ELEANOR H. PORTER

OH, MONEY! MONEY! A NOVEL

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CHAPTER I

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EXIT MR. STANLEY G. FULTON

There was a thoughtful frown on the face of the man who was the possessor of twenty million dollars. He was a tall, spare man, with a fringe of reddish-brown hair encircling a bald spot. His blue eyes, fixed just now in a steady gaze upon a row of ponderous law books across the room, were friendly and benevolent in direct contradiction to the bulldog, never-let-go fighting qualities of the square jaw below the firm, rather thin lips.

The lawyer, a youthfully alert man of sixty years, trimly gray as to garb, hair, and mustache, sat idly watching him, yet with eyes that looked so intently that they seemed to listen.

For fully five minutes the two men had been pulling at their cigars in silence when the millionaire spoke.

"Ned, what am I going to do with my money?"

Into the lawyer's listening eyes flashed, for a moment, the keenly scrutinizing glance usually reserved for the witness on the other side. Then quietly came the answer.

"Spend it yourself, I hope—for some years to come, Stanley."

Mr. Stanley G. Fulton was guilty of a shrug and an uplifted eyebrow.

"Thanks. Very pretty, and I appreciate it, of course. But I can't wear but one suit of clothes at a time, nor eat but one dinner—which, by the way, just now consists of somebody's health biscuit and hot water. Twenty millions don't really what you might call melt away at that rate."

The lawyer frowned.

"Shucks, Fulton!" he expostulated, with an irritable twist of his hand.
"I thought better of you than that. This poor rich man's 'one-suit,
one-dinner, one-bed-at-a-time' hard-luck story doesn't suit your style.
Better cut it out!"

"All right. Cut it is." The man smiled good-humoredly. "But you see I was nettled. You didn't get me at all. I asked you what was to become of my money after I'd done spending it myself—the little that is left, of course."

Once more from the lawyer's eyes flashed that keenly scrutinizing glance.

"What was it, Fulton? A midnight rabbit, or a wedge of mince pie NOT like mother used to make? Why, man alive, you're barely over fifty, yet. Cheer up! It's only a little matter of indigestion. There are a lot of good days and good dinners coming to you, yet."

The millionaire made a wry face.

"Very likely—if I survive the biscuits. But, seriously, Ned, I'm in earnest. No, I don't think I'm going to die—yet awhile. But I ran across young Bixby last night—got him home, in

fact. Delivered him to his white-faced little wife. Talk about your maudlin idiots!"

"Yes, I know. Too bad, too bad!"

"Hm-m; well, that's what one million did—inherited. It set me to thinking—of mine, when I get through with them."

"I see." The lawyer's lips came together a little grimly. "You've not made your will, I believe."

"No. Dreaded it, somehow. Funny how a man'll fight shy of a little thing like that, isn't it? And when we're so mighty particular where it goes while we're living!"

"Yes, I know; you're not the only one. You have relatives—somewhere, I surmise."

"Nothing nearer than cousins, third or fourth, back East. They'd get it, I suppose—without a will."

"Why don't you marry?"

The millionaire repeated the wry face of a moment before.

"I'm not a marrying man. I never did care much for women; and—I'm not fool enough to think that a woman would be apt to fall in love with my bald head. Nor am I obliging enough to care to hand the millions over to the woman that falls in love with THEM, taking me along as the necessary sack that holds the gold. If it comes to that, I'd rather risk the cousins. They, at least, are of my own blood, and they didn't angle to get the money."

"You know them?"

"Never saw 'em."

"Why not pick out a bunch of colleges and endow them?"

The millionaire shook his head.

"Doesn't appeal to me, somehow. Oh, of course it ought to, but—it just doesn't. That's all. Maybe if I was a college man myself; but—well, I had to dig for what education I got."

"Very well—charities, then. There are numberless organizations that—" He stopped abruptly at the other's uplifted hand.

"Organizations! Good Heavens, I should think there were! I tried 'em once. I got that philanthropic bee in my bonnet, and I gave thousands, tens of thousands to 'em. Then I got to wondering where the money went."

Unexpectedly the lawyer chuckled.

