

BETTER DAYS:

OR,

A Millionaire of To-morrow

BY

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BETTER DAYS:
OR,
A Millionaire of To-morrow.

“Philosophy consists not
In airy schemes, or idle speculations;
The rule and conduct of all social life
Is her great province. Not in lonely cells
Obscure she lurks, but holds her heavenly light
To Senates and to Kings, to guide their counsels,
And teach them to reform and bless mankind.”



TO THE
EIGHT THOUSAND MILLIONAIRES OF AMERICA
THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED.

IF, THROUGH A PERUSAL OF ITS CONTENTS, ONE
AMONG THEM ALL SHALL BE LED TO SO DISPOSE OF A
PORTION OF HIS FORTUNE AS TO HELP THE WAGE-
WORKERS OF OUR LAND TO HELP THEMSELVES, THEN
THESE PAGES WILL NOT HAVE BEEN WRITTEN IN VAIN.



CHAPTER I.

“The earth trembled underneath their feet.”

“Chicago,” said Professor John Thornton, “Chicago, my dear doctor, is the typical American city. New York and San Francisco may be classed as metropolitan. Philadelphia, St. Louis, and New Orleans are local to their surroundings; Boston is—Boston, but Chicago is *sui generis*. Notwithstanding its large permanent foreign population, and the presence of the throngs of strangers attracted by the Columbian Exposition, Chicago remains intensely and distinctively an American city.”

“I quite believe you, professor,” said Dr. Eustace. “Certainly in all the world elsewhere there is no race track for locomotives, no place where iron horses are speeded, and purses of gold and diamond badges awarded to the winners.”

“It is an innovation certainly, doctor, but just such a one as might have been expected in Chicago. The people of this city have not yet passed the *noblesse oblige* period. You know that in all large cities there is liable to come a time when the citizens divide into separate communities, usually with separate interests, and without any general public spirit. In New York, for instance, Madison Square takes no pride in the East River bridge, Avenue A does not care whether the Grant monument shall ever be completed, and the Statue of Liberty on Bedloe’s Island is as strange to many a resident of Harlem as if she were planted on the banks of the Neva. But the people of Chicago, though locally divided into Northsiders, and Southsiders, and Westsiders, are joined in interest for Chicago against the world. Any project that promises glory or profit for the Lake City will cause her citizens to open their pocket books. These

Illinois Don Quixotes never tire of sounding the praises of their Dulcinea, and are ever ready to break a lance in her honor.”

“Is not this race,” said Dr. Eustace, “under the auspices of the National Exposition?”

“Not at all,” replied the professor. “As I am informed, a party of speculators leased a thousand acres of land here, ten miles from the city limits. They have, as you see, inclosed it and provided it with the usual buildings, including seats for one hundred thousand spectators. The race course is circular in form, four miles in length, and seven railroad tracks are laid around it. The officers of the leading railroad corporations of the country readily consented to send locomotives and engineers here to compete for the prizes offered, and—you witness the result. This is the third day of the races, and still the interest seems undiminished.”

It was late in the month of July, 1892, and although the World’s Exposition was not yet formally opened, tens of thousands of strangers thronged the hotels of Chicago and added to the gayety of her streets. The great attraction of the day was the locomotive railroad race, and about twenty acres of people, representing all nations, filled the benches and spread over the outer circle of the great four-mile track.

Seven of the largest locomotives in America, selected or constructed for this race, were steaming up and down the tracks, waiting for the signal to range themselves under a white cable, which was stretched diagonally across the race course at such an angle as to equalize the difference of length of inner and outer tracks. Each locomotive was draped with its distinguishing colors, worn also by its attendant engineer and fireman. The favorite

engine in the pool rooms was the Chauncey M. Depew, entered by the New York Central Railroad Company.

The furnishings of this engine were of polished silver, with draperies of blue silk, and the engineer and fireman wore shirts and caps of the same color.

