A Perfect Stranger.

CONFOUND it all, how shall I ever know the woman?" Harrison Parker muttered to himself, glancing at the big station clock. "And that train is half an hour late now." He stamped up and down the platform impatiently, trying to keep warm. Outside, the streets were filled with driving sleet and melting slush, so his clothes were soaking wet. A little stream dripped from his umbrella, and left a wet track behind him as he walked.

"Nice night, nice business George has got me into," he grumbled; "I wonder if he did give me any signs for identifying the creature." He pulled out a very damp letter, and ran his eye over it hurriedly by the unsteady glare shed by an arc light up near the roof.

"DEAR HARRISON: I am in an awful hole, and hope you will help me out. My great-aunt, Miss Sarah Dawson, wired me this P. M. to meet her this evening." Then followed the particulars about the train.—"She's coming to spend Thanksgiving with us. Have a bad sore throat, and can't go out; father away, mother ill. Somebody must meet her; she has never been here before, and might get lost, if left alone. I will do as much for you some time. Yours,

GEORGE CAREY."

Parker scowled. However, just at that moment the train, now three quarters of an hour overdue, rolled slowly down the track. The passengers began to pour out, and mix and move together so that it would have been hard to find a friend, but to find a perfect stranger! Parker was naturally shy, and that fact added another misery to the situation. Still it was too late to back out now.

He advanced with an expression of fierce determination to look for a possible "Aunt Sarah."

A tall, gaunt woman, dressed severely in black, was descending onto the carpet-covered footstool below the step of a parlor car. The porter stood behind her holding a squawking parrot and a fat pug dog.

"Homely old maid, with animals, looks likely," thought Harrison. The lady, having reached the ground safely, took her pets and began to start for the exit. Parker stepped up in front of her, took off his hat, relieved her of the bird, and remarked in a confident tone, "Miss Dawson, I believe. Of course you don't know me"——

"No, I don't know you, and I don't want to," she snapped, glaring fiercely at him through enormous spectacles. She grabbed the cage and walked on with dignity.

"By Jove! I hope they won't all be like that," the now unhappy young man thought to himself.

A little to one side of the pushing throng, he noticed a short, stout woman, with a timid, worried look, holding tightly a small bag with a silver "D" on the side. She seemed to be expecting some one to meet her. Parker felt relieved. He determined to be more gentle and careful in his mode of address this time, so he approached the woman slowly, and murmured sweetly, "Your nephew was not able to come this evening, so I came in his place to meet you."

She gave a terrified start, "Oh! no, no," she gasped, "go away, go away, please do. Oh! why doesn't my husband come?" and her voice broke in a despairing sob.

The unfortunate Parker felt an unholy longing to see his friend Carey. He noticed that the stream of people had thinned and in a few minutes would be gone. Very likely Miss Dawson had already departed on her way. Parker jumped at this idea joyously. Perhaps he had escaped after all; but fate was against him.