"You never did like to invest without investigating, Fulton," he observed.

With only a shrug for an answer the other plunged on.

"Now, understand. I'm not saying that organized charity isn't all right, and doesn't do good, of course. Neither am I prepared to propose anything to take its place. And maybe the two or three I dealt with were particularly addicted to the sort of thing I objected to. But, honestly, Ned, if you'd lost heart and friends and money, and were just ready to chuck the whole shooting-match, how would you like to become a 'Case,' say, number twenty-three thousand seven hundred and forty-one, ticketed and docketed, and duly apportioned off to a six-by-nine rule of 'do this' and 'do that,' while a dozen spectacled eyes watched you being cleaned up and regulated and wound up with a key made of just so much and no more pats and preachments carefully weighed and labeled? How WOULD you like it?"

The lawyer laughed.

"I know; but, my dear fellow, what would you have? Surely, UNorganized charity and promiscuous giving is worse—"

"Oh, yes, I've tried that way, too," shrugged the other. "There was a time when every Tom, Dick, and Harry, with a run-down shoe and a ragged coat, could count on me for a ten-spot by just holding out his hand, no questions asked. Then a serious-eyed little woman sternly told me one day that the indiscriminate charity of a millionaire was not only a curse to any community, but a corruption to the whole state. I believe she kindly included the nation, as well, bless her! And I thought I was doing good!" "What a blow—to you!" There was a whimsical smile in the lawyer's eyes.

"It was." The millionaire was not smiling. "But she was right. It set me to thinking, and I began to follow up those ten-spots—the ones that I could trace. Jove! what a mess I'd made of it! Oh, some of them were all right, of course, and I made THOSE fifties on the spot. But the others—! I tell you, Ned, money that isn't earned is the most risky thing in the world. If I'd left half those wretches alone, they'd have braced up and helped themselves and made men of themselves, maybe. As it was—Well, you never can tell as to the results of a so-called 'good' action. From my experience I should say they are every whit as dangerous as the bad ones."

The lawyer laughed outright.

"But, my dear fellow, that's just where the organized charity comes in.
Don't you see?"

"Oh, yes, I know—Case number twenty-three thousand seven hundred and forty-one! And that's all right, of course. Relief of some sort is absolutely necessary. But I'd like to see a little warm sympathy injected into it, some way. Give the machine a heart, say, as well as hands and a head."

"Then why don't you try it yourself?"

"Not I!" His gesture of dissent was emphatic. "I have tried it, in a way, and failed. That's why I'd like some one else to tackle the job. And that brings me right back to my original question. I'm wondering what my money will do, when I'm done with it. I'd like to have one of my own kin have it—if I was sure of him. Money is a queer proposition, Ned, and it's capable of—'most anything."

"It is. You're right."

"What I can do with it, and what some one else can do with it, are two quite different matters. I don't consider my efforts to circulate it wisely, or even harmlessly, exactly what you'd call a howling success. Whatever I've done, I've always been criticized for not doing something else. If I gave a costly entertainment, I was accused of showy ostentation. If I didn't give it, I was accused of not putting money into honest circulation. If I donated to a church, it was called conscience money; and if I didn't donate to it, they said I was mean and miserly. So much for what I've done. I was just wondering—what the other fellow'd do with it."

"Why worry? 'T won't be your fault."

"But it will—if I give it to him. Great Scott, Ned! what money does for folks, sometimes—folks that aren't used to it! Look at Bixby; and look at that poor little Marston girl, throwing herself away on that worthless scamp of a Gowing

who's only after her money, as everybody (but herself) knows! And if it doesn't make knaves and martyrs of them, ten to one it does make fools of 'em. They're worse than a kid with a dollar on circus day; and they use just about as much sense spending their pile, too. You should have heard dad tell about his pals in the eighties that struck it rich in the gold mines. One bought up every grocery store in town and instituted a huge free grab-bag for the populace; and another dropped his hundred thousand in the dice box before it was a week old. I wonder what those cousins of mine back East are like!"

"If you're fearful, better take Case number twenty-three thousand seven hundred and forty-one," smiled the lawyer.

