

section of the town lived a brother and former partner, and the two brothers had quarrelled bitterly, there being some little domestic scandal involved in the affair. The high standing of both parties had called particular attention to the matter, and public curiosity had risen to a high pitch, which many of the daily papers had attempted to assuage by hints and conjectures, but as yet nothing was definitely known.

It requires a certain degree of nerve power to coolly seek admission to a man's house with the avowed intention of learning, if possible, what that man distinctly desires to conceal, and Norway felt the truth of this more forcibly than he had in any former experience of the kind as he walked up the granite steps and rang the bell. A coloured man answered the summons and promptly replied to Norway's inquiry if Mr. Berthold was in, that he was, but would see no one. Thus delayed, but not discouraged, Norway took a brisk walk and returned in half an hour with the same errand. This time a very pretty waitress opened the door. She gave the same report as had her predecessor.

"But I think he will see me; my business is very important," said Norway, persuasively. "At least be so kind as to take my card." He gave her a plain visiting card. "And see—for your trouble allow me to present you with a few bangles."

He dropped five little shining gold dollars into the girl's hand; and whether it was the master stroke of the bangles, or the winning smile that accompanied the gift, the girl after a moment's hesitation, allowed him to enter, and seated him in a small reception room.

After a few moments of waiting, a portly, apoplectic looking gentleman, in dressing gown and slippers, entered, studying the card with a bored expression.

"I don't remember you, Mr. Norway," he began, unceremoniously. "But I'm told your business is very important. What can I do for you?"

"I have the honour, sir," said Norway, seriously and gently, "of representing the *Pro and Con*. I have called for the purpose of taking, if such is your pleasure, a statement from you in regard to—"

"Statement! I say statement!" burst forth the irate old gentleman, forgetting in his wrath to be grammatical. "Do you take me for a natural idiot? Let me tell you, young man, for your own benefit, that I've had sixteen reporters kicked down the steps; yes, sir, and into the street, within three days. The longer it takes you to get out of the house, the more help you will be likely to receive on the way. James!"

The black servant appeared. Norway walked quietly into the hall, took his hat from the rack, and, with his hand on the door knob, said, with that firm but courteous manner so hard for even the most violent to interrupt:

"Mr. Berthold, I came here in your own interest, and in about" (he consulted his watch) "an hour and a half I shall return with the same object in view. When I shall receive from your own hands a written statement for publication in the *Pro and Con*. Good day, sir."

Without waiting to note the effect of his parting words, he closed the door behind him, and hailing a cab was driven to the residence of Mr. Hezekiah Berthold, in another part of the town. Here, through chance, admission was easy, for as Mr. Berthold was expecting a lawyer the maid took it for granted that Norway was he, and admitted him without question. Mr. Berthold, a tall, thin stately gentleman, sitting in a cozy library before a bright grate fire, observed his visitor with surprise but no visible gratification.

"Mr. Berthold," said Norway, "I, as a representative of the *Pro and Con*, have called to solicit from you a statement in regard to the little matter, hints of which are now floating about town. The *Pro and Con* desires to publish nothing but truth, and it is for this reason that I have intruded upon you in person."

"I have nothing whatever to say to you," said Mr. Berthold, with a cold glare. "I do not consider it necessary that my private affairs should be made the subject of public discussion. I desire you to leave immediately, and as for the *Pro and Con*, to which I am a subscriber, I shall stop the paper."

"Very well, sir," said Norway, courteously. He bowed, and seemed about to leave the room when a second thought presented itself. He paused and added incidentally:

"I called in the hope that you might leave with me some slight expression at least of your views in the case, in order that our article may be as fair as possible. I have just left the residence of your brother, Mr. Amos Berthold, and I am going back in half an hour to receive his statement, and—"

"What! what! My brother writing a statement, did you say?" cried Mr. Berthold, rising excitedly. "Ah! Sit down, young man, sit down."

Norway sat down. As he did so he saw, half concealed by the heavy curtains before the window, a young lady standing in the shadow of the heavy draperies, who had evidently been listening with much interest to the proceedings. Her profile was turned toward him, but even at that point of view Norway perceived that she looked disturbed, if not angry. But it was not that which most attracted his attention. There was something strangely familiar in the poise of the head, the fluffy waves of dark hair, the contour of the pretty mouth and chin. Why did it bring so vividly to his mind a certain night seven years ago with a sound of roaring flames and falling walls. At that moment Mr. Berthold excused himself in order to lock up some important papers that had been mislaid, and as he left the curtains parted, and the young lady advanced into the room. As she faced him, Norway doubted no longer. It was his *protege* of the fire. Changed, certainly; for instead of a timid, frightened school-girl, here was a stately beautiful woman. Norway had heard of Miss Berthold, who would have been a decided belle only for a certain exclusiveness that hedged her in, or rather hedged others out, but he had never met her formally. But a sense of guilt stole over him, depriving him of the pleasure which the occasion would otherwise have brought him. Miss Berthold was attired in a dark wine-coloured velvet; made plain and close fitting, which seemed to add to her height and to render her more imposing. As she confronted

him she transfixed the unhappy young man with a magnificent look of mingled scorn and indignation.

