days before, I had seen the Massachusetts troops going down the same street. During the day the news had come that they were already engaged, that some were already dead in Baltimore. And the Seventh, as they went, blessed and wept over by a great city, went, as we all believed, to terrible battle. The setting sun in a clear April sky shone full up the street. Mothers' eyes glistened at the windows upon the glistening bayonets of their boys below. I knew that Winthrop and other dear friends were there, but I did not see them. I saw only a thousand men marching like one hero. The music beat and rang and clashed in the air. Marching to death or victory or defeat, it mattered not. They marched for Justice, and God was their captain.

From that moment he has told his own story until he went to Fortress Monroe, and was made acting military

secretary and aid by General Butler. Before he went, he wrote the most copious and gayest letters from the camp. He was thoroughly aroused, and all his powers happily at play. In a letter to me soon after his arrival in Washington, he says: —

“I see no present end to this business. We must conquer the South. Afterward we must be prepared to do its police in its own behalf, and in behalf of its black population, whom this war must, without precipitation, emancipate. We must hold the South as the metropolitan police holds New York. All this is inevitable. Now I wish to enroll myself at once in the *Police of the Nation*, and for life, if the nation will take me. I do not see that I can put myself — experience and character — to any more useful use. . . . . My experience in this short campaign with the Seventh assures me that volunteers are for one purpose and regular soldiers entirely another. We want regular soldiers for the cause of order in these anarchical countries, and we want men in command who, though they may be valuable as temporary satraps or proconsuls to make liberty possible where it is now impossible, will never under any circumstances be disloyal to *Liberty*, will always oppose any scheme of any one to constitute a military government, and will be ready, when the time comes, to imitate Washington. We must think of these things, and prepare for them. . . . . Love to all the dear friends. . . . . This trip has been all a lark to an old tramper like myself.”

Later he writes: —

“It is the loveliest day of fullest spring. An aspen under the window whispers to me in a chorus of all its leaves, and when I look out, every leaf turns a sunbeam at me. I am writing in Viele’s quarters in the villa of Somebody Stone, upon whose place or farm we are encamped. The man who



built and set down these four great granite pillars in front of his house, for a carriage-porch, had an eye or two for a fine site. This seems to be the finest possible about Washington. It is a terrace called Meridian Hill, two miles north of Pennsylvania Avenue. The house commands the vista of the Potomac, all the plain of the city, and a charming lawn of delicious green, with oaks of first dignity just coming into leaf. It is lovely Nature, and the spot has snatched a grace from Art. The grounds are laid out after a fashion, and planted with shrubbery. The snowballs are at their snowballiest. . . . . Have you heard or — how many times have you used the simile of some one, Bad-muss or Cadmus, or another hero, who sowed the dragon's teeth, and they came up dragoons a hundred-fold and infantry a thousand-fold? *Nil admirari* is, of course, my frame of mind; but I own astonishment at the crop of soldiers. They must ripen awhile, perhaps, before they are to be named quite soldiers. Ripening takes care of itself; and by the harvest-time they will be ready to cut down.

"I find that the men best informed about the South do not anticipate much severe fighting. Scott's Fabian policy will demoralize their armies. If the people do not bother the great Cunctator to death before he is ready to move to assured victory, he will make defeat impossible. Meanwhile there will be enough outwork going on, like those neat jobs in Missouri, to keep us all interested. . . . . Know, O comrade, that I am already a corporal, — an acting corporal, selected by our commanding officer for my general effect of pipe-clay, my rapidity of heel and toe, my present arms, etc., but liable to be ousted by suffrage any moment. *Quod faustum sit*, . . . . . I had already been introduced to the Secretary of War. . . . . I called at —'s and saw, with two or three others, — on the sofa. Him my prophetic soul named my uncle Abe. . . . . But in my uncle's house are many nephews, and whether nepotism or my transcendent merit will prevail we shall see. I have fun, — I get

experience, — I see much, — it pays. Ah, yes! But in these fair days of May I miss my Staten Island. War stirs the pulse, but it wounds a little all the time.

“Compliment for me Tib [a little dog] and the Wisterias, — also the mares and the billiard-table. Ask — to give you t’ other lump of sugar in my behalf. . . . Should — return, say that I regret not being present with an unpremeditated compliment, as thus, — ‘Ah! the first rose of summer!’ . . . I will try to get an enemy’s button for — , should the enemy attack. If the Seventh returns presently, I am afraid I shall be obliged to return with them for a time. But I mean to see this job through, somehow.”

In such an airy, sportive vein he wrote, with the firm purpose and the distinct thought visible under the sparkle. Before the regiment left Washington, as he has recorded, he said good-by and went down the bay to Fortress Monroe. Of his unshrinking and sprightly industry, his good head, his warm heart, and cool hand, as a soldier, General Butler has given precious testimony to his family. “I loved him as a brother,” the General writes of his young aid.