"Hm-m; I suppose so," ejaculated the other grimly, getting to his feet.

"Well, I must be off. It's biscuit time, I see."

A moment later the door of the lawyer's sumptuously appointed office closed behind him. Not twenty-four hours afterward, however, it opened to admit him again. He was alert, eager-eyed, and smiling. He looked ten years younger. Even the office boy who ushered him in cocked a curious eye at him.

The man at the great flat-topped desk gave a surprised ejaculation.

"Hullo, Fulton! Those biscuits must be agreeing with you," he laughed.

"Mind telling me their name?"

"Ned, I've got a scheme. I think I can carry it out." Mr. Stanley G. Fulton strode across the room and dropped himself into the waiting chair. "Remember those cousins

back East? Well, I'm going to find out which of 'em I want for my heir."

"Another case of investigating before investing, eh?"

"Exactly."

"Well, that's like you. What is it, a little detective work? Going to get acquainted with them, I suppose, and see how they treat you. Then you can size them up as to hearts and habits, and drop the golden plum into the lap of the worthy man, eh?"

"Yes, and no. But not the way you say. I'm going to give 'em say fifty or a hundred thousand apiece, and—"

"GIVE it to them—NOW?"

"Sure! How'm I going to know how they'll spend money till they have it to spend?"

"I know; but—"

"Oh, I've planned all that. Don't worry. Of course you'll have to fix it up for me. I shall leave instructions with you, and when the time comes all you have to do is to carry them out."

The lawyer came erect in his chair.

"LEAVE instructions! But you, yourself—?"

"Oh, I'm going to be there, in Hillerton."

"There? Hillerton?"

"Yes, where the cousins live, you know. Of course I want to see how it works."

"Humph! I suppose you think you'll find out—with you watching their every move!" The lawyer had settled back in his chair, an ironical smile on his lips.

"Oh, they won't know me, of course, except as John Smith."

"John Smith!" The lawyer was sitting erect again.

"Yes. I'm going to take that name—for a time."

"Nonsense, Fulton! Have you lost your senses?"

"No." The millionaire still smiled imperturbably. "Really, my dear Ned, I'm disappointed in you. You don't seem to realize the possibilities of this thing."

"Oh, yes, I do—perhaps better than you, old man," retorted the other with an expressive glance.

"Oh, come, Ned, listen! I've got three cousins in Hillerton. I never saw them, and they never saw me. I'm going to give them a tidy little sum of money apiece, and then have the fun of watching them spend it. Any harm in that, especially as it's no one's business what I do with my money?"

"N—no, I suppose not—if you can carry such a wild scheme through."

"I can, I think. I'm going to be John Smith."

"Nice distinctive name!"

"I chose a colorless one on purpose. I'm going to be a colorless person, you see."

"Oh! And—er—do you think Mr. Stanley G. Fulton, multi-millionaire,
with his pictured face in half the papers and magazines from the
Atlantic to the Pacific, CAN hide that face behind a colorless John
Smith?"

"Maybe not. But he can hide it behind a nice little close-cropped beard." The millionaire stroked his smooth chin reflectively.

"Humph! How large is Hillerton?"

"Eight or ten thousand. Nice little New England town, I'm told."

"Hm-m. And your—er—business in Hillerton, that will enable you to be the observing fly on your cousins' walls?"

"Yes, I've thought that all out, too; and that's another brilliant stroke. I'm going to be a genealogist. I'm going to be at work tracing the Blaisdell family—their name is Blaisdell. I'm writing a book which necessitates the collection of an endless amount of data. Now how about that fly's chances of observation. Eh?"

"Mighty poor, if he's swatted—and that's what he will be! New England housewives are death on flies, I understand."

"Well, I'll risk this one."

"You poor fellow!" There were exasperation and amusement in the lawyer's eyes, but there was only mock sympathy in his voice. "And to think I've known you all these years, and never suspected it, Fulton!"

The man who owned twenty millions still smiled imperturbably.

