In San Francisco, on the north side In San Francisco, on the north side of Folsom street, overlooking Mission Bay, stands a palatial residence.

The interior of this house is even more beautiful than its exterior, every apartment being in its way a gem of magnificence and refinement.

The library especially realizes the most perfect ideal of an elegant and cultured home.

And yet, at the moment we look in upon him—one Augustafternoon, as he

upon him—one Augustafternoon, as he occupied his library—the proprietor of all this wealth appeared of all men—the

all this wealth appeared of all men the most miserable.

He was Mr. Morton Preble, for many years a leading banker of San Francisco.

It was in vain that the broad baywindow at the south end of the room had been opened, giving lagress to the sanshine and the fragrance of rare flowers—in vain that the walls were lined with richly carved book-cases and paintings—in vain that soft couches and luxurious chairs had been gathered around him.

paintings—in vain that soft couches and luxurious chairs had been gathered around him.

He was wretched.

He lay on a sofa, in the depths of the great bay-window, the wreck of a once powerful man. His figure was thin and gaunt; his face white as marble; his eyes having an expression of woful approhension, of larrowing anxiety, of dreadful expectancy.

It was evident at a glance that no merely physical ailment had made him what he was.

By what withering secret, by what destroying affliction, had he been thus agonized? thus haunted? thus hunted? be so noble and good! he so wealthy and distinguished!

As he moved restlessly upon his luxurious cushions the pretty clock on the mantel-piece struck five, every stroke seeming to fall like a hammer upon the heart of the nervous invalid. He aroused himself, struggling feebly to a sitting posture.

"Oh, will this fatal day never, never

ting posture.
"Oh, will this fatal day never, never pass?" he murmured; "nor bring us re-lief?"

Noticing with a nervous start that he was alone, he touched a bell upon a table before him, and called:
"Helen, Helen! where are you?"
Before the echois of his voice had died out a step was heard, and his wife entered his presence.

"I left you only for a moment, Morton," she said, advancing to the banker's side. "You were dozing, I think. I wished to send for the doctor!"

She was a beautiful woman, of some six and thirty years greeful with

six and thirty years, graceful, with broad white brows, and loving eyes, in which the brightness and sweetness of a sunshiny nature were still perceptible, under a grief and anxiety no less poignant than that evinced by her husband.

"The doctor!" he echoed, half reproachfully.
"Yes, dear," she said, in a calm and "Yes, dear," she said, in a cann also cheerful voice, as she drew a chair to the side of the sofa, and sat down, strok-ing the corrugated forehead of the in-

valid with a magnetic touch. "He will be here immediately. Your last nervous crisis alarmed me. You may become seriously ill!"

Mr. Preble bestowed an affectionate look upon his wife, but said despondently:

look upon his wife, but said despondently:

"The doctor! He cannot 'minister to a mind diseased!' Oh, if these long hours would only pass! If I only know what the day has yet in store for us!"

"Look up, Morton!" enjoined Mrs. Preble, with a reverently trustful glance upward through the open window at the blue sky, and as if looking beyond the azure clouds therein. "Let us appeal from the injustice and wickedness of earth to the goodness and mercy of Heaven!"

Heaven!"
The banker gave a low, sobbing sigh.
"I cannot look up, Helen," he answered, with a passionate tremor in his voice—"only down, down at the grave that is opening before me!"
Mrs. Preble continued to stroke his forehead softly, while she lifted her pale face to the sunlight streaming into the spartment.

"Look up, Morton—always look up!" she again enjoined upon the invalid. "During all these fourtoen years of ag-ony, I have not once doubted either the goodness or the Justice of Heaven, 'Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted.' I believe that we shall yet rejoice more keenly than we have mourned and that we shall come to a glorious day of joy beyond all this long night of sorrow!"

The face of the invalid lighted up with an answering glow, and he murmured:

mured:

"Glorious faith! My wife, you are indeed a blessed comforter! Perhaps, after all, you are right!"

A knock resounded on a side-door at this juncture, and the next moment Dr. Hutton, the family physician, for whom Mrs. Preble had sent, entered the room.

whom Mrs. Preble had sent, entered the room.

