Home Lights and Shadows

T. S. Arthur

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PREFACE.

HOME! How at the word, a crowd of pleasant thoughts awaken. What sun−bright images are pictured to the imagination. Yet, there is no home without its shadows as well as sunshine. Love makes the home−lights and selfishness the shadows. Ah! how dark the shadow at times—how faint and fleeting the sunshine. How often selfishness towers up to a giant height, barring out from our dwellings every golden ray. There are few of us, who do not, at times, darken with our presence the homes that should grow bright at our coming. It is sad to acknowledge this; yet, in the very acknowledgement is a promise of better things, for, it is rarely that we confess, without a resolution to overcome the evil that mars our own and others' happiness. Need we say, that the book now presented to the reader is designed to aid in the work of overcoming what is evil and selfish, that home−lights may dispel home−shadows, and keep them forever from our dwellings.

RIGHTS AND WRONGS.

IT is a little singular—yet certainly true—that people who are very tenacious of their own rights, and prompt in maintaining them, usually have rather vague notions touching the rights of others. Like the too eager merchant, in securing their own, they are very apt to get a little more than belongs to them.

Mrs. Barbara Uhler presented a notable instance of this. We cannot exactly class her with the "strong−minded" women of the day. But she had quite a leaning in that direction; and if not very strong−minded herself, was so unfortunate as to number among her intimate friends two or three ladies who had a fair title to the distinction.

Mrs. Barbara Uhler was a wife and a mother. She was also a woman; and her consciousness of this last named fact was never indistinct, nor ever unmingled with a belligerent appreciation of the rights appertaining to her sex and position.

As for Mr. Herman Uhler, he was looked upon, abroad, as a mild, reasonable, good sort of a man. At home, however, he was held in a very different estimation. The "wife of his bosom" regarded him as an exacting domestic tyrant; and, in opposing his will, she only fell back, as she conceived, upon the first and most sacred law of her nature. As to "obeying" him, she had scouted that idea from the beginning. The words, "honor and obey," in the marriage service, she had always declared, would have to be omitted when she stood at the altar. But as she had, in her maidenhood, a very strong liking for the handsome young Mr. Uhler, and, as she could not obtain so material a change in the church ritual, as the one needed to meet her case, she wisely made a virtue of necessity, and went to the altar with her lover. The difficulty was reconciled to her own conscience by a mental reservation.

It is worthy of remark that above all other of the obligations here solemnly entered into, this one, _not_ to honor and obey her husband, ever after remained prominent in the mind of Mrs. Barbara Uhler. And it was no fruitless sentiment, as Mr. Herman Uhler could feelingly testify.

From the beginning it was clearly apparent to Mrs. Uhler that her husband expected too much from her; that he regarded her as a kind of upper servant in his household, and that he considered himself as having a right to complain if things were not orderly and comfortable. At first, she met his looks or words of displeasure, when his meals, for instance, were late, or so badly cooked as to be unhealthy and unpalatable, with—

"I'm sorry, dear; but I can't help it."

"Are you sure you can't help it, Barbara?" Mr. Uhler at length ventured to ask, in as mild a tone of voice as his serious feelings on the subject would enable him to assume.

Mrs. Uhler's face flushed instantly, and she answered, with dignity:

"I _am_ sure, Mr. Uhler."

It was the first time, in speaking to her husband, that she had said "Mr. Uhler," in her life the first time she had ever looked at him with so steady and defiant an aspect.

Now, we cannot say how most men would have acted under similar circumstances; we can only record what Mr. Uhler said and did:

"And I am _not_ sure, Mrs. Uhler," was his prompt, impulsive reply, drawing himself up, and looking somewhat sternly at his better half.

"You are not?" said Mrs. Uhler; and she compressed her lips tightly.

"I am not," was the emphatic response.

"And what do you expect me to do, pray?" came next from the lady's lips.

"Do as I do in my business," answered the gentleman. "Have competent assistance, or see that things are done right yourself."

"Go into the kitchen and cook the dinner, you mean, I suppose?"

"You can put my meaning into any form of words you please, Barbara. You have charge of this household, and it is your place to see that everything due to the health and comfort of its inmates is properly cared for. If those to whom you delegate so important a part of domestic economy as the preparation of food, are ignorant or

careless, surely it is your duty to go into the kitchen daily, and see that it is properly done. I never trust wholly to any individual in my employment. There is no department of the business to which I do not give personal attention. Were I to do so my customers would pay little regard to excuses about ignorant workmen and careless clerks. They would soon seek their goods in another and better conducted establishment."

"Perhaps you had better seek your dinners elsewhere, if they are so little to your fancy at home."

This was the cool, defiant reply of the outraged Mrs. Uhler.

Alas, for Mr. Herman Uhler; he had, so far as his wife was concerned, committed the unpardonable sin; and the consequences visited upon his transgression were so overwhelming that he gave up the struggle in despair. Contention with such an antagonist, he saw, from the instinct of self−preservation, would be utterly disastrous. While little was to be gained, everything was in danger of being lost.

"I have nothing more to say," was his repeated answer to the running fire which his wife kept up against him for a long time. "You are mistress of the house; act your own pleasure. Thank you for the suggestion about dinner. I may find it convenient to act thereon."

The last part of this sentence was extorted by the continued irritating language of Mrs. Uhler. Its utterance rather cooled the lady's indignant ardor, and checked the sharp words that were rattling from her tongue. A truce to open warfare was tacitly agreed upon between the parties. The antagonism was not, however, the less real. Mrs. Uhler knew that her husband expected of her a degree of personal attention to household matters that she considered degrading to her condition as a wife; and, because he _expected_ this, she, in order to maintain the dignity of her position, gave even less attention to these matters than would otherwise have been the case. Of course, under such administration of domestic affairs, causes for dissatisfaction on the part of Mr. Uhler, were ever in existence. For the most part he bore up under them with commendable patience; but, there were times when weak human nature faltered by the way—when, from heart−fulness the mouth would speak. This was but to add new fuel to the flame. This only gave to Mrs. Uhler a ground of argument against her husband as an unreasonable, oppressive tyrant; as one of the large class of men who not only regard woman as inferior, but who, in all cases of weak submission, hesitate not to put a foot upon her neck.