"Oh, yes, I know what you mean, but I'm not crazy. And really I'm interested in genealogy, too, and I've been thinking for some time I'd go digging about the roots of my ancestral tree. I have dug a little, in years gone. My mother was a Blaisdell, you know. Her grandfather was brother to some ancestor of these Hillerton Blaisdells; and I really am interested in collecting Blaisdell data. So that's all straight. I shall be telling no fibs. And think of the opportunity it gives me! Besides, I shall try to board with one of them. I've decided that."

"Upon my word, a pretty little scheme!"

"Yes, I knew you'd appreciate it, the more you thought about it." Mr.
Stanley G. Fulton's blue eyes twinkled a little.

With a disdainful gesture the lawyer brushed this aside.

"Do you mind telling me how you happened to think of it, yourself?"

"Not a bit. 'Twas a little booklet got out by a Trust Company."

"It sounds like it!"

"Oh, they didn't suggest exactly this, I'll admit; but they did suggest that, if you were fearful as to the way your heirs would handle their inheritance, you could create a trust fund for their benefit while you were living, and then watch the way the beneficiaries spent the income, as well as the way the trust fund itself was managed. In this way you could observe the effects of your gifts, and at the same time be able to change them if you didn't like results. That gave me an idea. I've just developed it. That's all. I'm going to make my cousins a little rich, and see which, if any of them, can stand being very rich."

"But the money, man! How are you going to drop a hundred thousand dollars into three men's laps, and expect to get away without an investigation as to the why and wherefore of such a singular proceeding?"

"That's where your part comes in," smiled the millionaire blandly.
"Besides, to be accurate, one of the laps is—er—a petticoat one."

"Oh, indeed! So much the worse, maybe. But—And so this is where I come in, is it? Well, and suppose I refuse to

come in?"

"Regretfully I shall have to employ another attorney."

"Humph! Well?"

"But you won't refuse." The blue eyes opposite were still twinkling. "In the first place, you're my good friend—my best friend. You wouldn't be seen letting me start off on a wild-goose chase like this without your guiding hand at the helm to see that I didn't come a cropper."

"Aren't you getting your metaphors a trifle mixed?" This time the lawyer's eyes were twinkling.

"Eh? What? Well, maybe. But I reckon you get my meaning. Besides, what
I want you to do is a mere routine of regular business, with you."

"It sounds like it. Routine, indeed!"

"But it is—your part. Listen. I'm off for South America, say, on an exploring tour. In your charge I leave certain papers with instructions that on the first day of the sixth month of my absence (I being unheard from), you are to open a certain envelope and act according to instructions within. Simplest thing in the world, man. Now isn't it?"

"Oh, very simple—as you put it."

"Well, meanwhile I'll start for South America—alone, of course; and, so far as you're concerned, that ends it. If on the way, somewhere, I determine suddenly on a change of destination, that is none of your affair. If, say in a month or two, a quiet, inoffensive gentleman by the name of Smith arrives in Hillerton on the legitimate and perfectly respectable business of looking up a family pedigree, that

also is none of your concern." With a sudden laugh the lawyer fell back in his chair.

"By Jove, Fulton, if I don't believe you'll pull this absurd thing off!"

"There! Now you're talking like a sensible man, and we can get somewhere. Of course I'll pull it off! Now here's my plan. In order best to judge how my esteemed relatives conduct themselves under the sudden accession of wealth, I must see them first without it, of course. Hence, I plan to be in Hillerton some months before your letter and the money arrive. I intend, indeed, to be on the friendliest terms with every Blaisdell in Hillerton before that times comes."

"But can you? Will they accept you without references or introduction?"

"Oh, I shall have the best of references and introductions. Bob Chalmers is the president of a bank there. Remember Bob? Well, I shall take John Smith in and introduce him to Bob some day. After that, Bob'll introduce John Smith? See? All I need is a letter as to my integrity and respectability, I reckon, so my kinsmen won't suspect me of designs on their spoons when I ask to board with them. You see, I'm a quiet, retiring gentleman, and I don't like noisy hotels."