He was an old man, portly in figure, with white hair and beard, but with a fresh and ruddy complexion a pair of shrewd blue eyes, and with an exuberant boyishness of manner that sat well upon him. He had a knid heart and a clear head. He approached the sofa, after greeting the husband and wife, and lifted the thin restless hand of the invalid, feeling his pulse.

"Quite a high fever," he said, after a brief pause. "Worrying again, ch. Mr. Preble? You are wearing yourself out. Medicine will do you no good so long as your mind is in its present condition. I must give you an opiate—"

"Not now, doctor," interposed the banker. "I cannot—must not—sleep to day! I need to be broad awake now, for i cannot tell at any moment what the enext may bring forth. I am looking for the culmination of all my years of anguish—for the crowning agony of the whole. Perhaps even now—Ah, what was that?"

He started up wildly, and then as the sound that had disturbed.

was that?"

He started up wildly, and then as the sound that had disturbed him was not repeated, he sank back again on his cushions, pallid and panting.

The doctor looked at Mrs. Preble with an auxious questioning glance.

"It is the anniversary," she replied to his unspoken inquiry—"the anniversary of our loss,"

"Ah, yes," said the doctor. "I remember."

"Yes, it's another of those terrible.

"Yes, it's another of those terrible says," cried the banker, in a hollow whisper. "Sit down, doctor, and I will tell you the whole story. I can think of nothing else to-day, and am almost wild with apprehension and anxiety. Sit down."

Dr. Hutton drew up a chair and seated himself, his face expressing the double solicitude of a friend and physician.

double solicitude of a friend and physician.

"You knew us fourteen years ago, doctor." said Mr. Preble. "We lived then where we do now, in a cottage on the site of this great mansion. There were but the three of us—Helen and I, and our three-year old Jessie. And it was fourteen years ago to day that our little Jessie was stolen from us."

"I remember it," said the doctor softly. "Yet might she not have been lost. Mr. Preble? She went out to play in the garden, if I remember rightly, and was never seen by you again. She might have strayed away—"

"So we thought for a whole year, doctor." interrupted the banker. "We never dreamed that she had been stolen. We searched everywhere for her, and offered immense rewards for her recovery. I employed detectives, but all to no purpose. When our little Jessie ran down the steps into that flower-garden," and he pointed to the front of the house "as if the earth had opened and swallowed her up, we never saw her again."

"She must have found the vate onen."

"she must have found the gate open, and wandered out," suggested Dr. Hutton. "She might have strolled down to the waters and been drowned."

The banker fixed his burning eyes upon the physician's face, and whispered:

"I said we never saw the poor child again. I did not say we had not heard of her. She was lost on the 9th of August, 1804. For a year we thought her dead.

"August 9, 1860. She's growing rapidly!"
And the next—
"August 9, 1861. She continues to do weil!"
And the next—
"August 9, 1862. I've seen her again!"
And the next—
"August 9, 1863. She's becoming a woman!"
And the next—
"August 9, 1854. Your child is thirteen!"
And the next—
"August 9, 1865. She's lovelier than ever!"
And the next—
"August 9, 1866. She's really charming!"
And the next—
"Angust 9, 1867. My reward is at hand!"
And what shall we get to-day!
The physician looked up and fixed his thoughtful gaze upon the bereaved thusband and wife.
"How did these messages come to you?" he demanded.
"Invariably by post," replied Mr.
Preble. "Usually to the house, but sometimes to the office!"
"And you have never seen the author?"
"The last of them is dated, I see, a year ago to-day!"
"Yes, yes," faltered the banker, "and

"The last of them is dated, I see, a year ago to-day!"

"Yes, yes," faltered the banker, "and the time has come for another message. This is the 9th of August, 1868!"

"I see," said Dr. Hutton. "And this is the secret of your terrible excitement! You are expecting to receive to-day another of these strange messages!"

There was a brief silence. Mrs. Preble's hand fluttered in its task, and her face grew very pale. The banker breathed gaspingly. The physician regarded them both in friendly sympathy.