The engine which most attracted the admiration of the throng was the Collis P. Huntington, entered by the Southern Pacific Company. All the furnishings as well as the wheels of this locomotive were gilded and burnished for the occasion. The attendants wore shirts and caps of crimson, and the drapery consisted of ropes of crimson roses, the freshness of which, while coiled around smoke stack and boiler, was accounted for by the fact that they were cut from asbestos cloth made and tinted for the purpose.

The directors of the railroad corporations centering in Chicago had readily extended aid and co-operation to the company organized in that city for the construction and conduct of a locomotive race track, for it was conceded that no more instructive school for engineers and firemen could have been devised, and that there was no better field in which to make experiments in machinery, tests of fuel consumption, and economical creation and application of dynamic force. Almost every railroad company in the United States and Canada entered one or more locomotives for the races, which were advertised for the last week of July, 1892, and, notwithstanding the large sums offered for premiums, and the great expense of building and maintaining the race course, the enterprise proved exceedingly profitable to its projectors.

Among the one hundred and fifty thousand spectators of the contest was Professor John Thornton, of Boston, who, ten years

before, had been the hardworking principal of the Denver public schools, but who, through the death of an uncle, inherited a fortune of five millions of dollars, and was now one of the solid men and social magnates of the Hub.

During the years of poverty and struggle which antedated Professor Thornton's introduction to the ranks of wealth, he had grown to regard very rich men with aversion and contempt. He was fond of quoting the aphorism that the Lord expressed his opinion of money by the kind of men he bestowed it upon, and he was stout in the belief that any man who, in this world of human misery, could make and keep five millions of dollars, was too selfish, if not too dishonest, for an associate. He did not carry his opinions so far as to refuse the estate which fell to him, but he was exceedingly generous with his income, and he never ceased to criticise the millionaires.

Professor Thornton was generally regarded by his friends as a Cræsus with the instincts of a Bohemian, a sort of gilded *sans-culotte*, with very radical opinions and a very conservative bank account.

The professor was accompanied to the race course by his family physician and old friend, Dr. Eustace. This gentleman, unlike the professor, was optimistic in his views of life. Pessimism, according to his belief, might be sometimes necessary for ballast, but as a rule he preferred to throw the sand and rocks overboard, and load up with the silks and spices of Cathay.

"What a country!" ejaculated the doctor, as, amid the cheers of the multitude, one of the locomotives dashed up the track to try her speed.

“It is a great country,” said Professor Thornton, “but will its peace and prosperity endure?”

“Why not?” sententiously interposed Doctor Eustace.

“Are we,” replied the professor, “so much wiser than the people of the republics which once encircled the Mediterranean, that we can afford to disregard the lesson imparted by their history?”

“Do you pretend to compare the ancient civilizations with ours?” queried the doctor.

“It may not be gainsaid,” rejoined Thornton, “that our civilization is superior to that of the ancients in control and utilization of the forces of nature, and it is also true that in the relations of the individual to his government the former has gained in freedom and in security of personal rights. But otherwise we seem to be traveling the same round of national life from infancy to decay, which marked the course of Assyria, of Egypt, of Greece, and of Rome.”

“But conditions were different with them,” remonstrated the doctor. “Rome, even when a republic, was such only in name. There was never any basis of universal suffrage. The government of Rome was always a military despotism, and her prætorian guard sold the imperial purple, and rich men bought it, and she fell because of her corruption.”

“And we have legislators and bosses who sell offices, and ambitious incapables who buy them,” answered the professor. “And we are having now the same vast accumulations of fortune in individual hands that have ever proven the forerunners of national destruction elsewhere. Wealth, corruption, weakness, decay, the

mob, and the despot have been the six stages of national life with other republics, and I doubt whether by harnessing steam and electricity to our chariot we shall do more than expedite the journey.”

“Professor, you should go out as a missionary to millionaires,” interposed the doctor, “and preach to them the doctrines of nationalism.”