Some of the female associates, among whom Mrs. Uhler unfortunately found herself thrown, were loud talkers about woman's rights and man's tyranny; and to them, with a most unwife−like indelicacy of speech, she did not hesitate to allude to her husband as one of the class of men who would trample upon a woman if permitted to do so. By these ladies she was urged to maintain her rights, to keep ever in view the dignity and elevation of her sex, and to let man, the tyrant, know, that a time was fast approaching when his haughty pride would be humbled to the dust.

And so Mrs. Uhler, under this kind of stimulus to the maintainance of her own rights against the imaginary aggressions of her husband, trampled upon his rights in numberless ways.

As time wore on, no change for the better occurred. A woman does not reason to just conclusions, either from facts or abstract principles like man; but takes, for the most part, the directer road of perception. If, therefore her womanly instincts are all right, her conclusions will be true; but if they are wrong, false judgment is inevitable. The instincts of Mrs. Uhler were wrong in the beginning, and she was, in consequence, easily led by her associates, into wrong estimates of both her own and her husband's position.

One day, on coming home to dinner, Mr. Uhler was told by a servant, that his wife had gone to an anti−slavery meeting, and would not get back till evening, as she intended dining with a friend. Mr. Uhler made no remark on receiving this information. A meagre, badly−cooked dinner was served, to which he seated himself, alone, not to eat, but to chew the cud of bitter fancies. Business, with Mr. Uhler, had not been very prosperous of late; and he had suffered much from a feeling of discouragement. Yet, for all this, his wife's demands for money, were promptly met—and she was not inclined to be over careful as to the range of her expenditures.

There was a singular expression on the face of Mr. Uhler, as he left his home on that day. Some new purpose had been formed in his mind, or some good principle abandoned. He was a changed man—changed for the worse, it may well be feared.

It was late in the afternoon when Mrs. Uhler returned. To have inquired of the servant whether Mr. Uhler had made any remark, when he found that she was absent at dinner time, she would have regarded as a betrayal to that personage of a sense of accountability on her part. No; she stooped not to any inquiry of this kind—compromised not the independence of the individual.

The usual tea hour was at hand—but, strange to say, the punctual Mr. Uhler did not make his appearance. For an hour the table stood on the floor, awaiting his return, but he came not. Then Mrs. Uhler gave her hungry, impatient little ones their suppers—singularly enough, she had no appetite for food herself—and sent them to bed.

Never since her marriage had Mrs. Uhler spent so troubled an evening as that one proved to be. A dozen times she rallied herself—a dozen times she appealed to her independence and individuality as a woman, against the o'er−shadowing concern about her husband, which came gradually stealing upon her mind. And with this uncomfortable feeling were some intruding and unwelcome thoughts, that in no way stimulated her self−approval.

It was nearly eleven o'clock when Mr. Uhler came home; and then he brought in his clothes such rank fumes of tobacco, and his breath was so tainted with brandy, that his wife had no need of inquiry as to where he had spent his evening. His countenance wore a look of vacant unconcern.

"Ah! At home, are you?" said he, lightly, as he met his wife. "Did you have a pleasant day of it?"

Mrs. Uhler was—frightened—shall we say? We must utter the word, even though it meet the eyes of her "strong minded" friends, who will be shocked to hear that one from whom they had hoped so much, should be frightened by so insignificant a creature as a husband. Yes, Mrs. Uhler was really frightened by this new aspect in which her husband presented himself. She felt that she was in a dilemma, to which, unhappily, there was not a single horn, much less choice between two.

We believe Mrs. Uhler did not sleep very well during the night. Her husband, however, slept "like a log." On the next morning, her brow was overcast; but his countenance wore a careless aspect. He chatted with the children at the breakfast table, goodnaturedly, but said little to his wife, who had penetration enough to see that he was hiding his real feelings under an assumed exterior.

"Are you going to be home to dinner to−day?" said Mr. Uhler, carelessly, as he arose from the table. He had only sipped part of a cup of bad coffee.

"Certainly I am," was the rather sharp reply. The question irritated the lady.

"You needn't on my account," said Mr. Uhler. "I've engaged to dine at the Astor with a friend."

"Oh, very well!" Mrs. Uhler bridled and looked dignified. Yet, her flashing eyes showed that cutting words were ready to leap from her tongue. And they would have come sharply on the air, had not the manner of her husband been so unusual and really mysterious. In a word, a vague fear kept her silent.

Mr. Uhler went to his store, but manifested little of his usual interest and activity. Much that he had been in the habit of attending to personally, he delegated to clerks. He dined at the Astor, and spent most of the afternoon there, smoking, talking, and drinking. At tea−time he came home. The eyes of Mrs. Uhler sought his face anxiously as he came in. There was a veil of mystery upon it, through which her eyes could not penetrate. Mr. Uhler remained at home during the evening, but did not seem to be himself. On the next morning, as he was about leaving the house, his wife said—

"Can you let me have some money to−day?"

Almost for the first time in her life, Mrs. Uhler asked this question in a hesitating manner; and, for the first time, she saw that her request was not favorably received.

"How much do you want?" inquired the husband.

"I should like to have a hundred dollars," said Mrs. Uhler.

"I'm sorry; but I can't let you have it," was answered. "I lost five hundred dollars day before yesterday through the neglect of one of my clerks, while I was riding out with some friends."

"Riding out!" exclaimed Mrs. Uhler.

"Yes. You can't expect me to be always tied down to business. I like a little recreation and pleasant intercourse with friends as much as any one. Well, you see, a country dealer, who owed me five hundred dollars, was in the city, and promised to call and settle on the afternoon of day before yesterday. I explained to one of my clerks what he must do when the customer came in, and, of course, expected all to be done right. Not so, however. The man, when he found that he had my clerk, and not me, to deal with, objected to some unimportant charge in his bill, and the foolish fellow, instead of yielding the point, insisted that the account was correct. The customer went away, and paid out all his money in settling a bill with one of my neighbors. And so I got nothing. Most likely, I shall lose the whole account, as he is a slippery chap, and will, in all probability, see it to be his interest to make a failure between this and next spring. I just wanted that money to−day. Now I shall have to be running around half the morning to make up the sum I need."

