

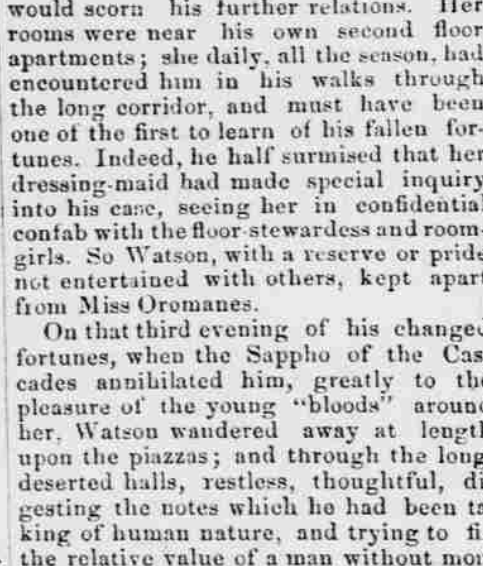
"Dead Broke."

"He is dead broke." "How much does he owe?" "One week to-morrow, over the month," said the clerk, examining the ledger. "When?" "Whistled the landlord. "Has he no friends to pay for him?" "Plenty of friends now, but they'll be out that he is broke, and they'll be off like a convey of birds. "I must see him; and the hotel proprietor walked out upon the piazza, approached a young man leaning against one of the front pillars. "Mr. Watson, your bill, I see, is in arrears one week over the settlement day. Why is it?" "The young man flushed at first as if in anger; then a smile overspread his handsome face. "I know I am a little delinquent, Major Snow, but I can't pay at present."

"Do you expect money soon?" "Well, really, I don't know who should send me anything from their surfeit of cash." "Then I am to understand that you are not only unable to pay, but do not expect to be able to?" "Undoubtedly, Major." "Sorry, Watson, for you have been a favorite of the season, and I don't like to turn you out before the break-up. Nor will I. If you can give up your suit of rooms, and take up with one suited to your circumstances, I will let you remain the season out, trusting you to pay me in the future." "You are very good, Major, and I guess I'll have to consent." "So the baggage of Robert Watson was lifted and borne from the elegant suite on the second floor to a little seven by fourteen room on the fifth floor. How quickly it became known that the change had been made! Every servant in the house layed the knowledge in the absence of the usual deference paid to the possessors of "parlors." At dinner, the "boy" who had been too eager to anticipate Mr. Watson's wants, suddenly became oblivious to those wants, and only answered them after repeated orders. The cashier and register clerk, always so obsequious, grew dignified and indifferent. Only the arbiter Major preserved a kindly greeting for his guest too poor to pay his bill, and remaining by sufferance. "Queer," thought the hotel proprietor. "He certainly had money enough when he came, for he deposited a cool five thousand in the safe. He hasn't been fast, I am certain, and his habits have been good; but the young bloods have rather played off from him. But he has been a favorite. Not a belle in the room but would have dropped her best friend for his attendance. Hang me if I can understand it. Watson, hailing from Baltimore, had been a season guest at the Cascade. Friends he had in plenty. He was courteous, well bred, good-looking, intelligent, and, apparently, rich—what more could be asked? Among the ladies he had moved quite a prince; and many were the "gossamer webs woven as toils to capture him, but to all he proved a very incorrigible recusant—he would not be any one's prize. The exquisite charm of his voice, manner and intellect, the beauty of person, the elegance of attire—all were agreeable to him, deeply so, for he seemed to enjoy them immensely; but not the brilliant postess, Miss Mountjoy, nor the coy and artless Miss Dumain, nor the rattle-headed young Miss Lambert, nor the very rich Miss Oromanes, appeared to command his attention. He was all alike, the agreeable companion, the candid friend, the shrewd resistor of all arts to lead him into love's labyrinthine mazes. How would all these beauties of the saloon receive the announcement sure to be made of his "altered circumstances," as the Major expressed it? Evidently Mr. Watson was not indifferent. He still frequented the piazzas and parlors, giving every friend, male and female ample opportunity to "cut" his acquaintance, or otherwise to express themselves. It was somewhat curious to note the progress of his decline, not fall, for Watson had that in his character construction which, even if poverty and trial, would preserve him from a sacrifice of personal dignity and self-respect. But that he was on the decline became to him a sorrowful fact. Sorrowful did we say? That is, judging by the usual standard of human felicity or misery. To lose one's friends, to behold your position in society gradually slipping away, to realize that no longer you are held in coveted consideration by a chosen few, is, ordinarily, a source of sorrow. But in Watson's case it was difficult to tell how keenly the knife cut to the quick of his sensibilities; for, while every acquaintance was given full facilities for doing the disagreeable office of giving the "cold shoulder," the Baltimorean appeared like an interested spectator, and was as unmoved when passed by a supposed friend without the slightest notice, as if he were a newspaper reporter, anxious to see the act and note the fact. Into the parlors during the evening he particularly pressed his way. If a bevy of gay fellows surrounded Miss Mountjoy; he worked his way to the circle, and, at last, received from that lady of Sappho-like lips his discharge. She did most gracefully and crushingly turn her back upon him not three days after his removal from the second floor. Miss Dumain he sought, confident that one so artless certainly would be above the hollow-hearted crowd, and still give him her friendly greeting. Vain conception! The artless girl was so indeed; and when at length he cornered her, it was to his discomfort. She suddenly turned and forced her way past him, without even one of her downward glances. On the contrary, her eyes were fixed fully on his face, and plainly said, "Sir, we are strangers."

