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BY J. W. GALLEY.

### CHAPTER II.

The home of Colonel Holten was his own. He was its author. There had been a time in the manhood of his life when the price of any article in his home would have been a vital financial matter to him; but now, thanks to his own efforts, care, courage, and capabilities, he was able easily to have about him whatever money could buy. Yet his home was in no way a heterogeneous array of imitative purchases or gilded trashiness. It was costly, and it conformed in all its details to his ideas of a home, as near as well rewarded skill and personal supervision could make it. Yet, what, he was no slave to his merchandise. His belongings, nor would he advise or permit those who shared his affections and fortunes so to be. The downs of life had taught him that his ups are only valuable as they promote contentment with the reasonable attainment of one's object. The acquisition of the power of wealth was his game. He loved to play that game. But he loved even better the seasons of relaxation, under the roof-tree he had reared from a foundation of empty hands.

His wife was a soothing, sensible, domestic person, satisfied by herself and others, but not by her, to be above him in blood and lineage—whatever that may mean in the United States of North America. Some recent ancestors of hers had been members of the Legislature of her native State, or of some other State; and one ancestor in particular had been a judge in his time, and also a member of Congress. But Holten's ancestors had been simply furrowers of the soil, or traders, for numberless generations. And though now, in the matter of weight in the State and on the market, he was able to buy and sell, had such been for sale, the influence of all his wife's relations from the remotest point in the family history, still he ever, and at all times held and gave forth the idea that his wife and her family were, as compared with himself and his family—or with anybody else's family, in fact—superior or religious. He not only held this idea, but he religiously believed it, from the fact that when he first felt his heart warm toward the good girl of his choice, she seemed so far and away above his social position and culture, that the impression then made remained, in true love evergreen, with him through life. He, by his actions, more than by his words, perhaps, sought to convey this idea to his children; and he generally succeeded in doing so, but not in every case. He had no son. This was one of his regrets. But he had three fair daughters, the eldest of whom was his son-in-law, except that she was in no way masculine. She was herself again as near as she could be, as able from what she regarded as her misfortune of sex. She was a strong woman—not strong as a man is strong—but strong as a brave man would have her to be. She knew when he was hurt. The least abrasion on the firm-fronted armor which he presented to the striving world was not hidden to her eyes. She gloried in his strength, rejoiced in his successes, and was vexed at any impediments in his way. She realized as by intuition that the fortunes of a man are himself, that opportunity is itself his dearest asset, until vitallized by a vigorous manhood; and yet she was not a forward nor an obtrusive woman. Toward this child the father leaned in his wearied-out or disgusted hours; and she promptly met him with as much motherly kindness as may be in a young woman of years not yet counting one score. In form and feature she resembled her father and her father's people. Tall she was but not over tall, full and firm of chest, strong of limb and little of action, with an imposing, grand, and graceful way of her own. She was not pretty of face, yet it was easier to look in her face a second time than to avoid doing so. It was a sweet, powerful face, and the head which gave to that face an appearance of prominence of mouth and chin was a grand head. It was of the domestic-heroic type, poised a little backward by the weight of a vital brain, and yet far enough forward for all practical purposes. Her hair was light brown, her eyes grey, her hair was light teeth good, her cheeks and chin dimpled, and her neck and throat white, smooth, and with but the faintest suggestion of an angle. Still she was not pretty—did not think she was. But she was, and she early knew it, pleasing to her own sex, and interesting to the other. Her sisters, being younger and prettier, were as yet ordinary persons, not requiring special notice at this time. But she had a visiting friend, a few years older than herself, from the country of ancient culture which lies to the eastward. This friend was another sort of girl—slender, high of forehead, and light behind the ears. Her head poised the reverse way to that of her heroine, for whereas the head of our girl tilted backward, giving to her face a slightly upward poise, the face of the other poised forward, drawing the chin back, and throwing the brow to the front; hence, our girl looked at you with a full, open expression, while the other glanced from under her higher forehead. Girls who have heads and faces gotten up in these styles have usually bodies and minds to correspond. Thinking observers know that; so there is no need just here to further describe Judith Holten and her young Eastern friend, Alice Winans.