"But how could you go away under such circumstances, and trust all to a clerk?" said Mrs. Uhler warmly, and with reproof in her voice.

"How could I!" was the quick response. "And do you suppose I am going to tie myself down to the store like a slave! You are mistaken if you do; that is all I have to say! I hire clerks to attend to my business."

"But suppose they are incompetent? What then?" Mrs. Uhler was very earnest.

"That doesn't in the least alter my character and position." Mr. Uhler looked his wife fixedly in the face for some moments after saying this, and then retired from the house without further remark.

The change in her husband, which Mrs. Uhler at first tried to make herself believe was mere assumption or caprice, proved, unhappily, a permanent state. He neglected his business and his home for social companions; and whenever asked by his wife for supplies of cash, invariably gave as a reason why he could not supply her want, the fact of some new loss of custom, or money, in consequence of neglect, carelessness, or incompetency of clerks or workmen, when he was away, enjoying himself.

For a long time, Mrs. Uhler's independent spirit struggled against the humiliating necessity that daily twined its coils closer and closer around her. More and more clearly did she see, in her husband's wrong conduct, a reflection of her own wrong deeds in the beginning. It was hard for her to acknowledge that she had been in error—even to herself. But conviction lifted before her mind, daily, its rebuking finger, and she could not shut the vision out.

Neglect of business brought its disastrous consequences. In the end there was a failure; and yet, to the end, Mr. Uhler excused his conduct on the ground that he wasn't going to tie himself down like a galley slave to the oar—wasn't going to stoop to the drudgery he had employed clerks to perform. This was all his wife could gain from him in reply to her frequent remonstrances.

Up to this time, Mr. Uhler had resisted the better suggestions which, in lucid intervals, if we may so call them, were thrown into her mind. Pride would not let her give to her household duties that personal care which their rightful performance demanded; the more particularly, as, in much of her husband's conduct, she plainly saw rebuke.

At last, poverty, that stern oppressor, drove the Uhlers out from their pleasant home, and they shrunk away into obscurity, privation, and want. In the last interview held by Mrs. Uhler with the "strong minded" friends, whose society had so long thrown its fascinations around her, and whose views and opinions had so long exercised a baleful influence over her home, she was urgently advised to abandon her husband, whom one of the number did not hesitate to denounce in language so coarse and disgusting, that the latent instincts of the wife were shocked beyond measure. Her husband was not the brutal, sensual tyrant this refined lady, in her intemperate zeal, represented him. None knew the picture to be so false as Mrs. Uhler, and all that was good and true in her rose up in indignant rebellion.

To her poor, comfortless home, and neglected children, Mrs. Uhler returned in a state of mind so different from anything she had experienced for years, that she half wondered within herself if she were really the same woman. Scales had fallen suddenly from her eyes, and she saw every thing around her in new aspects and new relations.

"Has my husband really been an exacting tyrant?" This question she propounded to herself almost involuntarily. "Did he trample upon my rights in the beginning, or did I trample upon his? He had a right to expect from me the best service I could render, in making his home comfortable and happy. Did I render that service? did I see in my home duties my highest obligation as a wife? have I been a true wife to him?"

So rapidly came these rebuking interrogations upon the mind of Mrs. Uhler, that it almost seemed as if an accuser stood near, and uttered the questions aloud. And how did she respond? Not in self justification. Convinced, humbled, repentant, she sought her home.

It was late in the afternoon, almost evening, when Mrs. Uhler passed the threshold of her own door. The cry of a child reached her ears the moment she entered, and she knew, in an instant, that it was a cry of suffering, not anger or ill nature. Hurrying to her chamber, she found her three little ones huddled together on the floor, the youngest with one of its arms and the side of its face badly burned in consequence of its clothes having taken fire. As well as she could learn, the girl in whose charge she had left the children, and who, in the reduced circumstances of the family, was constituted doer of all work, had, from some pique, gone away in her absence. Thus left free to go where, and do what they pleased, the children had amused themselves in playing with the fire.

When the clothes of the youngest caught in the blaze of a lighted stick, the two oldest, with singular presence of mind, threw around her a wet towel that hung near, and thus saved her life.

"Has your father been home?" asked Mrs. Uhler, as soon as she comprehended the scene before her.

"Yes, ma'am," was answered.

"Where is he?"

"He's gone for the doctor," replied the oldest of the children.

"What did he say?" This question was involuntary. The child hesitated for a moment, and then replied artlessly—

"He said he wished we had no mother, and then he'd know how to take care of us himself."

The words came with the force of a blow. Mrs. Uhler staggered backwards, and sunk upon a chair, weak, for a brief time, as an infant. Ere yet her strength returned, her husband came in with a doctor. He did not seem to notice her presence; but she soon made that apparent. All the mother's heart was suddenly alive in her. She was not over officious—had little to say; but her actions were all to the purpose. In due time, the little sufferer was in a comfortable state and the doctor retired.

Not a word had, up to this moment, passed between the husband and wife. Now, the eyes of the latter sought those of Mr. Uhler; but there came no answering glance. His face was sternly averted.

Darkness was now beginning to fall, and Mrs. Uhler left her husband and children, and went down into the kitchen. The fire had burned low; and was nearly extinguished. The girl had not returned; and, from what Mrs. Uhler gathered from the children would not, she presumed, come back to them again. It mattered not, however; Mrs. Uhler was in no state of mind to regard this as a cause of trouble. She rather felt relieved by her absence. Soon the fire was rekindled; the kettle simmering; and, in due time, a comfortable supper was on the table, prepared by her own hands, and well prepared too.