With an explosive chuckle the lawyer clapped his knee. "Fulton, this is absolutely the richest thing I ever heard of! I'd give a farm to be a fly on YOUR wall and see you do it. I'm blest if I don't think I'll go to Hillerton myself—to see Bob. By George, I will go and see Bob!"

"Of course," agreed the other serenely. "Why not? Besides, it will be the most natural thing in the world—

business, you know. In fact, I should think you really ought to go, in connection with the bequests."

"Why, to be sure." The lawyer frowned thoughtfully. "How much are you going to give them?"

"Oh, a hundred thousand apiece, I reckon."

"That ought to do—for pin money."

"Oh, well, I want them to have enough, you know, for it to be a real test of what they would do with wealth. And it must be cash—no securities. I want them to do their own investing."

"But how are you going to fix it? What excuse are you going to give for dropping a hundred thousand into their laps like that? You can't tell your real purpose, naturally! You'd defeat your own ends."

"That part we'll have to fix up in the letter of instructions. I think we can. I've got a scheme."

"I'll warrant you have! I'll believe anything of you now. But what are
you going to do afterward—when you've found out what you want to know,
I mean? Won't it be something of a shock, when John Smith turns into
Mr. Stanley G. Fulton? Have you thought of that?"

"Y-yes, I've thought of that, and I will confess my ideas are a little hazy, in spots. But I'm not worrying. Time enough to think of that part. Roughly, my plan is this now. There'll be two letters of instructions: one to open in six months, the other to be opened in, say, a couple of years, or so. (I want to give myself plenty of time for my observations, you see.) The second letter will really give you final instructions as to

the settling of my estate—my will. I'll have to make some sort of one, I suppose."

"But, good Heavens, Stanley, you—you—" the lawyer came to a helpless pause. His eyes were startled.

"Oh, that's just for emergency, of course, in case anything—er—happened. What I really intend is that long before the second letter of instructions is due to be opened, Mr. Stanley G. Fulton will come back from his South American explorations. He'll then be in a position to settle his affairs to suit himself, and—er—make a new will. Understand?"

"Oh, I see. But—there's John Smith? How about Smith?"

The millionaire smiled musingly, and stroked his chin again.

"Smith? Oh! Well, Smith will have finished collecting Blaisdell data, of course, and will be off to parts unknown. We don't have to trouble ourselves with Smith any longer."

"Fulton, you're a wizard," laughed the lawyer. "But now about the cousins. Who are they? You know their names, of course."

"Oh, yes. You see I've done a little digging already—some years ago—looking up the Blaisdell family. (By the way, that'll come in fine now, won't it?) And an occasional letter from Bob has kept me posted as to deaths and births in the Hillerton Blaisdells. I always meant to hunt them up some time, they being my nearest kith and kin. Well, with what I already had, and with what Bob has written me, I know these facts."

He paused, pulled a small notebook from his pocket, and consulted it.

"There are two sons and a daughter, children of Rufus Blaisdell. Rufus died years ago, and his widow married a man by the name of Duff. But she's dead now. The elder son is Frank Blaisdell. He keeps a grocery store. The other is James Blaisdell. He works in a real estate office. The daughter, Flora, never married. She's about forty-two or three, I believe, and does dressmaking. James Blaisdell has a son, Fred, seventeen, and two younger children. Frank Blaisdell has one daughter, Mellicent. That's the extent of my knowledge, at present. But it's enough for our purpose."

"Oh, anything's enough—for your purpose! What are you going to do first?"

"I've done it. You'll soon be reading in your morning paper that Mr. Stanley G. Fulton, the somewhat eccentric multi-millionaire, is about to start for South America, and that it is hinted he is planning to finance a gigantic exploring expedition. The accounts of what he's going to explore will vary all the way from Inca antiquities to the source of the Amazon. I've done a lot of talking to-day, and a good deal of cautioning as to secrecy, etc. It ought to bear fruit by to-morrow, or the day after, at the latest. I'm going to start next week, and I'm really going EXPLORING, too—though not exactly as they think. I came in to-day to make a business appointment for to-morrow, please. A man starting on such a hazardous journey must be prepared, you understand. I want to leave my affairs in such shape that you will know exactly what to do—in emergency. I may come to-morrow?"

