A Story.

"Look here upon this picture, and on this,
The counterfeit presentiment of two brothers."

"Where every god did seem to set his seal
To give the world assurance of a man."

"I SAY, fellows, just look at Croesus! He is as white as the paper of that note he's reading. Something's up! There he goes with a rush; not bad news, I hope," and Dysart left his comfortable chair and stepped to the open window, a look of friendly concern on his face. "Say, Jack, what is it?" he called; but his fellow-clubmen, listening for the reply, heard only the slamming of a cab door and the rattle of hoofs over the pavement. Slowly Dysart drew in his head from the window, and turning to the others, remarked in the tone of one giving impressive information, "Well, fellows, that's the first time I ever saw Croesus in a hurry! Why," he continued, laughing, "he actually forgot to drawl when he paid the message!"

There was a general laugh at this last, but it was a short one, and a rather unusual silence followed. No one seemed disposed to make capital of Croesus' trouble, whatever it was. "Croesus!" It was a queer name, but fortunately the bearer of it possessed another. His real name was John Darcy. Yet he was seldom given the benefit of his rightful cognomen. Most of his letters and notes of invitations—and they were legion—came addressed to "Mr. Jack Darcy"; and the majority of people dispensed even with the "Mr. " in personal address, and called him plain "Jack." His open-handed generosity with his money—and he was not over-blessed with it—had long since earned him the opulent title of "Croesus" among his fellow-clubmen.

Everybody knew Jack Darcy, and esteemed it a privilege to know him,—at least those who knew him best, did. There was not a drawing-room in Kensington which was not open to him. There was not a club in London whose portals were closed to him. Yet there was nothing remarkable about him. He was not rich; perhaps his birth and family had something to do with it. Undoubtedly there were people who felt it to be an advantage to be on terms of friendship with the younger son of John Darcy, Lord Chellingworth, but the host of friends among his social equals could not have been attracted by such considerations. His fortune consisted of a modest bequest, the entailed estates being inherited with the title by his elder brother, Cordella, who, at the opening of our story, was absent with his regiment in Egypt. Jack Darcy was not a brilliant young man as the term goes, and only passably good looking. The only approach to anything striking about him were his eyes. The boyish effect of his beardless face and fair hair curling closely to his head, was curiously counteracted by the earnestness and sympathetic depth of his eyes, which were of a light-blue color. First acquaintance with Croesus seldom impressed anybody. Always dressed in the height of fashion, verging even to foppishness, carelessly indifferent in manner, and with an affected drawl to his speech, it would be hard to define the personal charm which closer acquaintance with him invariably carried with it. Undoubtedly the honest good nature which shone from the blue eyes, and the unstinting generosity and firmness of his friendship, had much to do with it. However, there were rare occasions, as some of his intimates could testify, when a dormant energy wakened to darken the depths of those eyes, when the habitual eyeglass was neglected and the drawl in his speech chiefly notable for its absence. It was one of these sudden metamorphoses which called forth his friend Dysart's laughing declaration that Croesus had "actually forgotten to drawl." And Dysart was right in his surmise. "Something" was "up," and if he could have foreseen the long days of misery which were to follow, and under what circumstances he would again be brought face to face with his friend, he might not have returned to his paper with such peaceful mind.

It was very unusual for Jack Darcy to be so agitated as he appeared to be, as his cab rolled