Between Puffs.

N. Boston, one night, two fellows sat smoking before an open fire. They had been chums and classmates in college, but had separated after graduating, one to familiarize himself with the stern realities of life in the shape of a crusty old uncle and a disagreeable business, the other to travel.

It was three years since they had seen each other, and their pleasure at meeting may well be conceived. They sat chatting about old friends,—how one had become a lawyer of rising importance, another the owner of a Western ranch, and so on.

Finally, one said to the other, “Tell me of yourself, Harry,—you’ve done nothing but question me since we met.”

Harry took his pipe from his lips, hesitated, and then answered, “I hardly know how to begin the story of my wanderings. You know what sort of a man I was at college, Jack,—not absolutely good, but still good as men go, and scorning to do many things which were then taken as a matter of course. I’ve been true to the same standard since, but once I almost slipped up, and the story of that event will interest you. You know London was my Mecca, and there I found the atmosphere for which I longed. I meant to see all there was in the town and I began at the pleasantest end, of course. The first six months I spent in visiting those places hallowed by Thackeray and Dickens, and inspecting the Museum and the Zoo,—don’t laugh,—the beasts are worth the trouble. During the next six I faithfully attended the races, went off on shooting excursions, etc., and took a trip to Edinboro. Then I started out to explore the theatres, concert gardens, and music halls, and it was here that I met my fate. One night I strolled into the Alhambra, and, not having dined, beckoned a waiter, and sat down at a table that afforded me a good view of the stage, and at the same time gave me an opportunity of observing the habitudes of the place. I made a good dinner, sent the man for a cigar, and then sat smoking for a time, taking little interest in the performance, but too lazy to move. Suddenly the house became somewhat excited, everyone was on tiptoe with expectation,—I looked up, and the cause of it all walked, or rather floated, onto the stage. Jack, she was the loveliest woman I have ever seen,—just above middle height, exquisitely proportioned, slender feet and hands, skin as soft and fair—pshaw, old man, I could talk all night in that strain.

“I made inquiries about her, and found that she was French, and not long over. Then I went out, and by a judicious use of the “almighty sovy” prevailed upon the manager to introduce me. The girl was as beautiful off the stage as on it, and her soft, gentle speech completed my conquest. I ascertained later that she lived alone and was unquestionably good. Now the trouble commenced; I spent night and day in that place, made one florist rich and raised another from penury, but made no impression on the stony heart of Mademoiselle. Finally, she relented so far as to drive with me in the Park. When she praised the trap I had lately set up, I claimed as a right the privilege of driving with her the next day. She accepted, and then my joy knew no bounds,—I neither thought nor cared for anything but seeing her, and I drifted along, not thinking or caring where the tide might strand me. Every minute which Hélène could spare me I spent with her, and one evening actually took tea in her rooms. Nothing but tea and rolls, but I could have eaten boards with a relish then. I left about ten, warned by a look from her gentle eyes, and on reaching home began to reflect.

‘This mustn’t go on,’ said I, ‘I can’t take