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# CY WHITTAKER'S PLACE

"S-s-h-h! for the land sakes! speech-  
makin' must be as bad as the rum hab-  
it when a feller's got it chronic as  
you have. No; it didn't make much  
difference to me whether you came or  
not. But, honest, you've got to be a  
kind of Bunker Hill monument to the  
folks back home. They kneel down at  
your foundations and look up at you  
and tell each other how many foot  
high you are and what it cost to build  
you and how you stand for patriotism  
and purity till—well, I couldn't see you  
tumble down without givin' you a  
chance to explain—I couldn't. 'Twould  
be like blowin' up a church."

### CHAPTER XXI.

THE purple had left Congress-  
man Atkins' face, but the  
speechmaking habit is not like-  
ly to be broken.

"Cyrus Whittaker," he stammered,  
"have you been drinking? Your lan-  
guage to me is abominable. Why I  
permit myself to remain here and lis-  
ten to such—"

"If you'll keep still I'll tell you why.  
And if I was you I wouldn't be too  
anxious to find out. This everlasting  
cold don't make me over and above  
good tempered, and when I think of  
what you've done to that little girl, or  
what you tried to do, I have to hold  
myself down tight—tight—and don't  
you forget it! Now you keep quiet  
and listen. It'll be best for you, He-  
man. Your cards ain't under the table  
any longer. I've seen your hand, and  
I know why you've been playin' it.  
I know the whole game. I've been  
west, and Everdean and I have had a  
talk."

Mr. Atkins had again risen from the  
chair. Now he fell heavily back into  
it. His lips moved as if he meant to  
speak, but he did not. At the mention  
of the Everdean name he made a  
queer choking sound in his throat.

"I know the whole business, He-  
man," went on the captain. "I know  
why you was so knocked over when  
you learned who Bos'n was the night  
of the party. I know why you took  
up with that blackguard Thomas and  
why you've spent your good money  
hirin' lawyers for him. I know about  
the mine. I know the whole thing  
from first to last. Shall I tell you?  
Do you want to hear it?"

The great man did not answer. A  
drop of perspiration shone on his high  
forehead, and the veins of his big  
white hands stood out as he clutched  
the arms of his chair. The monument  
was tottering on its base.

"It's a dirty mess, the whole of it,"  
continued Captain Cy. "And yet I can  
see—I suppose I can see—some excuse  
for you at the beginnin'. When old  
man Everdean and his crowd bought  
you and John Thayer out way back  
there in '54, after John died, and all  
the money was put into your hands  
I call'ate you was honest then. I  
wouldn't wonder if you meant to hand  
over the \$37,500 to your partner's wid-  
ow. But 'twas harder and more risky  
to send money east in them days than  
'tis now, and so you waited, thinkin'  
maybe that you'd fetch it to Emily  
when you come yourself. But you  
didn't come home for some years; you  
went tradin' down along the Feejees  
and around that way. That's how I  
reasoned it out these last few days on  
the train. I give you credit for bein'  
honest first along."

"But never mind whether you was  
or not—you haven't been since. You  
never paid over a cent of that poor  
feller's money—honest money, that be-  
longed to his heirs and belongs to 'em  
now. You've hung on to it, stole it,  
used it for yours. And Emily worked  
and scratched for a livin' and died  
poor. And Mary, she died after bein'  
abused and deserted by that cursed  
husband of hers. And you thought  
you was safe, I call'ate. And then  
Bos'n turns up right in your own town,  
right across the road from you! By  
the big dipper, it's enough to make a  
feller believe that the Almighty does  
take a hand in straightenin' out such  
things when us humans bungle 'em—  
it is so!

"Course I ain't sure. Heman, what  
you meant to do when you found that  
the child you'd stole that money from  
was goin' to be under your face and  
eyes till you or she died. I call'ate you  
was afraid I'd find somethin' out,  
wasn't you? I presume likely you  
thought that I, not havin' quite the  
reverence for you that the rest of the  
Bayporters have, might be sharp  
enough or lucky enough to smell a rat.  
Perhaps you suspicioned that I knew  
the Everdeans. Anyhow you wanted  
to get the child as fur out of your  
sight and out of my hands as you  
could. Ain't that so? And when her  
dad turned up you thought you saw  
your chance. Heman, you answer me  
this: Ain't it part of your bargain with  
Thomas that when he gets his little  
girl he shall take her and clear out,  
away off somewheres, for good? Ain't  
it now—what?"