Next he tried rattle-headed Miss Lambert, and she rattled on quite normal; but Watson soon discovered that the rattle was not for him. Strangely enough, and proud and exclusive Miss Percy unbent somewhat from her lofty carriage, and gave him a welcome; but over it all was a shadow—

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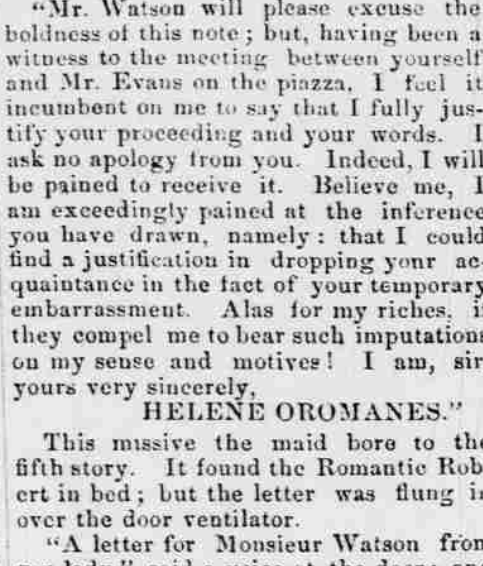
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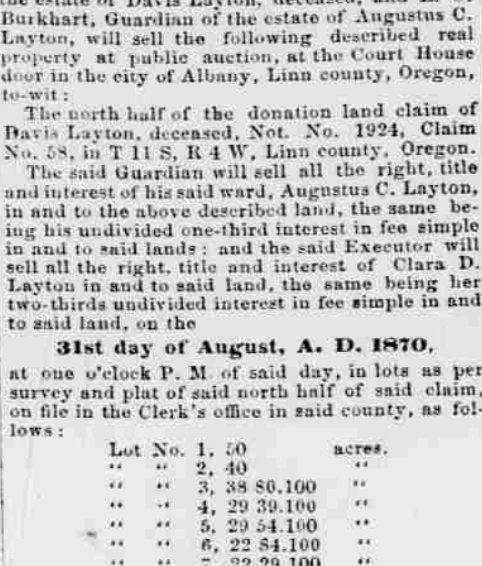
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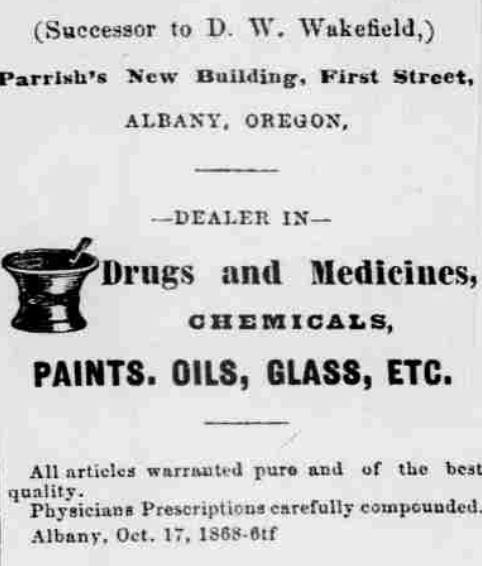
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