

I suppose?" he queried with a comprehensive glance at the young man's shabby apparel.

"I don't work anywhere just at present," was the reply. "I cannot get any work to do." As he spoke, a faintness came over Anthony, and he involuntarily placed his hand on the back of a chair to steady himself.

"You are weak, ill!" exclaimed the other, rising in alarm and forcing him to sit down. "You are not well, eh?"

Anthony looked up with a smile that was meant to be cheerful, but was only piteous. "I have not eaten anything for two days," he said wearily; "I am afraid I am starving."

"Mon Dieu!" ejaculated Mr. Leduc, hastening to his desk and touching an electric bell. In a moment a servant appeared at the door. "A glass of port wine, Cécile, and quickly," ordered her master.

The maid tripped away and returned within a few moments with the wine. Mr. Leduc met her at the door and took it from her. He gave it to Anthony and made him drink it. "Prepare some supper in the dining-room at once," he said briefly, "something substantial."

"You are better now," he said, as the colour came back slowly to the young man's face.

"You are very kind," murmured Anthony, gratefully.

"Eh bien! and why not, my friend?" demanded Mr. Leduc, smilingly. "I think the obligations are on my side; there were six hundred dollars in that pocket-book. Now we shall have some supper, and you will stay here to-night; my housekeeper will find you a bed. To-morrow we shall see what can be done in the way of providing you with a situation."

"You had better hear my story first, Mr. Leduc," said Anthony, quietly. "It may cause you to change your mind." Then he told it, slowly and deliberately. Mr. Leduc listened patiently, shading his face with his hand. When Anthony had finished, he looked up and said, thoughtfully:

"You have been most unfortunate, but I do not believe you were guilty. A man who is honest when he is starving is not likely to have been dishonest when he was prosperous. I know Mr. Wayington very well; he is a good-hearted man but very obstinate; and of course, appearances were against you. I do not pretend to say how the missing pocket-book came into your trunk, but I am quite sure you did not put it there. God is good; perhaps the guilty person will yet confess. In the meantime, what can you do? Can you write shorthand? Yes? Very good! I am in need of a stenographer, you are in need of a situation; what could be more convenient?"

Anthony tried to stammer some words of thanks, but Mr. Leduc silenced him and led the way to the dining-room, where such a supper was spread as the outcast had not seen for many days.

Dame Lecours, the merchant's housekeeper, looked somewhat taken aback when told to prepare a chamber for this very dilapidated-looking guest of her master's, but she felt reassured when he addressed her in the very best French, and thanked her courteously as she was leaving him.

The next morning a difficulty arose. Anthony's clothes were scarcely in keeping with his improved fortunes. However, his benefactor had not forgotten the fact, and before the young man had time to realise his embarrassing position, Mr. Leduc's valet appeared with an armful of clothes belonging to his master.

"Monsieur Leduc's compliments; and he hopes the garments will serve until monsieur has time to call upon his tailor."

Anthony was somewhat slighter than this new-found friend, but the clothes fitted very well, nevertheless, and Mr. Leduc scarcely recognised him when he came downstairs, so much improved was he in appearance.

"One thing I must prepare you for," said the French gentleman, kindly, as they walked down town together. "It will not be long before someone recognises you, and you may be made to feel uncomfortable, but you must be brave and live down your trouble. Remember I hold you innocent; and remember also that le Bon Dieu can dissipate the clouds when it shall seem good to him to do so. Are you—pardon me—a Catholic?"

"I have that happiness," answered Anthony, simply.

"That is good—you have, consequently, many motives for faith and patience. Here now is the office—follow me."

For about a week all went well. Anthony's frank good nature soon put him on terms of good-fellowship with his brother clerks, and he seemed on the high road to happiness once more, when all at once the clouds lowered over him again. One morning he went into the office and not a voice returned his cheerful salutation. Everybody seemed too busy to notice him. "It has come," thought Anthony, hanging up his hat and walking into Mr. Leduc's private office, where a desk had been placed for him.

Mr. Leduc himself arrived about an hour afterward, and he was scarcely seated when the head clerk from the outside office brought in a paper and laid it before him. He glanced at it, and then looked up with a frown on his usually calm face.

"Send them all in here," he said, sternly.

A moment later half-a-dozen of his employes stood before him, most of them looking decidedly uncomfortable.

"I understand from this petition," he said, in French, tapping the paper, "that you object to an employé of mine. Now, I want you all to understand, that I am perfectly well aware of Mr. Greyson's history: that I knew what I was about when I employed him; and that I intend to keep him in his present position until he leaves it of his own accord. If any or all of you are not satisfied with my arrangements, you are at liberty to send in your resignations. You may go."

The little knot of clerks made their exit with an alacrity that would have amused Anthony had he not been overwhelmed at the moment with shame and mortification. Mr. Leduc looked at his crimson face and smiled.