Mr. Uhler was a little taken by surprise, when, on being summoned to tea, he took his place at the usually uninviting table, and saw before him a dish of well made toast, and a plate of nicely boiled ham. He said nothing; but a sensation of pleasure, so warm that it made his heart beat quicker, pervaded his bosom; and this was increased, when he placed the cup of well made, fragrant tea to his lips, and took a long delicious draught. All had been prepared by the hands of his wife—that he knew. How quickly his pleasure sighed itself away, as he remembered that, with her ample ability to make his home the pleasantest place for him in the world, she was wholly wanting in inclination.

Usually, the husband spent his evenings away. Something caused him to linger in his own home on this occasion. Few words passed between him and his wife; but the latter was active through all the evening, and, wherever her hand was laid, order seemed to grow up from disorder; and the light glinted back from a hundred places in the room, where no cheerful reflection had ever met his eyes before.

Mr. Uhler looked on, in wonder and hope, but said nothing. Strange enough, Mrs. Uhler was up by day−dawn on the next morning; and in due time, a very comfortable breakfast was prepared by her own hands. Mr. Uhler ventured a word of praise, as he sipped his coffee. Never had he tasted finer in his life, he said. Mrs. Uhler looked gratified; but offered no response.

At dinner time Mr. Uhler came home from the store, where he was now employed at a small salary, and still more to his surprise, found a well cooked and well served meal awaiting him. Never, since his marriage, had he eaten food at his own table with so true a relish—never before had every thing in his house seemed so much like home.

And so things went on for a week, Mr. Uhler wondering and observant, and Mrs. Uhler finding her own sweet reward, not only in a consciousness of duty, but in seeing a great change in her husband, who was no longer moody and ill−natured, and who had not been absent once at meal time, nor during an evening, since she had striven to be to him a good wife, and to her children a self denying mother.

There came, now, to be a sort of tacit emulation of good offices between the wife and husband, who had, for so many years, lived in a state of partial indifference. Mr. Uhler urged the procuring of a domestic, in place of the girl who had left them, but Mrs. Uhler said no—their circumstances would not justify the expense. Mr. Uhler said they could very well afford it, and intimated something about an expected advance in his salary.

"I do not wish to see you a mere household drudge," he said to her one day, a few weeks after the change just noted. "You know so well how every thing ought to be done, that the office of director alone should be yours. I

think there is a brighter day coming for us. I hope so. From the first of next month, my salary is to be increased to a thousand dollars. Then we will move from this poor place, into a better home."

There was a blending of hopefulness and tenderness in the voice of Mr. Uhler, that touched his wife deeply. Overcome by her feelings, she laid her face upon his bosom, and wept.

"Whether the day be brighter or darker," she said, when she could speak calmly, "God helping me, I will be to you a true wife, Herman. If there be clouds and storms without, the hearth shall only burn the brighter for you within. Forgive me for the past, dear husband! and have faith in me for the future. You shall not be disappointed."

And he was not. Mrs. Uhler had discovered her true relation, and had become conscious of her true duties. She was no longer jealous of her own rights, and therefore never trespassed on the rights of her husband.

The rapidity with which Mr. Uhler rose to his old position in business, sometimes caused a feeling of wonder to pervade the mind of his wife. From a clerk of one thousand, he soon came into the receipt of two thousand a year, then rose to be a partner in the business, and in a singularly short period was a man of wealth. Mrs. Uhler was puzzled, sometimes, at this, and so were other people. It was even hinted, that he had never been as poor as was pretended. Be that as it may, as he never afterwards trusted important matters to the discretion of irresponsible clerks, his business operations went on prosperously; and, on the other hand, as Mrs. Uhler never again left the comfort and health of her family entirely in the hands of ignorant and careless domestics, the home of her husband was the pleasantest place in the world for him, and his wife, not a mere upper servant, but a loving and intelligent companion, whom he cared for and cherished with the utmost tenderness.

THE HUMBLED PHARISEE.

"WHAT was that?" exclaimed Mrs. Andrews, to the lady who was seated next to her, as a single strain of music vibrated for a few moments on the atmosphere.

"A violin, I suppose," was answered.

"A violin!" An expression almost of horror came into the countenance of Mrs. Andrews. "It can't be possible."

It was possible, however, for the sound came again, prolonged and varied.

"What does it mean?" asked Mrs. Andrews, looking troubled, and moving uneasily in her chair.

"Cotillions, I presume," was answered, carelessly.

"Not dancing, surely!"

But, even as Mrs. Andrews said this, a man entered, carrying in his hand a violin. There was an instant movement on the part of several younger members of the company; partners were chosen, and ere Mrs. Andrews had time to collect her suddenly bewildered thoughts, the music had struck up, and the dancers were in motion.

"I can't remain here. It's an outrage!" said Mrs. Andrews, making a motion to rise.

The lady by whom she was sitting comprehended now more clearly her state of mind, and laying a hand on her arm, gently restrained her.

"Why not remain? What is an outrage, Mrs. Andrews?" she asked.

"Mrs. Burdick knew very well that I was a member of the church." The lady's manner was indignant.

"All your friends know that, Mrs. Andrews," replied the other. A third person might have detected in her tones a lurking sarcasm. But this was not perceived by the individual addressed. "But what is wrong?"

"Wrong! Isn't that wrong?" And she glanced towards the mazy wreath of human figures already circling on the floor. "I could not have believed it of Mrs. Burdick; she knew that I was a professor of religion."

"She doesn't expect you to dance, Mrs. Andrews," said the lady.

"But she expects me to countenance the sin and folly by my presence."

"Sin and folly are strong terms, Mrs. Andrews."

"I know they are, and I use them advisedly. I hold it a sin to dance."

"I know wise and good people who hold a different opinion."

"Wise and good!" Mrs. Andrews spoke with strong disgust. "I wouldn't give much for their wisdom and goodness—not I!"

"The true qualities of men and women are best seen at home. When people go abroad, they generally change their attire—mental as well as bodily. Now, I have seen the home−life of certain ladies, who do not think it sin to dance, and it was full of the heart's warm sunshine; and I have seen the home−life of certain ladies who hold dancing to be sinful, and I have said to myself, half shudderingly: "What child can breathe that atmosphere for years, and not grow up with a clouded spirit, and a fountain of bitterness in the heart!"