Into this family Norman Maydole, Jr., was ushered by his head, Mrs. Holten, taking his reserve of manner for bashful timidity, strove, with cheery motherliness, to make his introduction easy. The younger girls stood with their arms about each other, and looked innocently at the new young man. Miss Alice Winans inspected him according to Robert Burns's formula: "Keech thro' ev'ryither man Wi' sharp'n'd sic' inspection."

Judith shook hands with him earnestly and fairly, looking at him with level eyes from an open, honest expression, bade him a brief, hearty welcome (after her father's style) to him. But Miss Alice kept a tenton to his looks, and ere the evening was half ended had noted that Norman's eyes were, though very quiet and self-possessed, prone to wander after the form and movements of Judith Holten. Norman made no boyish effort to add weight to his own impressiveness—had no thought of so doing. His mind was upon other matters, relating to the changing condition of his affairs; and, perhaps, in any case he would have acted as he did then—simply as a quiet young gentleman. As the evening progressed into the late hours, Mrs. Holten remarked easily to Norman, as she took a seat near, in her changes from place to place about the room: "Mr. Maydole, you are to remain with us as a *famille* for the present, and you must try to feel at home."

"Think you, madam; but is it not more fit that I should remain at my hotel?" "No, indeed! Mr. Holten would not think of it; and we have all voted that you remain with us."

"It is with entire pleasure that I accept your kindness. Indeed as to its effect upon myself, I have not had any hesitation in its acceptance; but I am here to serve, not to be served."

"If you are an early riser, Mr. Maydole, and find no one but the servants stirring when you get up, come to my den. It is in the southeast corner of the building, right-hand side along this hall. I am usually up betimes in the morning. I shall be busily occupied, but I will find you something to do."

When Colonel Holten left him for the night, Norman addressed, paid no attention to his wounded shoulder, and then lay down to sleep. But there were too many now arrangements among his ideas to allow of his sleeping for several hours. He went over in his mind his leaving home, and all that had happened to him and by him, on his way down to the city, and then he tried to forecast his position in Colonel Holten's family; but that being too complex he gave it up, turning at length drowsily upon his pillow, to fall into a half-dream, in which he saw Judith Holten's grand, muscular grace moving about the house, and heard her strong, contagious laugh ringing him at last into a sound, dreamless sleep.

This laugh of Judith's, by the way, was an interesting performance, which broke at first on her face in a smile of deepened dimples and gleaming teeth, and then she took her into a contagious grace of countenance, which she could not resist, nor anybody else. As one of Colonel Holten's "old time pals" when he returned to his bachelor home in the mines, describing Judith Holten, said: "A feller could afford to make a d—d fool of himself, any time, if he'd laugh at him."

In the morning Norman was up and about at an early hour, but he had heard heavy, slipper-footed steps along the hall before he was out of bed; and as the sound of these steps went in the direction of "the den," he followed the sound, and knocking at the door in the side of the hall, was hidden to "come in," and then passing into a room which had the appearance of the office of a hard-worked counselor at law, with its desks, its library, its pigeon-holes, and its papers, he was heartily accosted with:

"Ah, Mr. Maydole! Good morning, sir. Pleased to see you. Hope you rested well. I'm very busy." Then, without waiting for an answer he added, pointing to a desk in the middle of the room, "Amuse yourself looking through those accounts—said to be tangled—see what you can find out." Then taking out his watch, he smoothed his thumb across its crystal, and further added, "We will work till half past eight o'clock, then breakfast, then I go down town, then you work at those account books as long as you feel like it, and afterward follow your own fancy. If you think you find a point that is crooked, report it to me." Without an other word he sat down to his desk, and immediately relapsed into the spiritual trance of business absorption.

Norman took his seat without remark, and straightway went to work. The books proved to be those of a mining company, containing what purported to be the business records of the working of the mine through several years. For all he could make out at a brief examination, the books seemed mechanically well arranged, and kept with artistic neatness as to penmanship, etc.; but Norman, as occasional assistant to his father in the county clerk's office, had seen fancy papers make a very poor showing of facts, and was, therefore, in no wise dazzled by the matter of style. He had also in his time, even from childhood, sat by his father's side in court, watching the proceedings in lengthy litigation of the shrewd attorney examining books of account and book-keepers; and these early impressions, coupled with his late course of commercial education had brought him forward not so ill prepared for the task in hand. As no particular point had been given him to find out, he wisely concluded to prepare himself with "a case in court," and be ready for examination at all points, let the same come in what shape soever. He saw large, numerous, and oft charges, for wages, for timbers, lumber, powder, steel, tools, etc., and he concluded