The lawyer hesitated, his face an odd mixture of determination and irresolution.

"Oh, hang it all—yes. Of course you may come. To-morrow at ten—if they don't shut you up before."

With a boyish laugh Mr. Stanley G. Fulton leaped to his feet.

"Thanks. To-morrow at ten, then." At the door he turned back jauntily. "And, say, Ned, what'll you bet I don't grow fat and young over this thing? What'll you bet I don't get so I can eat real meat and 'taters again?"

CHAPTER II

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ENTER MR. JOHN SMITH

It was on the first warm evening in early June that Miss Flora Blaisdell crossed the common and turned down the street that led to her brother James's home.

The common marked the center of Hillerton. Its spacious green lawns and elm-shaded walks were the pride of the town. There was a trellised band-stand for summer concerts, and a tiny pond that accommodated a few boats in summer and a limited number of skaters in winter. Perhaps, most important of all, the common divided the plebeian East Side from the more pretentious West. James Blaisdell lived on the West Side. His wife said that everybody did who WAS anybody. They had lately moved there, and were, indeed, barely settled.

Miss Blaisdell did dressmaking. Her home was a shabby little rented cottage on the East Side. She was a thin-faced little woman with an anxious frown and near-sighted, peering eyes that seemed always to be looking for wrinkles. She peered now at the houses as she passed slowly down the street. She had been only twice to her brother's new home, and she was not sure that she would recognize it, in spite of the fact that the street was still alight with the last

rays of the setting sun. Suddenly across her worried face flashed a relieved smile.

"Well, if you ain't all here out on the piazza!" she exclaimed, turning, in at the walk leading up to one of the ornate little houses. "My, ain't this grand!"

"Oh, yes, it's grand, all right," nodded the tired-looking man in the big chair, removing his feet from the railing. He was in his shirt-sleeves, and was smoking a pipe. The droop of his thin mustache matched the droop of his thin shoulders—and both indefinably but unmistakably spelled disillusion and discouragement. "It's grand, but I think it's too grand—for us. However, daughter says the best is none too good—in Hillerton. Eh, Bess?"

Bessie, the pretty, sixteen-year-old daughter of the family, only shrugged her shoulders a little petulantly. It was Harriet, the wife, who spoke—a large, florid woman with a short upper lip, and a bewilderment of bepuffed light hair. She was already on her feet, pushing a chair toward her sister-in-law.

"Of course it isn't too grand, Jim, and you know it. There aren't any really nice houses in Hillerton except the Pennocks' and the old Gaylord place. There, sit here, Flora. You look tired."

"Thanks. I be—turrible tired. Warm, too, ain't it?" The little dressmaker began to fan herself with the hat she had taken off. "My, 'tis fur over here, ain't it? Not much like 'twas when you lived right 'round the corner from me! And I had to put on a hat and gloves, too. Someway, I thought I ought to—over here."

Condescendingly the bepuffed head threw an approving nod in her direction.

"Quite right, Flora. The East Side is different from the West Side, and no mistake. And what will do there won't do here at all, of course."

"How about father's shirt-sleeves?" It was a scornful gibe from Bessie in the hammock. "I don't notice any of the rest of the men around here sitting out like that."

"Bessie!" chided her mother wearily. "You know very well I'm not to blame for what your father wears. I've tried hard enough, I'm sure!"

"Well, well, Hattie," sighed the man, with a gesture of abandonment. "I supposed I still had the rights of a freeborn American citizen in my own home; but it seems I haven't." Resignedly he got to his feet and went into the house. When he returned a moment later he was wearing his coat.

Benny, perched precariously on the veranda railing, gave a sudden indignant snort. Benny was eight, the youngest of the family.

"Well, I don't think I like it here, anyhow," he chafed. "I'd rather go back an' live where we did. A feller can have some fun there. It hasn't been anything but 'Here, Benny, you mustn't do that over here, you mustn't do that over here!' ever since we came. I'm going home an' live with Aunt Flora. Say, can't I, Aunt Flo?"