"And so you mean to say," Mrs. Andrews spoke with some asperity of manner, "that dancing makes people better?—Is, in fact, a means of grace?"

"No. I say no such thing."

"Then what do you mean to say? I draw the only conclusion I can make."

"One may grow better or worse from dancing," said the lady. "All will depend on the spirit in which the recreation is indulged. In itself the act is innocent."

Mrs. Andrews shook her head.

"In what does its sin consist?"

"It is an idle waste of time."

"Can you say nothing worse of it?"

"I could, but delicacy keeps me silent."

"Did you ever dance?"

"Me? What a question! No!"

"I have danced often. And, let me say, that your inference on the score of indelicacy is altogether an assumption."

"Why everybody admits that."

"Not by any means."

"If the descriptions of some of the midnight balls and assemblies that I have heard, of the waltzing, and all that, be true, then nothing could be more indelicate,—nothing more injurious to the young and innocent."

"All good things become evil in their perversions," said the lady. "And I will readily agree with you, that dancing is perverted, and its use, as a means of social recreation, most sadly changed into what is injurious. The same may be said of church going."

"You shock me," said Mrs. Andrews. "Excuse me, but you are profane."

"I trust not. For true religion—for the holy things of the church—I trust that I have the most profound reverence. But let me prove what I say, that even church going may become evil."

"I am all attention," said the incredulous Mrs. Andrews.

"You can bear plain speaking."

"Me!" The church member looked surprised.

"Yes, you."

"Certainly I can. But why do you ask?"

"To put you on your guard,—nothing more."

"Don't fear but what I can bear all the plain speaking you may venture upon. As to church going being evil, I am ready to prove the negative against any allegations you can advance. So speak on."

After a slight pause, to collect her thoughts, the lady said:

"There has been a protracted meeting in Mr. B——'s church."

"I know it. And a blessed time it was."

"You attended?"

"Yes, every day; and greatly was my soul refreshed and strengthened."

"Did you see Mrs. Eldridge there?"

"Mrs. Eldridge? No indeed, except on Sunday. She's too worldly−minded for that."

"She has a pew in your church."

"Yes; and comes every Sunday morning because it is fashionable and respectable to go to church. As for her religion, it isn't worth much and will hardly stand her at the last day."

"Why Mrs. Andrews! You shock me! Have you seen into her heart? Do you know her purposes? Judge not, that ye be not judged, is the divine injunction."

"A tree is known by its fruit," said Mrs. Andrews, who felt the rebuke, and slightly colored.

"True; and by their fruits shall ye know them," replied the lady. "But come, there are too many around us here for this earnest conversation. We will take a quarter of an hour to ourselves in one of the less crowded rooms. No one will observe our absence, and you will be freed from the annoyance of these dancers."

The two ladies quietly retired from the drawing rooms. As soon as they were more alone, the last speaker resumed.

"By their fruits ye shall know them. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Let me relate what I saw and heard in the families of two ladies during this protracted meeting. One of these ladies was Mrs. Eldridge. I was passing in her neighborhood about four o'clock, and as I owed her a call, thought the opportunity a good one for returning it. On entering, my ears caught the blended music of a piano, and children's happy voices. From the front parlor, through the partly opened door, a sight, beautiful to my eyes, was revealed. Mrs. Eldridge was seated at the instrument, her sweet babe asleep on one arm, while, with a single hand, she was touching the notes of a familiar air, to which four children were dancing. A more innocent, loving, happy group I have never seen. For nearly ten minutes I gazed upon them unobserved, so interested that I forgot the questionable propriety of my conduct, and during that time, not an unkind word was uttered by one of the children, nor did anything occur to mar the harmony of the scene. It was a sight on which angels could have looked, nay, did look with pleasure; for, whenever hearts are tuned to good affections, angels are present. The music was suspended, and the dancing ceased, as I presented myself. The mother greeted me with a happy smile, and each of the children spoke to her visitor with an air at once polite and respectful.

"'I've turned nurse for the afternoon, you see,' said Mrs. Eldridge, cheerfully. 'It's Alice's day to go out, and I never like to trust our little ones with the chambermaid, who is n't over fond of children. We generally have a good time on these occasions, for I give myself up to them entirely. They've read, and played, and told stories, until tired, and now I've just brightened them up, body and mind, with a dance.'

"And bright and happy they all looked.

"'Now run up into the nursery for a little while, and build block houses,' said she, 'while I have a little pleasant talk with my friend. That's good children. And I want you to be very quiet, for dear little Eddy is fast asleep, and I'm going to lay him in his crib.'

"Away went the children, and I heard no more of them for the half hour during which I staid. With the child in her arms, Mrs. Eldridge went up to her chamber, and I went with her. As she was laying him in the crib, I took from the mantle a small porcelain figure of a kneeling child, and was examining it, when she turned to me. 'Very beautiful,' said I. 'It is,' she replied.—'We call it our Eddy, saying his prayers. There is a history attached to it. Very early I teach my little ones to say an evening prayer. First impressions are never wholly effaced; I therefore seek to implant, in the very dawning of thought, an idea of God, and our dependence on him for life and all our blessings, knowing that, if duly fixed, this idea will ever remain, and be the vessel, in after years, for the reception of truth flowing down from the great source of all truth. Strangely enough, my little Eddy, so sweet in temper as he was, steadily refused to say his prayers. I tried in every way that I could think of to induce him to kneel with the other children, and repeat a few simple words; but not his aversion thereto was unconquerable. I at last grew really troubled about it. There seemed to be a vein in his character that argued no good. One day I saw this kneeling child in a store. With the sight of it came the thought of how I might use it. I bought the figure, and did not show it to Eddy until he was about going to bed. The effect was all I had hoped to produce. He looked at it for some moments earnestly, then dropped on his little knees, clasped his white hands, and murmured the prayer I had so long and so vainly striven to make him repeat.'