The last days of his life at Fortress Monroe were doubtless also the happiest. His energy and enthusiasm, and kind, winning ways, and the deep satisfaction of feeling that all his gifts could now be used as he would have them, showed him and his friends that his day had at length dawned. He was especially interested in the condition and fate of the slaves who escaped from the neighboring region and sought refuge at the fort. He had never for an instant forgotten the secret root of the treason which was desolating the land with war; and in his view there would be no peace until that root was destroyed. In his letters written from the fort he suggests plans of relief and comfort for the refugees; and one of his last requests was to a lady in New York for clothes for these poor pensioners. They were promptly sent, but reached the fort too late.

As I look over these last letters, which gush and throb with the fulness of his activity, and are so tenderly streaked with touches of constant affection and remembrance, yet are so calm and duly mindful of every detail, I do not think with an elder friend, in whom the wisdom of years has only deepened sympathy for all generous youthful impulse, of Virgil's Marcellus, "Heu, miserande puer!" but I recall rather, still haunted by Philip Sidney, what he wrote, just before his death, to his father-in-law, Walsingham, — "I think a wise and constant man ought never to grieve while he doth play, as a man may say, his own part truly."

The sketches of the campaign in Virginia, which Winthrop had commenced in the Atlantic Monthly Magazine, would have been continued, and have formed an invaluable memoir of the places, the men, and the operations of which he was a witness and a part. As a piece of vivid pictorial description, which gives the spirit as well as the spectacle, his "Washington as a Camp" is masterly. He knew not only what to see and to describe, but what to think; so that in his papers you are not at the mercy of a multitudinous mass of facts, but understand their value and relation.

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The disastrous day of the 10th of June, at Great Bethel, need not be described here. It is already written with tears and vain regrets in our history. It is useless to prolong the debate as to where the blame of the defeat, if blame there were, should rest. But there is an impression somewhat prevalent that Winthrop planned the expedition, which is incorrect. As military secretary of the commanding general, he made a memorandum of the outline of the plan as it had been finally settled. Precisely what that memorandum (which has been published) was, he explains in the last letter he wrote, a few hours before leaving the fort. He says: "If I come back safe, I will send you my notes of the plan of attack, part

made up from the General's hints, part my own fancies." This defines exactly his responsibility. His position as aid and military secretary, his admirable qualities as adviser under the circumstances, and his personal friendship for the General, brought him intimately into the council of war. He embarked in the plan all the interest of a brave soldier contemplating his first battle. He probably made suggestions some of which were adopted. The expedition was the first move from Fort Monroe, to which the country had been long looking in expectation. These were the reasons why he felt so peculiar a responsibility for its success; and after the melancholy events of the earlier part of the day, he saw that its fortunes could be retrieved only by a dash of heroic enthusiasm. Fired himself, he sought to kindle others. For one moment that brave, inspiring form is plainly visible to his whole country, rapt and calm, standing upon the log nearest the enemy's battery, the mark of their sharpshooters, the admiration of their leaders, waving his sword, cheering his fellow-soldiers with his bugle voice of victory, — young, brave, beautiful, for one moment erect and glowing in the wild whirl of battle, the next falling forward toward the foe, dead, but triumphant.

On the 19th of April, 1861, he left the armory-door of the Seventh, with his hand upon a howitzer; on the 21st of June his body lay upon the same howitzer at the same door, wrapped in the flag for which he gladly died as the symbol of human freedom. And so, drawn by the hands of young men lately strangers to him, but of whose bravery and loyalty he had been the laureate, and who fitly mourned him who had honored them, with long, pealing dirges and muffled drums, he moved forward.

Yet such was the electric vitality of this friend of ours, that those of us who followed him could only think of him as approving the funeral pageant, not the object of it, but still the spectator and critic of every scene in which he was a part. We did not think of him as dead. We never shall. In the

moist, warm midsummer morning, he was alert, alive,  
immortal.

# STILLFLEET AND HIS NEWS

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Home!

The Arago landed me at midnight in mid-winter. It was a dreary night. I drove forlornly to my hotel. The town looked mean and foul. The first omens seemed unkindly. My spirits sank full fathom five into Despond.

But bed on shore was welcome after my berth on board the steamer. I was glad to be in a room that did not lurch or wallow, and could hold its tongue. I could sleep, undisturbed by moaning and creaking woodwork, forever threatening wreck in dismal refrain.

It was late next morning when a knock awoke me. I did not say, "Entrez," or "Herein."

Some fellows adopt those idioms after a week in Paris or a day in Heidelberg, and then apologize, — "We travellers quite lose our mother tongue, you know."

"Come in," said I, glad to use the vernacular.

A Patrick entered, brandishing a clothes-broom as if it were a shillalah splintered in a shindy.

"A jontlemin wants to see yer honor," said he.