The monument was swaying, was  
swinging from side to side, but it did  
not quite fall—not then. The congress-  
man's cheeks hung flabby, his fore-  
head was wet, and he shook from head  
to foot. But he clinched his jaws and  
made one last attempt at defiance.

"I—I don't know what you mean,"  
he declared. "You—you seem to be ac-  
cusing me of something—of stealin', I  
believe. Do you understand who I  
am? I have some influence and repu-  
tation, and it is dangerous to—to try to  
frighten me. Proofs are required in  
law, and—"

"S-s-h-h! You know I've got the  
proofs. They were easy enough to get  
once I happened on the track of 'em.  
Lord sakes, Heman, I ain't a fool!  
What's the use of your pretendin' to  
be one? here's the deed out in Frisco,  
with yours and John's name on it.  
There's the records to prove the sale.  
There's the receipt for the \$75,000  
signed by you on behalf of yourself  
and your partner's widow. There's old  
man Everdean alive and competent to  
testify. There's John Thayer's will on  
file over to Orham. Proofs! Why,  
you thief, if it's proofs you want I've  
got enough to send you to state prison  
for the rest of your life! Don't you  
dare say 'proofs' to me again! Heman  
Atkins, you owe me, as Bos'n's guard-  
ian, \$37,500, with interest since 1854.  
What you goin' to do about it?"

Here was one ray, a feeble ray, of  
light.

"You're not her guardian," cried At-  
kins. "The courts have thrown you  
out, and your appeal won't stand ei-  
ther. If any money is due it belongs  
to her father. She isn't of age! No,  
sir, her father!"

Captain Cy's patience had been giv-  
ing away. Now he lost it altogether.  
He strode across the room and shook  
his forefinger in his victim's face.

"So!" he cried. "That's your tack,  
is it? By the big dipper, you go to  
her father—just you go to him and tell  
him! Just hint to him that you owe  
his daughter thirty-odd thousand dol-  
lars and see what he'll do. Good heav-  
ens above, he was ready to sell her  
out to me for \$50 wuth of sand bank  
in Orham—almost ready, he was, till  
you offered a higher price to him to  
fight. Why, he'll have your hide nail-  
ed up on the barn door! If you don't  
pay him every red copper down on the  
nail he'll wring you dry. And then  
he'll blackmail you forever and ever,  
amen—unless, of course, I go home  
and stop the blackmail by printin' my  
story in the Breeze. I've a precious  
good mind to do it. By the Almighty,  
I will do it unless you come off that  
high horse of yours and talk like a  
man."

And then the monument fell—  
prostrate, with a sickly, pitiful crash.  
If we of Bayport could have seen our  
congressman then! The great man,  
great no longer, broke down complet-  
ly. He cried like a baby. It was all  
true—all true. He had not meant to  
steal at first. He had been led into  
using the money in his business. Then  
he had meant to send it to the heirs,  
but he didn't know their whereabouts.  
Captain Cy smiled at this excuse. And  
now he couldn't pay—he couldn't. He  
had hardly that sum in the world. He  
had lost money in stocks. His prop-  
erty in the south had gone to the  
bad. He would be ruined. He would  
have to go to prison. He was getting  
to be an old man. And there was  
Alicia, his daughter! Think of her!  
Think of the disgrace! And so on,  
over and over, with the one recurring  
burden—what was the captain going  
to do—what was he going to do? It  
was a miserable, dreadful exhibition,  
and Captain Cy could feel no pride in  
his triumph.

"There, there!" he said at last. "Stop  
it, man; stop it, for goodness sakes!  
Pull yourself together. I guess we can  
fix it up somehow. I ain't goin' to be  
too hard on you. If it want for your  
meanness in bein' willin' to let Bos'n  
suffer her life long with that drunken  
beast of a dad of hers I'd feel almost  
like tellin' you to get up and forget it.  
But that's got to be stopped. Now, you  
listen to me."

To be Continued)

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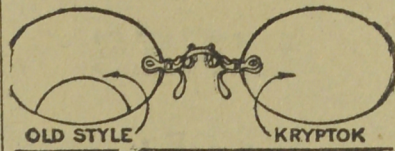
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