"Tears were in the eyes of Mrs. Eldridge, as she uttered the closing words. I felt that she was a true mother, and loved her children with a high and holy love. And now, let me give you a picture that strongly contrasts with this. Not far from Mrs. Eldridge, resides a lady, who is remarkable for her devotion to the church, and, I am compelled to say, want of charity towards all who happen to differ with her—more particularly, if the difference involves church matters. It was after sundown; still being in the neighborhood, I embraced the opportunity to make a call. On ringing the bell, I heard, immediately, a clatter of feet down the stairs and along the passage, accompanied by children's voices, loud and boisterous. It was some time before the door was opened, for each of the four children, wishing to perform the office, each resisted the others' attempts to admit the visitor. Angry exclamations, rude outcries, ill names, and struggles for the advantage continued, until the cook, attracted from the kitchen by the noise, arrived at the scene of contention, and after jerking the children so roughly as to set the two youngest crying, swung it open, and I entered. On gaining the parlor, I asked for the mother of these children.

"'She isn't at home,' said the cook.

"'She's gone to church,' said the oldest of the children.

"'I wish she'd stay at home,' remarked cook in a very disrespectful way, and with a manner that showed her to be much fretted in her mind. 'It's Mary's day out, and she knows I can't do anything with the children. Such children I never saw! They don't mind a word you say, and quarrel so among themselves, that it makes one sick to hear them.'

"At this moment a headless doll struck against the side of my neck. It had been thrown by one child at another; missing her aim, she gave me the benefit of her evil intention. At this, cook lost all patience, and seizing the offending little one, boxed her soundly, before I could interfere. The language used by that child, as she escaped from the cook's hands, was shocking. It made my flesh creep!

"'Did I understand you to say that your mother had gone to church?' I asked of the oldest child.

"'Yes, ma'am,' was answered. 'She's been every day this week. There's a protracted meeting.'

"'Give me that book!' screamed a child, at this moment. Glancing across the room, I saw two of the little ones contending for possession of a large family Bible, which lay upon a small table. Before I could reach them, for I started forward, from an impulse of the moment, the table was thrown over, the marble top broken, and the cover torn from the sacred volume."

The face of Mrs. Andrews became instantly of a deep crimson. Not seeming to notice this, her friend

continued.

"As the table fell, it came within an inch of striking another child on the head, who had seated himself on the floor. Had it done so, a fractured skull, perhaps instant death, would have been the consequence."

Mrs. Andrews caught her breath, and grew very pale. The other continued.

"In the midst of the confusion that followed, the father came home.

"'Where is your mother?' he asked of one of the children.

"'Gone to church,' was replied.

"'O dear!' I can hear his voice now, with its tone of hopelessness,—'This church−going mania is dreadful. I tell my wife that it is all wrong. That her best service to God is to bring up her children in the love of what is good and true,—in filial obedience and fraternal affection. But it avails not.'

"And now, Mrs. Andrews," continued the lady, not in the least appearing to notice the distress and confusion of her over−pious friend, whom she had placed upon the rack, "When God comes to make up his jewels, and says to Mrs. Eldridge, and also to this mother who thought more of church−going than of her precious little ones, 'Where are the children I gave you?' which do you think will be most likely to answer, 'Here they are, not one is lost?'"

"Have I not clearly shown you that even church−going may be perverted into an evil? That piety may attain an inordinate growth, while charity is dead at the root? Spiritual pride; a vain conceit of superior goodness because of the observance of certain forms and ceremonies, is the error into which too many devout religionists fall. But God sees not as man seeth. He looks into the heart, and judges his creatures by the motives that rule them."

And, as she said this, she arose, the silent and rebuked Mrs. Andrews, whose own picture had been drawn, following her down to the gay drawing rooms.

Many a purer heart than that of the humbled Pharisee beat there beneath the bosoms of happy maidens even though their feet were rising and falling in time to witching melodies.

ROMANCE AND REALITY.

"I MET with a most splendid girl last evening," remarked to his friend a young man, whose fine, intellectual forehead, and clear bright eye, gave indications of more than ordinary mental endowments.

"Who is she?" was the friend's brief question.

"Her name is Adelaide Merton. Have you ever seen her?"

"No, but I have often heard of the young lady."

"As a girl of more than ordinary intelligence?"

"O yes. Don't you remember the beautiful little gems of poetry that used to appear in the Gazette, under the signature of Adelaide?"

"Very well. Some of them were exquisite, and all indicative of a fine mind. Was she their author?"

"So I have been told."

"I can very readily believe it; for never have I met with a woman who possessed such a brilliant intellect. Her power of expression is almost unbounded. Her sentences are perfect pictures of the scenes she describes. If she speaks of a landscape, not one of its most minute features is lost, nor one of the accessories to its perfection as a whole overlooked. And so of every thing else, in the higher regions of the intellect, or in the lower forms of nature. For my own part, I was lost in admiration of her qualities. She will yet shine in the world."

The young man who thus expressed himself in regard to Adelaide Merton, was named Charles Fenwick. He possessed a brilliant mind, which had been well stored. But his views of life were altogether perverted and erroneous, and his ends deeply tinctured with the love of distinction, for its own sake. A few tolerably successful literary efforts, had been met by injudicious over praise, leading him to the vain conclusion that his abilities were of so high a character, that no field of action was for him a worthy one that had any thing to do with what he was pleased to term the ordinary grovelling pursuits of life. Of course, all mere mechanical operations were despised, and as a natural consequence, the men who were engaged in them. So with merchandizing, and also with the various branches of productive enterprise. They were mere ministers of the base physical wants of our nature. His mind took in higher aims than these!

His father was a merchant in moderate circumstances, engaged in a calling which was of course despised by the son, notwithstanding he was indebted to his father's constant devotion to that calling for his education, and all the means of comfort and supposed distinction that he enjoyed. The first intention of the elder Mr. Fenwick had been to qualify his son, thoroughly, for the calling of a merchant, that he might enter into business with him and receive the benefits of his experience and facilities in trade. But about the age of seventeen, while yet at college, young Fenwick made the unfortunate discovery that he could produce a species of composition which he called poetry. His efforts were praised—and this induced him to go on; until he learned the art of tolerably smooth versification. This would all have been well enough had he not imagined himself to be, in consequence, of vastly increased importance. Stimulated by this idea, he prosecuted his collegiate studies with renewed diligence, storing a strong and comprehensive mind with facts and principles in science and philosophy, that would have given him, in after life, no ordinary power of usefulness as a literary and professional man, had not his selfish ends paralysed and perverted the natural energies of a good intellect.