A gentleman to see me! Who can it be? I asked myself. Not Densdeth already! No, he is probably also making a late morning of it after our rough voyage. I fear I should think it a little ominous if he appeared at the threshold of my home life, as my first friend in America. Bah! Why should I have superstitions about Densdeth? Our intimacy on board will not continue on shore. What's Hecuba to me, or I to Hecuba?"

"A jontlemin to see yer honor," repeated the Pat, with a peremptory flourish of his weapon.

"What name, Patrick?"



"I misremember the name of him, yer honor. He's a wide-awake jontlemin, with three mustasshes, — two on his lip, and one at the pint of his chin."

Can it be Harry Stillfleet? I thought. He cannot help being wide-awake. He used to wear his beard *à la* three-moustache mode. His appearance as my first friend would be a capital omen. "Show him up, Pat!" said I.

"He shows himself up," said a frank, electric voice. "Here he is, wide-awake, three moustaches, first friend, capital omen. Hail Columbia! beat the drums! Robert Byng, old boy, how are you?"

"Harry Stillfleet, old boy, how are you?"

"I am an old boy, and hope you are so too."

"I trust so. It is the best thing that can be said of a full-grown man."

"I saw your name on the hotel book," Stillfleet resumed. "Rushed in to say, 'How d' ye do?' and 'Good-bye!' I'm off to-day. Any friends out in the Arago?"

"No friends. A few acquaintances, — and Densdeth."

"Name Densdeth friend, and I cut you bing-bang!"

"What! Densdeth, the cleverest man I have ever met?"

"The same."

"Densdeth, handsome as Alcibiades, or perhaps I should say Absalom, as he is Hebrewish?"

"That very Alcibiades, — Absalom, — Densdeth."

"Densdeth, the brilliant, the accomplished, — who fascinates old and young, who has been everywhere, who has seen everything, who knows the world *de profundis*, — a very Midas with the gold touch, but without the ass's ears? Densdeth, the potent millionaire?"

"Yes, Byng. And he can carry a great many more adjectives. He has qualities enough to make a regiment of average men. But my friends must be built of other stuff."

"So must mine, to tell the truth, Harry. But he attracts me strangely. His sardonic humor suits one side of my nature."

"The cynical side?"

"If I have one. The voyage would have been a bore without him. I had never met and hardly heard of him before; but we became intimate at once. He has shown me much attention."

"No doubt. He knows men. You have a good name. You are to be somebody on your own account, we hope. Besides, Densdeth was probably aware of your old friendship with the Denmans."

"He never spoke of them."

"Naturally. He did not wish to talk tragedy."

"Tragedy! What do you mean?"

"You have not heard the story of Densdeth and Clara Denman!" cried Stillfleet, in surprise.

"No. Shut up in Leipsic, and crowding my studies to come home, I have not heard a word of New York gossip for six months."

"This is graver than gossip, Byng. It happened less than three months ago. Densdeth was to have married Clara Denman."

"The cynical Densdeth marry that strange child!"

"You forget your ten years' absence. The strange child grew up a noble woman."

"Not a beauty, — that I cannot conceive."

"No; but a genius. Once in a century Nature sends such a brave, earnest, tender, indignant soul on this low earth. All the men of genius were in love with her, except myself. But Densdeth, a bad genius, seemed to have won her. The wedding-day was fixed, cards out, great festivities; you know how a showy man like Denman would seize the occasion for splendor. One night she disappeared without sign. Three days afterward she was floated upon the beach down the bay, — drowned, poor thing!"

"What!" cried I, "Clara Denman, my weird little playmate! Dead! Drowned! I did not imagine how tenderly I had remembered her."

"I was not her lover," said Harry, "only a friend; but the world has seemed a mean and lonely place since she passed away so cruelly."

The mercurial fellow was evidently greatly affected.

"She had that fine exaltation of nature," continued he, "which frightens weak people. They said her wild, passionate moods brought her to the verge of madness."

"A Sibylline soul."

"Yes, a Sibyl who must see and know and suffer. Her friends gave out that she had actually gone mad with a fever, and so, while her nurse was asleep, she stole out, erred about the city, fell into the river, and was drowned."

"Not suicide!"

"Never! with such a healthy soul. Yet some people do not hesitate to say that she drowned herself rather than be forced to marry Densdeth."

"These are not the days of forced marriages."

"Moral pressure is more despotic than physical force. I fancy our old friend Churm may think there was tyranny in the business, though he never speaks of it. You know he was a supplementary father and guardian of those ladies. He was absent when it all happened."

"And the Denmans, — how do they seem to bear it?"

"Mr. Denman was sadly broken at first. I used to meet him, walking about, leaning feebly on Densdeth's arm, looking like a dead man, or one just off the rack. But he is proud as Lucifer. He soon was himself again, prouder than before."

"And Emma Denman?"

"I have had but one glimpse of her since the younger sister's death. Her beauty is signally heightened by mourning."

"Such a tragedy must terribly blight her life. Will they see me, do you think? I should like to offer my sympathy, for old friendship's sake."