"We shall hear of her again to-day."

"Coffees, Teas,

"We shall hear of her again to-day," said Mr. Preble; "and what will the message be?"

The mother averted her face. Her brave heart falvered.

brave heart faltered as that question

echoed in her soul.

"The writer of these letters is unquestionably the abductor of your child!" said Dr. Hutton, "Have you any suspicion as to his identity?"

"Not the slightest," said Mr. Preble, "We have puzzled over the problem for many years, but we cannot guess who he is."
"Think," said the doctor. 'Have

"Think," said the doctor. 'Have you no enemy? I do not mean people with whom you are not friendly—every stirring man has plenty of these—but a downright enemy! Is there no man whom you knew in the East who hated you? No one against whom you were called upon to testify—no one whom you possibly injured?"

The banker shook his head. He had asked himself all these questions repeatedly.

peatedly.
"I have no such enemy, doctor," he

"I have no such enemy, doctor," he answered with sincerity of voice and manner.

"And Mrs. Preble?" suggested the doctor, turning to her. "Have you no rejected suitor who might be revengeful enough to desolate your home?"

"No," said the lady. "I was married early. Morton was my first lover!"

"This is strange—very strange!" muttered the doctor. "You are not conscious of having an enemy in the world, and yet you have an enemy—a hidden foe—a flend in human form—who is working out against you a fear-bandsome who is working out against you a fear-ful hatred! And you have not the slightest suspicion as to who he is?"
"Not the slightest," declared the

"Not the slightest," declared the banker."
"Not the slightest!" echoed Mrs. Preble. "My husband had a step-brother who might have been capable of this infamy—but he is dead!"
"The handwriting is not familiar?"
"No. It is merely a rude scrawl, as you see," said the banker. "It suggests nothing—except that it is evidently disguised!"
Again there was a profound silence.

guised?"
Again there was a profound silence.
"Our child is seventeen years old now," at length murmured Mrs, Preble, her voice trembling. "She is on the threshold of womanhood. No doubt, during all these years, she has yearned for us, wherever she may be, as we have yearned for her?"

"But where is she?" asked the physician—and now his voice was broken by his deep sympathy with the agoniz

by his deep sympathy with the agoniz ed parents. "Where can she be?"
"Heaven only knows," answered the mother. "Perhaps in San Francisco— perhaps in some rule but in the inter-ior, with some observe farmer, and an

abductor would have carried her to some lonely region of the interior, among the valleys and mountains. Yet 1 never see a young girl in the streets without turning to look at her. I never hear a girlish voice without listening eagerly, half fancying that it may prove the voice of my lost Jes-ie!"

the voice of my lost Jes-je!"

"Oh, pitying heaven!" sighed Dr. Hutton, dashing a flood of tears from his eyes. "Will this long agony never be over?"

"We hope so, and ever believe so," answered Mrs. Preble, with the firmness of an unfaltering trust in God's mercy. "The last message we received from our enemy seems to point to some kind of a change."

"True," assented Dr. Hutton, looking at the message in question. "It is un-

loss we received a written message con-cerning her." "Whatever it is, let it come!" he murmured. "Anything can be borne better than this awful suspense. Let it

loss we received a written message concerning her."

"A message!" cried Dr. Hutton, starting."

"A mere scraw!—a single line in a bander." Here it is."

"A mere scraw!—a single line in a bander." Here it is."

"A mand evidently disguised," said the banker. "Here it is."

"An mand evidently disguised," said the banker. "Here it is."

"An mand evidently disguised," said the banker. "Here it is."

"An in the scraw of paper, which is more in the fable, and he is make nothing of this," he defe clared. "It is merely a date, with the name of your lost daughter. It tells me, in thing." It is merely a date, with the name of your lost daughter. It tells me, in thing. "With the demon laugh connecting them and then we received another message." It is merely a date, with the demon laugh connecting them and then we received another message. The history of the tells of the proposed of the history of the his

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The hanker turned restlessly on his sofa, and his face grew even paler.

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the system. With such enable mose companies disappear.

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