The father's intention of making him a merchant was, of course, opposed by the son, who chose one of the learned profession as more honorable—not more useful; a profession that would give him distinction—not enable him to fill his right place in society. In this he was gratified. At the time of his introduction to the reader, he was known as a young physician without a patient. He had graduated, but had not yet seen any occasion for taking an office, as his father's purse supplied all his wants. His pursuits were mainly literary—consisting of essays and reviews for some of the periodicals intermixed with a liberal seasoning of pretty fair rhymes which rose occasionally to the dignity of poetry—or, as he supposed, to the lofty strains of a Milton or a Dante. Occasionally a lecture before some literary association brought his name into the newspapers in connection with remarks that kindled his vanity into a flame. Debating clubs afforded another field for display, and he made liberal use of the

facility. So much for Charles Fenwick.

Of Adelaide Merton, we may remark, that she was just the kind of a woman to captivate a young man of Fenwick's character. She was showy in her style of conversation, but exceedingly superficial. Her reading consisted principally of poetry and the popular light literature of the day, with a smattering of history. She could repeat, in quite an attractive style, many fine passages from Homer, Virgil, Milton, Shakspeare, Pope, Byron, Shelley, Coleridge, and a host of lesser lights in the poetic hemisphere—and could quote from and criticise the philosophy and style of Bulwer with the most edifying self−satisfaction imaginable—not to enumerate her many other remarkable characteristics.

A second visit to Adelaide confirmed the first favorable impression made upon the mind of Fenwick. At the third visit he was half in love with her, and she more than half in love with him. A fourth interview completed the work on both sides. At the fifth, the following conversation terminated the pleasant intercourse of the evening. They were seated on a sofa, and had been talking of poetry, and birds, and flowers, green fields, and smiling landscapes, and a dozen other things not necessary to be repeated at present. A pause of some moments finally succeeded, and each seemed deeply absorbed in thought.

"Adelaide," at length the young man said in a low, musical tone, full of richness and pathos—"Do you not feel, sometimes, when your mind rises into the region of pure thoughts, and ranges free among the beautiful and glorious images that then come and go like angel visitants, a sense of loneliness, because another cannot share what brings to you such exquisite delight?"

"Yes—often and often," replied the maiden lifting her eyes to those of Fenwick, and gazing at him with a tender expression.

"And yet few there are, Adelaide, few indeed who could share such elevating pleasures."

"Few, indeed," was the response.

"Pardon me, for saying," resumed the young man, "that to you I have been indebted for such added delights. Rarely, indeed, have I been able to find, especially among your gentler sex, one who could rise with me into the refining, elevating, exquisite pleasures of the imagination. But you have seemed fully to appreciate my sentiments, and fully to sympathize with them."

To this Adelaide held down her head for a moment or two, the position causing the blood to deepen in her cheeks and forehead. Then looking up with an expression of lofty poetic feeling she said—

"And, until I met you, Mr. Fenwick, I must be frank in saying, that I have known no one, whose current of thought and feeling—no one whose love of the beautiful in the ideal or natural—has seemed so perfect a reflection of my own."

To this followed another pause, longer and more thoughtful than the first. It was at length broken by Fenwick, who said, in a voice that trembled perceptibly.

"I have an inward consciousness, that sprung into activity when the first low murmur of your voice fell upon my ear, that you were to me a kindred spirit. Since that moment, this consciousness has grown daily more and more distinct, and now I feel impelled, by a movement which I cannot resist, to declare its existence. First parden this freedom, Adelaide, and then say if you understand and appreciate what I have uttered in all frankness and sincerity?"

Not long did our young friend wait for an answer that made him happier than he had ever been in his life—happy in the first thrilling consciousness of love deeply and fervently reciprocated. To both of them, there was a degree of romance about this brief courtship that fully accorded with their views of love truly so called. The ordinary cold matter−of−fact way of coming together, including a cautious and even at times a suspicious investigation of character, they despised as a mere mockery of the high, spontaneous confidence which those who are truly capable of loving, feel in each other—a confidence which nothing can shake. And thus did they pledge themselves without either having thought of the other's moral qualities; or either of them having formed any distinct ideas in regard to the true nature of the marriage relation.

A few months sufficed to comsummate their union, when, in accordance with the gay young couple's desire, old Mr. Fenwick furnished them out handsomely, at a pretty heavy expense, in an establishment of their own. As Charles Fenwick had not, heretofore, shown any inclination to enter upon the practice of the profession he had chosen, his father gently urged upon him the necessity of now doing so. But the idea of becoming a practical doctor, was one that Charles could not abide. He had no objection to the title, for that sounded quite musical to his

ear; but no farther than that did his fancy lead him.

"Why didn't I choose the law as a profession?" he would sometimes say to his young wife. "Then I might have shone. But to bury myself as a physician, stealing about from house to house, and moping over sick beds, is a sacrifice of my talents that I cannot think of without turning from the picture with disgust."

"Nor can I," would be the wife's reply. "And what is more, I never will consent to such a perversion of your talents."

"Why cannot you study law, even now, Charles?" she asked of him one day. "With your acquirements, and habits of thought, I am sure you would soon be able to pass an examination."

"I think that is a good suggestion, Adelaide," her husband replied, thoughtfully. "I should only want a year or eighteen months for preparation, and then I could soon place myself in the front rank of the profession."

The suggestion of Charles Fenwick's wife was promptly adopted. A course of legal studies was entered upon, and completed in about two years. Up to this time, every thing had gone on with our young couple as smoothly as a summer sea. A beautifully furnished house, well kept through the attention of two or three servants, gave to their indoor enjoyments a very important accessory. For money there was no care, as the elder Mr. Fenwick's purse−strings relaxed as readily to the hand of Charles as to his own. A pleasant round of intelligent company, mostly of a literary character, with a full supply of all the new publications and leading periodicals of the day, kept their minds elevated into the region of intellectual enjoyments, and caused them still more to look down upon the ordinary pursuits of life as far beneath them.