“Doctor, you are satirical,” replied the professor, “but I am not so sure that events are not fast making missionaries of some such doctrine. Certainly the pressing problem of the hour is that of dealing wisely and justly with the new and unparalleled conditions which vast wealth has created throughout the world, and especially in these United States.”

“We shall prove equal to the problem,” said the doctor cheerfully. “A people who, North and South, were adequate to the achievements and sacrifices of our Civil War, will never allow their government to be overturned by a mob, or their politics to be always ruled by a few thousand wealth owners. And then the personnels of the pauper and the capitalist are ever changing. We have no law of entail by which the founder of a fortune can perpetuate it in his descendants. The vices and the brainlessness of the sons of rich men will come to our aid, and in the third or fourth generation the boatman’s oar and the peddler’s pack will be resumed. Let the millionaires add to their millions without molestation, say I. They cannot take their gold away with them. It must remain here, where it will again be distributed.”

“Doctor,” said the professor solemnly.

“Now, John,” interrupted the doctor, laying his hand familiarly on his friend’s shoulder, “possibly the country may be going to ruin, but we shall have time to see the race out. They are bringing the locomotives in line ready to start. If they should come out close together at the end, how are they going to tell which wins?”

“The judge of this race, doctor,” explained the professor, “is electrical and automatic and cannot make a mistake. As soon as the engines are arranged in line for starting, a wire will be stretched across the track behind them. This wire will connect with a registering apparatus, dial, and clock in front of the grand stand, and each track is numbered. At the signal bell for starting, the clockwork will be put in motion. The first locomotive that crosses this wire will, in the act of crossing, telegraph the number of its track, close the circuit, and stop the clock, thus registering the number of minutes, seconds, and quarter seconds consumed in the run.”

“How clever!” said the doctor. “Well, there sounds the signal bell—they are off!”

With a shrill shriek of challenge from their throats of steel, like unleashed hounds the giants bounded away, gaining speed as they ran. In thirty-eight seconds they rounded the curve by the half-mile post without much change in their relative positions. The next mile was made in fifty-five seconds, with the Chauncey M. Depew, which had the inside track, fifty yards ahead of the Collis P. Huntington, and the others all the way from fifty to one hundred yards behind. At the third mile post the Huntington and the Depew rounded the curve almost side by side, with trails of fire streaming from their smoke stacks, and mingling in a luminous cloud, which hovered above their distanced competitors.

Then, with thunderous leaps and bounds, they came down the home stretch, the one a streak of blue and silver, the other a streak of gold and crimson, and the roar of the multitude fairly drowned the shrieking of the whistles as engineer James Flanagan, of the Southern Pacific Company—his crimson cap gone, his black hair streaming in the wind, and his red flannel shirt open at the breast and almost blown from his massive white shoulders—rode across the signal wire five feet ahead of his competitor, winning the first prize of \$10,000 for his company and the diamond badge for himself, making the run of four miles in three minutes nine and one-quarter seconds, or at a rate of over eighty miles an hour.

“It was nothing, sor,” said Flanagan to the vice president of the Southern Pacific Company, who climbed upon the cab of the locomotive to shake hands with his engineer. “If it wasn’t for the time lost in getting under way I’d engage to sind the Collis P. around the four-mile track in two minutes and a half. Sure, the machine was never built that could catch her on a straight run. She’s a dandy and a darlin’ and a glory to old California,” and he patted the throttle valve affectionately.

“Flanagan,” said Vice President Crocker, “the owners of this race track have made one mistake They give the diamond badge, worth \$1,000, to the engineer, and the purse of \$10,000 to the company. Suppose we trade and let the company take the badge and you take the purse.”

“Oh, more power to you, Mither Crocker,” said the delighted engineer. “It’s thrade I will, and may you live until I offer to thrade back, and whin you die may you go straight up, wid never a hot box to delay you on your run to glory. I’ll give twinty-five hundred dollars of the money to Dan Nilson, that shoveled the coals unther

the boiler, like the good man he is, and wid the balance I'll buy a chicken ranch in Alameda that will be the makin' of Missis Flanagan and the kids."