"Come, come, this will not do, mon ami," he said reprovingly, but there was genuine sympathy in his eyes, nevertheless. "It is only what I warned you of. You must have courage, courage. Oh,

yes, they will perhaps send you to—to—how do you say it? to Coventry, eh? But never mind, the lane that turns out is long, is it not? Now we will not speak of it again. Here is a batch of letters, let us get them out at once."

After that Anthony found his path a little thorny. None of the protestors sent in their resignation, but they all combined to cut him dead and he could not help feeling it acutely. "I don't think I'd be so hard on any of them if our positions were reversed," he thought more than once; and indeed it is probable he would not, for his was one of the rare natures that would rather raise a fallen brother than trample on him because he was down.

Once or twice in the days that followed he was tempted to give up his position and leave the city; but the knowledge that his story would certainly pursue him sooner or later deterred him. The stigma that hung to him was only to be removed by years of honest industry—unless, indeed, which seemed unlikely, the one responsible for the original wrong should confess it and so clear his character.

Almost imperceptibly his nature broadened and deepened under the adverse circumstances that surrounded him.

From an easy-going, pleasure-loving youth he developed into a thoughtful, serious-minded man, to whom the world was worth exactly its real value and nothing more; he had seen beneath its surface and the lesson just learned, without embittering him, cured him of many illusions.

He had always been a practical Catholic—indeed, uncommonly so for a young fellow who had been his own master from the age of 18—but his piety had been of a dutiful sort. It was the right and proper thing for a Catholic to go to Church on Sundays, to observe days of abstinence, and to receive the Sacrament several times during the year, and he had been careful to observe all these points—would have felt uncomfortable had he not done so—but his religion had not entered into, and become the best and dearest part of his life as it was now doing. He had not dreamed that it could fill to overflowing the vacancy made in his existence by the withdrawal of a pharisaical world; but it was doing so daily and he rejoiced at the discovery.

Truly his tribulations had not been in vain. Happiness and prosperity, fair fame and the respect of his fellows might all be his in the future, but he would never again be in danger of placing fictitious value upon them.

Then one day his faith and patience were rewarded. Mr. Leduc came to him with a newspaper and pointed out a paragraph which ran thus: "If Anthony Greyson, late of Wayington and Sons, will call at the General Hospital, he will hear of something to his advantage."

"Take your hat and go at once, my boy," said the merchant kindly; and Anthony hurried off, the prey of contending hopes and fears.

When he reached the hospital he was shown up into a ward that a glance revealed to him was occupied chiefly by consumptives. A nurse met him as he entered, and when he told her who he was, she led him to the end of the ward where a screen was drawn around one of the beds.

"The person who advertised for you is in there," she said, and returned to her duty, leaving Anthony to announce himself to the invisible patient.

He walked softly around the end of the screen and found himself face to face with a man who had been a fellow-clerk in Wayingtons; but so worn and emaciated that Anthony was a full minute before he recognised him.

"You have come at last, I am glad," said the sick man with difficulty. "I was afraid you had gone away."

Anthony took one of the shadowy white hands in his own and pressed it sympathetically. "I had no idea you were here, Preston, or I should have come to see you sooner," he said kindly. "Is there anything I can do for you?" The shock of seeing an old acquaintance in such a condition had made him forget momentarily the peculiar circumstance that had caused the meeting.

"You can't do anything for me except grant me your forgiveness," answered the other feebly. "It was I who took Wayington's pocket-book—I who put it in your trunk when I found detection inevitable, and I who let you go to the gaol when a word would have saved you. It was to tell you this that I advertised for you. I suppose I ought not to expect you to forgive me, it was a terrible wrong; but if you knew what I have suffered since, I don't think you would find it in your heart to let me go into eternity unforgiven."

The beads of moisture stood around his brow and lips and he closed his eyes as he spoke. Perhaps he dreaded reproach or incentive.

Anthony sat as if turned to stone. In all his speculations as to the identity of the one who planned his ruin, he had never once thought of Gilbert Preston. It was not in human nature to recall the misery, mental and physical, that this man's cowardly act had been the cause of inflicting upon him, and it all recurred to him with the vividness of a flash of lightning. But the memory and the feelings it evoked lasted only long enough to remind him that he would one day need a generous pardon himself, and there was no trace of anger in his face or voice as he leaned over and wiped the perspiration from the face of the dying man, saying gently at the same time: "I forgive you as I hope to be forgiven myself. Are you strong enough to tell me how it happened?"

Preston opened his eyes and looked up, an expression of relief struggling with shame in his poor thin face. "You are very generous, Greyson," he said weakly. "Thank God, I had the courage to speak; it has taken a load off my mind. Yes, I will tell you how it happened. I had got into trouble—gambling debts; and the fellow I owed them to, threatened to write and tell Mr. Wayington if I did not pay up by a certain date. You know the sort of man the boss was; he'd have turned me out there and then if he'd known the rig I was running and that would have meant ruin to me. I was desperate—didn't know which way to turn—and that very day Mr. Wayington left a wallet on his desk with five hundred dollars