"Bless the child! Of course you can," beamed his aunt. "But you won't want to, I'm sure. Why, Benny, I think it's perfectly lovely here."

"Pa don't."

"Indeed I do, Benny," corrected his father hastily. "It's very nice indeed here, of course. But I don't think we can afford it. We had to squeeze every penny before, and how we're going to meet this rent I don't know." He drew a profound sigh.

"You'll earn it, just being here—more business," asserted his wife firmly. "Anyhow, we've just got to be here, Jim! We owe it to ourselves and our family. Look at Fred to-night!"

"Oh, yes, where is Fred?" queried Miss Flora.

"He's over to Gussie Pennock's, playing tennis," interposed Bessie, with a pout. "The mean old thing wouldn't ask me!"

"But you ain't old enough, my dear," soothed her aunt. "Wait; your turn will come by and by."

"Yes, that's exactly it," triumphed the mother. "Her turn WILL come—if we live here. Do you suppose Fred would have got an invitation to Gussie Pennock's if we'd still been living on the East Side? Not much he would! Why, Mr. Pennock's worth fifty thousand, if he's worth a dollar! They are some of our very first people."

"But, Hattie, money isn't everything, dear," remonstrated her husband gently. "We had friends, and good friends, before."

"Yes; but you wait and see what kind of friends we have now!"

"But we can't keep up with such people, dear, on our income; and—"

"Ma, here's a man. I guess he wants—somebody." It was a husky whisper from Benny.

James Blaisdell stopped abruptly. Bessie Blaisdell and the little dressmaker cocked their heads interestedly. Mrs. Blaisdell rose to her feet and advanced toward the steps to meet the man coming up the walk.

He was a tall, rather slender man, with a close-cropped, sandy beard, and an air of diffidence and apology. As he took off his hat and came nearer, it was seen that his eyes were blue and friendly, and that his hair was reddish-brown, and rather scanty on top of his head.

"I am looking for Mr. Blaisdell—Mr. James Blaisdell," he murmured hesitatingly.

Something in the stranger's deferential manner sent a warm glow of importance to the woman's heart. Mrs. Blaisdell was suddenly reminded that she was Mrs. James D. Blaisdell of the West Side.

"I am Mrs. Blaisdell," she replied a bit pompously. "What can we do for you, my good man?" She swelled again, half unconsciously. She had never called a person "my good man" before. She rather liked the experience.

The man on the steps coughed slightly behind his hand—a sudden spasmodic little cough. Then very gravely he reached into his pocket and produced a letter.

"From Mr. Robert Chalmers—a note to your husband," he bowed, presenting the letter.

A look of gratified surprise came into the woman's face.

"Mr. Robert Chalmers, of the First National? Jim!" She turned to her husband joyously. "Here's a note from Mr. Chalmers. Quick—read it!"

Her husband, already on his feet, whisked the sheet of paper from the unsealed envelope, and adjusted his glasses.

A moment later he held out a cordial hand to the stranger.

"Ah, Mr. Smith, I'm glad to see you. I'm glad to see any friend of Bob
Chalmers'. Come up and sit down. My wife and children, and my sister,
Miss Blaisdell. Mr. Smith, ladies—Mr. John Smith." (Glancing at the
open note in his hand.) "He is sent to us by Mr. Chalmers, of the First
National."

"Yes, thank you. Mr. Chalmers was so kind." Still with that deference so delightfully heart-warming, the newcomer bowed low to the ladies, and made his way to the offered chair. "I will explain at once my business," he said then. "I am a genealogist."

"What's that?" It was an eager question from Benny on the veranda railing. "Pa isn't anything, but ma's a Congregationalist."

"Hush, child!" protested a duet of feminine voices softly; but the stranger, apparently ignoring the interruption, continued speaking.

"I am gathering material for a book on the Blaisdell family."

"The Blaisdell family!" repeated Mr. James Blaisdell, with cordial interest.

"Yes," bowed the other. "It is my purpose to remain some time in your town. I am told there are valuable records here, and an old burying-ground of particular interest in this connection. The neighboring towns, too, have much Blaisdell data, I understand. As I said, I am intending to

make this place my headquarters, and I am looking for an attractive boarding-place. Mr. Chalmers was good enough to refer me to you."