On the bench behind the professor and the doctor two men were seated engaged in earnest conversation.

"I am not asserting," said one, "that the ore is so very rich. It will average fifteen per cent in copper carbonates, and that is good enough for anybody. But I do say that the lode is an immense one."

"How long do you suppose it would last, Bob, with a dozen forty-ton furnaces at work on it?"

"Last? why, if you had Niagara for a water-power, and the State of Colorado for a dumping-ground, and hades for a smelting furnace, you couldn't work that ledge out in a million years."

"Well, Bob," laughed the other man, "I will go and look at your mine. Can you start to-night?"

"Your time is mine," was the response.

"Very good; shall we go by the Iron Mountain route, or by Kansas City?"

"I will have to go by some other route than either," was the reply. "I cannot cross the State of Missouri; I am honorably dead there."

"Honorably dead?"

"Yes, sir. It was this way: I lived at Atchison for a while when I was a young fellow, and Abe Simmons and me were always at outs about something, and at last we quarreled in dead earnest about a girl, and he sent me a challenge to fight a duel. I always held that

dueling was a fool way to settle things, but I wasn't going to take water for no Missourian, and so I placed myself in the hands of my second, as they call it among the chivs.

“Well, Abe's second and my second were good friends of both of us, and they were in for a sort of a lark, and they fixed it up to paint two life-sized pictures, one of Abe and one of me, on the door of an old stable, and we was each to fire at the picture of the other at the word. They had three doctors to examine the wounds on the paintings, and if they decided that the wound was mortal, then the fellow whose picture was killed had to consider himself honorably dead, and was to leave Missouri and never return. If the wound was not mortal, he had to lay up and keep his bed for such time as the doctors agreed would be necessary.

“Well, sir, they made a circus of us, that's a fact. We both signed a paper agreeing on honor to carry out the arrangement, and we went out one broiling afternoon in August in pursuit of each other's gore. The boys had passed the word, and we played to a bigger audience than was ever at a Democratic barbecue. I was the best shot, but I was getting ashamed of the whole business, and I fired in a hurry, and only plugged Abe's picture through its gambrel joint. He took a dead sight and shot my picture plumb through the heart. I wanted three days to settle my business, but the doctors decided that the weather was so hot I wouldn't keep more than twelve hours, and accordingly I lit out for Pike's Peak—as it was then called—the next morning, and I have never touched the soil of Missouri since.”

“How about Abe?”

“The doctors agreed that he had to go on crutches for three months, and the boys laughed at him—so I heard—so much that at the end

of the second week he limped out to his father's ranch, and stayed there until his time was up, when he went to St. Louis."

"And the girl?"

"Well, of course I was a corpse, and she had no use for me, and Abe had, before the duel, invited her to a dance, and, naturally, being a cripple, he couldn't go, and she allowed that she would neither go to a dance or tie herself for life to a man with a lame leg, and she married another fellow altogether. But you see I cannot honorably go into Missouri unless I can travel on a corpse ticket."

"Well, Bob, your remains shall not violate your pledge. We will keep out of Missouri this trip."

"All right, Mr. Morning."

The professor turned at the sound of the name, and, looking his neighbor in the face, exclaimed:—

"David Morning, have you altogether forgotten an old friend? True, it is nearly ten years since I saw you last, in Denver, but surely I have not changed so very much since then?"

"Forgotten you, Professor Thornton?" replied the party addressed, as he shook hands warmly, "forgotten you? no, indeed. I do not need to ask if you are well—and your wife and daughter? Are they both with you?"

"Both are in Boston, and well, thank you. Do you remain long in Chicago?"

"I leave to-night for the West. Pray convey to your family my remembrances and regards."

“I will not fail to do so.”

“The crowd seems to be going, professor; I suppose we must say good-by.”

“Good-by, then, and a pleasant journey to you.”

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