

There was a little silence, broken only by the sullen reverberations beneath the train. And then a man suddenly appeared in the aisle.

He was a stout, red-faced man, with a black moustache. His eyes were small and keen, and his chin square and aggressive. 'So you're in here, are you?' he demanded as he looked down at the young man and the girl. His voice was low, but wrathful.

The young man looked up in the angry face.

'What do you mean by that?' he asked. He spoke quietly, but a red spot suddenly burned in his cheeks.

'You know well enough what I mean,' the stout man growled. 'You've coaxed this girl away from us. You're hiding her. She's bound to us by a contract. We mean to hold her to it. What are you butting in for?'

The young man had risen and was facing the stranger.

'I can explain that very easily,' he said. 'The girl needed a friend.'

The stout man chuckled hoarsely.

'A friend,' he sneered. 'What does she want of a friend? Hasn't she got a friend in the company? She'll make all the friends she wants without picking up the first pretty boy that winks at her.'

'Steady,' said the young man, and drew a quick breath.

The stout man looked across at the girl.

'Come, young lady,' he said; 'your friends are on the outside waiting for you. Your agreement to go with us is here in my pocket. You can't get away from it.'

'Wait,' said the young man, sharply. 'That agreement is worthless. The girl is not of age, and she has been coaxed away from home. That looks to me like abduction or kidnapping.'

The stout man showed his teeth.

'She's an honest girl. She'll come with me.'

The girl's face was pressed against the window pane. She did not look around.

The young man had thrust his hands in his side coat pockets, and his face was close to the stout man's.

'Now, listen to me,' he said. 'The young woman will do just what she pleases to do in this affair, and she's not to be bullied or cajoled. Understand that. Understand, too, that you can't bully me. If this girl wants my protection she will get it.'

The stout man laughed scornfully.

'Your protection,' he sneered; 'it's a fine brand of protection she'd get from you, Mr. Wolf! Your little game is very gauzy, my young friend. If there was some women here to look after the girl it would be different, but I don't intend to leave her in your hands, trust me for that.'

The young man's face turned white, and his lip quivered.

And then came a sudden interruption.

The elderly lady arose and leaned forward. She had a card in her fingers.

'I will take charge of the girl,' she said in a quiet tone. 'This is my name.'

The stout man stared at the card, and then he stared at the lady. He seemed to recognise her name. Then he gave the girl a hasty glance, scowled at the young man, and drew back.

'That's different,' he growled, and stalked from the car.

The elderly lady looked at the young man, and he bowed and took a chair some distance away. Then she turned to the girl.

It might have been twenty minutes later and the train was speeding away from Yorkville, when the lady came to him and took the chair opposite.

You are young Mr. Greer, I believe.'

'I am Dunham Greer.'

'I thought I recognised your face. I know your father very well. I am Mrs. Hamerton, Mrs. Gilbert Hamerton.'

The young man bowed. He had often heard of Mrs. Hamerton.

'I have been talking with the young girl,' she said, 'and I find she is a nice little thing. I'm quite sure this adventure will not harm her. In fact, I am so well pleased with her that I am going to take her home with me. She can make herself useful in several ways. I want some typewriting done, and I am going to let her work on my scrapbooks—perhaps you have heard of them? To-night I will write to her father.' He smiled a little as she looked at the young man. 'No doubt this will relieve you of a rather serious responsibility.'

'Yes,' said the young man with a laugh. 'It seemed to get more serious the longer I had it. You are very kind and good,' he quickly added.

The lady's face grew grave.

'For a moment,' she said, 'I was tempted to think unkindly of you, but now I am sure, dear boy, that if your father had twice as many millions they couldn't spoil you!'

And she laughed and put out her hand.—*Cleveland Plain Dealer.*

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