to extract and make schedules of these expenditures, in an effort to compare the proportion which each bore to the other, so as, if possible, to trace an excess of expenditure, or waste, in any one direction, as proportioned with any other. For his first item he selected the matter of mining timbers; and, by breakfast time, he thought he found that in one year the amount of timbers charged as used by and placed in the main shaft of the mine, would have so filled the shaft with timber that the twelve by six foot opening would be reduced to a six by three. He was working to verify this matter, when Colonel Holten suddenly awoke from his trance, and said, looking again at his watch:

"Ah, breakfast! Well, Mr. Maydole, how are the books?—too soon to ask that question, eh?" "Rather, sir. But still," said Norman, laying down his pencil, "there seems to be a little queeriness in the charges for timbers."

"How's that?" "It seems to me at a cursory glance, that if the amount of timber charged as used was used in the place to which it is allotted, there would be little room for anything else in that place but timber."

"Very good, very good, Mr. Maydole. Let us go to breakfast." Then he suddenly paused at the door, out of which he was about to lead, going back to his desk, opened a drawer, saying, "Here. It may happen that you shall wish to go out into the town without passing along the halls of the house. This key will let you out of that door," pointing to it, "into the side street. Be careful to lock it after you. Now we will go to breakfast."

At the breakfast table Norman was pleasantly greeted by the assembled family. Mrs. Holten, still under the idea that his quiet ways meant bashfulness, sought to draw him into conversation, and asked: "Does it snow where you have lived—I mean, does it fall heavily?"

"Now, snow-storms were among Norman's admirations of the fine things in nature." "No, madam, not where my father resides, that is, not heavily."

"Isn't that a pity? I think the first heavy snow-fall of the season is one of the most delightful things in the world." "O-oh-o," shivered Miss Alice Winans, as she drew up her shoulders into the imaginary wrappings of a heavy shawl.

"Let! When I was a girl," continued the madam, "we girls then used to wear our hair parted in the middle, and combed down smoothly over our ears, and done up with a comb in the back—"

"A very sensible, becoming, and womanly way to wear it," dryly exclaimed Colonel Holten.

"Old-fashioned, though," interrupted Judith.

"There is a great deal of good sense in that which is old-fashioned, my daughter."

"And much that is old-fashioned which is as full of folly as a powdered wig," rejoined Judith.

Holten smiled in his beard, and his wife continued:

"And we used to put on our shawls and go out bare-headed to romp through the falling snow. It was just delightful to see the steady falling, falling, falling of the soft, feathery flakes, and to hear our voices echo such a little way off in the muffled stillness. I like the snow."

"Oh, me! I hate it," said Miss Alice, with a shrug.

"The fall is heavy higher up in the mountain than where you live?" Col. Holten half asserted, half asked, nodding at Norman.

"Yes, sir. I spent one winter hunting on Norwegian snow-shoes on the high Sierra."

"And what did you hunt?" asked Mrs. Holten.

"Bears, wild-cats, mountain lions, deer, and small game."

"Why? I thought the bears crawled into their caves or holes in the winter season. That's what the *Natural History* says," remarked one of the younger Misses Holten.

"Then we crawl in after them," said Norman.

"Dear me, Mr. Maydole," continued the young miss, "would you crawl into a dark cave after a wild bear?"

"Yes; if I were hunting him." The young miss, looking at him with rounded eyes, simply said, "Mr. Maydole!"

"Did he convey to you his unerring aim with a pistol?" "And has often said that he did."

"And his love of flintlocks, with his address in the manly art?" "To some degree."

Colonel Holten looked at Norman's hands, and seemed to catch an idea for reflection, for he said no more during the breakfast.

"How deep is the snow upon the mountains, usually, in winter?" asked Miss Judith.

"From nothing to six, eight, ten, or twenty feet, until it is drifted by the winds, and then it is any depth, almost, you would ask."

Here Norman was led into a brief description of snow-shoeing, up and down over the deep snow on the silent, white-capped mountains, until Miss Winans, in the month of June, said she was freezing, and wanted to know if the company did not hear the sleigh-bells jingling through the streets of San Francisco.