"To us—for a BOARDING-place!" There was an unmistakable frown on Mrs.
James D. Blaisdell's countenance as she said the words. "Well, I'm sure
I don't see why he should. WE don't keep boarders!"

"But, Hattie, we could," interposed her husband eagerly. "There's that big front room that we don't need a bit. And it would help a lot if—" At the wrathful warning in his wife's eyes he fell back silenced.

"I said that we didn't keep boarders," reiterated the lady distinctly.
"Furthermore, we do need the room ourselves."

"Yes, yes, of course; I understand," broke in Mr. Smith, as if in hasty conciliation. "I think Mr. Chalmers meant that perhaps one of you"—he glanced uncertainly at the anxious-eyed little woman at his left—"might—er—accommodate me. Perhaps you, now—" He turned his eyes full upon Miss Flora Blaisdell, and waited.

The little dressmaker blushed painfully.

"Me? Oh, mercy, no! Why, I live all alone—that is, I mean, I couldn't, you know," she stammered confusedly. "I dressmake, and I don't get any sort of meals—not fit for a man, I mean. Just women's things—tea, toast, and riz biscuit. I'm so fond of riz biscuit! But, of course, you—" She came to an expressive pause.

"Oh, I could stand the biscuit, so long as they're not health biscuit," laughed Mr. Smith genially. "You see, I've

been living on those and hot water quite long enough as it is."

"Oh, ain't your health good, sir?" The little dressmaker's face wore the deepest concern.

"Well, it's better than it was, thank you. I think I can promise to be a good boarder, all right."

"Why don't you go to a hotel?" Mrs. James D. Blaisdell still spoke with a slightly injured air.

Mr. Smith lifted a deprecatory hand.

"Oh, indeed, that would not do at all—for my purpose," he murmured. "I wish to be very quiet. I fear I should find it quite disturbing—the noise and confusion of a public place like that. Besides, for my work, it seemed eminently fitting, as well as remarkably convenient, if I could make my home with one of the Blaisdell family."

With a sudden exclamation the little dressmaker sat erect.

"Say, Harriet, how funny we never thought! He's just the one for poor
Maggie! Why not send him there?"

"Poor Maggie?" It was the mild voice of Mr. Smith.

"Our sister—yes. She lives—"

"Your SISTER!" Into Mr. Smith's face had come a look of startled surprise—a look almost of terror. "But there weren't but three—that is, I thought—I understood from Mr. Chalmers that there were but three Blaisdells, two brothers, and one sister—you, yourself."

"Oh, poor Maggie ain't a Blaisdell," explained the little dressmaker, with a smile. "She's just Maggie Duff, father Duff's daughter by his first wife, you know. He married our

mother years ago, when we children were little, so we were brought up with Maggie, and always called her sister; though, of course, she really ain't any relation to us at all."

"Oh, I see. Yes, to be sure. Of course!" Mr. Smith seemed oddly thoughtful. He appeared to be settling something in his mind. "She isn't a Blaisdell, then."

"No, but she's so near like one, and she's a splendid cook, and—-"

"Well, I shan't send him to Maggie," cut in Mrs. James D. Blaisdell with emphasis. "Poor Maggie's got quite enough on her hands, as it is, with that father of hers. Besides, she isn't a Blaisdell at all."

"And she couldn't come and cook and take care of us near so much, either, could she," plunged in Benny, "if she took this man ter feed?"

"That will do, Benny," admonished his mother, with nettled dignity.
"You forget that children should be seen and not heard."

"Yes'm. But, please, can't I be heard just a minute for this? Why don't ye send the man ter Uncle Frank an' Aunt Jane? Maybe they'd take him."

"The very thing!" cried Miss Flora Blaisdell. "I wouldn't wonder a mite if they did."

"Yes, I was thinking of them," nodded her sister-in-law. "And they're always glad of a little help,—especially Jane."

"Anybody should be," observed Mr. James Blaisdell quietly.

Only the heightened color in his wife's cheeks showed that she had heard—and understood.