"Sir," she said, "have you a mother?"

"No," said Norway, who had risen at her reproach. "I have no mother?"

"Have you a sister?"

"No; no sister."

"Have you a wife, then?" persisted the young lady, with growing resentment.

"No," said Norway, and his own voice sounded strangely to him; "I have no wife."

"Well, have you a heart?" she asked at last, in desperation.

The young man was silent. He looked at her, but for once he found it impossible to speak. Of course she had utterly forgotten him; he had expected that. But it seemed to him, now they were once more face to face, that the night of the fire was but yesterday instead of seven years past. Something in his face, grave, earnest, and most appealing, touched the young lady with a slight wonder.

"What I mean is, how can you do such things?" she went on; for having gone so far, she was unable to stop.

"What things?"

"Why, pry into other people's secrets. Papa said it would kill him if it should get out. And to-morrow it will be all over town and in the papers. Oh! Oh! You are cruel. You are heartless. You cannot be a gentleman."

Words fail to describe Norway's sensations as he listened. He had sometimes been guilty of indulging in romantic dreams of the time when he might, perchance, meet his unknown *protege*, but they had never pictured the event under conditions like these. In his misery and humiliation he was fain to put the burden of responsibility on Mr. Thorne; and if thoughts could kill, it is probable that the *Pro and Con* would have been suddenly deprived of its able and enterprising editor. But at that moment Norway took a desperate resolve.

"Miss Berthold," he said, "have you ever heard the story of the wise foe and foolish friend?"

"No, sir," said the young lady coldly.

"Will you kindly allow me to relate it while I am waiting? Thank you. A certain king who lived in ancient times had a favourite ape. The animal was very fond of him, and was with him night and day. One night a robber effected an entrance into the royal chamber in the hope that he might escape with some of the court jewels. As he entered a huge spider descended from the ceiling on his invisible web, and dropped upon the forehead of the sleeping king. The ape, enraged that so vile a thing should touch his beloved master, seized a stout staff which lay near, and, raising it above his head, would have killed the unconscious monarch, but that the robber sprang forward and arrested the blow. The king awaking, and learning the cause of the confusion, commanded that the ape should be killed, but rewarded the robber. 'For,' said he, 'my petted favourite, with good intentions, would have put me to death; but thou, coming with bad intentions, hast saved my life. Better is a wise foe than a foolish friend.'"

Norway related this simple story in a low, impressive voice that was in itself a work of art. Miss Berthold listened, first with polite toleration, then with some slight interest.

"That is a very good story. And the moral is that you are a wise foe!"

"If I may not be considered in a friendly light, I certainly would caveat that distinction. But let me add that, rather than bring unfavourable notoriety upon your family, I will cut off my right hand. If you positively desire it, I will give you my word of honour that not a syllable relating to this affair shall ever find its way into the columns of the *Pro and Con*."

"Are you in earnest?" asked Miss Berthold in surprise.

"Quite so. But you should look at the question from all standpoints. There are other papers which will not take the same stand, but by false representations will give a much worse colouring to the affair than it deserves. I, at least, will secure justice for you; they will not."

"I never thought of that," said Miss Berthold, thoughtfully. She reflected a moment, then said:

"I think, then, perhaps it is better as it is. We will trust to your generosity. I owe you an apology for my hasty and rude words. Poor papa has had a great deal of trouble of late, and in thinking of him I forget myself."

She bowed an adieu and was gone. At that moment Mr. Berthold re-entered the room with a handful of manuscripts as an aid to the proposed work, and began writing his statement. This, however, he found much more difficult than he had anticipated, and it finally ended in his stating the facts to Norway, who at his option wrote them out. Under the skilful manipulation of his thoughts the whole affair was so gracefully presented that the old gentleman was delighted.

"I wonder if Amos will get ahead of that?" he said, rubbing his hands in agreeable reflection.

"If I may offer a suggestion," said Norway, "I will propose that you allow me to submit this paper to Mr. Amos Berthold for his inspection."

"What for?" said Mr. Berthold, sharply and suspiciously. He looked at Norway a moment, and finding nothing but frankness and truth in the gaze he met, reflected a moment, then said:

"Well, you may. I think I can trust him. A Berthold never was known to do a mean act. You're a good fellow," he added, holding out his hand to Norway, as the latter rose to go. "I am glad you came. Let me have your card. I shall hope to meet you again."

Half an hour later Norway stood again before Mr. Amos Berthold's door; but under what different auspices than formerly! Now he came a conqueror. This time Mr. Berthold did not refuse to see him, partly from curiosity, aroused by his strange, prophetic speech as he had taken his departure on his former visit, and partly from a sense of uneasiness therefrom.

"So you are here again," he said, testily.