"I think I do," said Colonel Holten, as, waking from his mood of reflection and rising from the table, he buttoned up his coat, pulled the collar up about his neck, looked for his hat, and said to his wife: "My dear, put on your wraps, and we will go for a merry ride under the robes of 'old lung syne.'"

Mrs. Holten looked at him with a smile lit by the light of other days, in which there was to him a quiet significance that sent him out of the house smiling as if he remembered something pleasant.

The family dispersed, and Norman went back again to the contemplation of his new work. He had not sat long when it occurred to him that the present was as good a time as any to follow the directions on a card, given him by Dr. Minnis, to the address therein; not that his shoulder was paining him to any extent, but because he thought it his prudent duty to have his wound looked after; consequently, he left himself out of the side door, and proceeded to find the medical man.

When he sent in the card given him by Dr. Minnis, he had but a few moments to wait ere the distinguished disciple of Galen came, himself, to meet him and greet him, saying: "I am pleased to meet you. Any patient of Dr. Minnis's is a personal friend to me when bringing the proper credentials. In what way can I serve you?"

"I do not call it weakness."

"Perhaps it is not, in this case—at least, I hope not. But father has always had a romantic notion of finding some kind of an ideal young man. He is always, as the miners call it, 'prospecting' for such a person. An honest, heroic young fellow, who is not spoiled by billiards and fooball-bones."

"Does your father object to billiards, and permit billiard tables in his own house?" "No, not to billiards in moderation. But he dislikes—I may say abhors—all futile absorption. You will hear him, some time, talk about it—the young men of this age throwing their immortal souls into billiard balls, and lounging their energies away in the smoke of fancy brands of cigars, and so forth."

"Had he no youthful follies?" "I do not know, of course; but as near as I can find out, father has always been a worker and a driver. Something of a hero, perhaps."

"On Change?" "More than that, I think. The men who were young along with him, years ago, have told me that in the early days of the gold diggings, father used to lend the fights against the Indians and wrong-doers. I have also heard him speak of such things."

"Judith, you have a great admiration for your father."

"I should say I had," said Judith, with a round, full, and assuring emphasis. "My father is the jewel of all our tribe. Yet he is so modest that he does not know it. He always puts mother's people above himself. They are good people, it is true, but father is worth all of them put together. And I say it, not to disparage them, but to do him justice."

"Do you think Mr. Maydole has characteristics resembling those of your father?" "I do not know. Sometimes I think he has. But we can not tell about that till he is more tried. See what my father has come through in his younger life; leaving home almost a boy; looking out for himself; then plunging into the wildest days of the gold excitement, with no hand to hold him back from the riot and fascinations of those times. Yet here he is to-day, so far as I can learn, a strong, clean, domestic gentleman. Out of the midst of such a life he has grown to be better than good."

Miss Alice Winans was rather puzzled with him. In her philosophical intellect he was always something between a latent monster and a good young gentleman, while in her heart he began to be a photograph of "negative," which only grew distinct against the dark shadow of him which lurked in her intellect. Over the shadow she talked, analyzed, and philosophized; over the "negative" she sighed and kept silent. Queer it is, at times, that our heads go one way and our hearts the other. There is no science in love—and mighty little judgment. Blessed be the man who first invented true love—he didn't put much brains into it. If he had, he would have spoiled it, and poor, ordinary male deities could never carry the gradually sensible women that they sometimes do marry. If the wise were to wed only the wise, there would be a monopoly of wisdom. Nature abhors a monopoly no less than she does a vacuum. The inventor of true love seems to have been familiar with these great facts; hence, he gave the dirty water poured from the window upon the wise pate of Socrates by his wedded wife, who had no taste for a full head with a lean ladder.

Norman was discussed by the two young ladies from time to time.

"Father is taking a strong fancy for Mr. Maydole," said Judith, in one of the discussions of the young man.

"I do not see why he should not."

"Nor I, either. But I am suspicious of father's weakness that way."

"I do not call it weakness."

"THE ROBBER FOILED!"

"THE VILLAINOUS 'COCHO PIZAN' PROBABLY KILLED BY YOUNG MAYDOLE."

[TO BE CONTINUED.]