But all this could not last forever. On the day Charles was admitted to the bar, he received a note from his father, requesting an immediate interview. He repaired at once to his counting room, in answer to the parental summons.

"Charles," said the old man, when they were alone, "I have, up to this time, supplied all your wants, and have done it cheerfully. In order to prepare you for taking your right place in society, I have spared no expense in your education, bearing you, after your term of college life had expired, through two professional courses, so that, as either a physician or a lawyer, you are fully equal to the task of sustaining yourself and family. As far as I am concerned, the tide of prosperity has evidently turned against me. For two years, I have felt myself gradually going back, instead of forward, notwithstanding my most earnest struggles to maintain at least the position already gained. To−day, the notice of a heavy loss completes my inability to bear the burden of your support, and that of my own family. You must, therefore, Charles, enter the world for yourself, and there struggle as I have done, and as all do around you, for a living. But, as I know that it will be impossible for you to obtain sufficient practice at once in either law or medicine to maintain yourself, I will spare you out of my income, which will now be small in comparison to what it has been, four hundred dollars a year, for the next two years. You must yourself make up the deficiency, and no doubt you can easily do so."

"But, father," replied the young man, his face turning pale, "I cannot, possibly, make up the deficiency. Our rent alone, you know, is four hundred dollars."

"I am aware of that, Charles. But what then? You must get a house at one half that rent, and reduce your style of living, proportionably, in other respects."

"What! And compromise my standing in society? I can never do that, father."

"Charles," said the old man, looking at his son with a sterner countenance than he had ever yet put on when speaking to him, "remember that you have no standing in society which you can truly call your own. I have, heretofore, held you up, and now that my sustaining hand is about to be withdrawn, you must fall or rise to your own level. And I am satisfied, that the sooner you are permitted to do so the better."

The fact was, that the selfish, and to old Mr. Fenwick, the heartless manner in which Charles had received the communication of his changed circumstances, had wounded him exceedingly, and suddenly opened his eyes to the false relation which his son was holding to society.

"You certainly cannot be in earnest, father," the son replied, after a few moments of hurried and painful thought, "in declaring your intention of throwing me off with a meagre pittance of four hundred dollars, before I have had a chance to do any thing for myself. How can I possibly get along on that sum?"

"I do not expect you to live on that, Charles. But the difference you will have to make up yourself. You have talents and acquirements. Bring them into useful activity, and you will need little of my assistance. As for me, as I have already told you, the tide of success is against me, and I am gradually moving down the stream. Four

hundred dollars is the extent of what I can give you, and how long the ability to do that may last, Heaven only knows."

Reluctantly the young couple were compelled to give up their elegantly arranged dwelling, and move into a house of about one half of its dimensions. In this there was a fixed, cold, common place reality, that shocked the sensibilities of both even though throughout the progress of the change, each had remained passive in the hands of the elder Mr. and Mrs. Fenwick, who had to choose them a house, and attend to all the arrangements of moving and refitting the new home. For Charles to have engaged in the vulgar business of moving household furniture, would have been felt as a disgrace;—and as for Adelaide, she didn't know how to do any thing in regard to the matter, and even if she had, would have esteemed such an employment as entirely beneath her.

While the packing up was going on under the direction of her husband's mother, Adelaide, half dressed, with an elegant shawl thrown carelessly about her shoulders, her feet drawn up and her body reclining upon a sofa, was deeply buried in the last new novel, while her babe lay in the arms of a nurse, who was thus prevented from rendering any assistance to those engaged in preparing the furniture for removal. As for her husband, he was away, in some professional friend's office, holding a learned discussion upon the relative merits of Byron and Shelley.

After the removal had been accomplished, and the neat little dwelling put, as the elder Mrs. Fenwick termed it, into "apple−pie order" the following conversation took place between her and her daughter−in−law.

"Adelaide, it will now be necessary for you to let both your nurse and chambermaid go. Charles cannot possibly afford the expense, as things now are."

"Let my nurse and chambermaid go!" exclaimed Adelaide, with a look and tone of profound astonishment.

"Certainly, Adelaide," was the firm reply. "You cannot now afford to keep three servants."

"But how am I to get along without them? You do not, certainly, suppose that I can be my own nurse and chambermaid?"

"With your small family," was Mrs. Fenwick's reply, "you can readily have the assistance of your cook for a portion of the morning in your chamber and parlors. And as to the nursing part, I should think that you would desire no higher pleasure than having all the care of dear little Anna. I was always my own nurse, and never had assistance beyond that of a little girl."

"It's no use to speak in that way, mother; I cannot do without a nurse," said Adelaide, bursting into tears. "I couldn't even dress the baby."

"The sooner you learn, child, the better," was the persevering reply of Mrs. Fenwick.

But Adelaide had no idea of dispensing with either nurse or chambermaid, both of whom were retained in spite of the remonstrances and entreaties of the mother−in−law.

Driven to the absolute necessity of doing so, Charles Fenwick opened an office, and advertised for business. Those who have attempted to make their way, at first, in a large city, at the bar, can well understand the disappointment and chagrin of Fenwick on finding that he did not rise at once to distinction, as he had fondly imagined he would, when he turned his attention, with strong reasons for desiring success, to the practice of his profession. A few petty cases, the trifling fees of which he rejected as of no consideration, were all that he obtained during the first three months. At the end of this time he found himself in debt to the baker, butcher, milkman, tailor, dry−goods merchants, and to the three servants still pertinaciously retained by his wife.—And, as a climax to the whole, his father's business was brought to a termination by bankruptcy, and the old man, in the decline of life, with still a large family dependent upon him for support, thrown upon the world, to struggle, almost powerless, for a subsistence. Fortunately, the Presidency of an Insurance Company was tendered him, with a salary of fifteen hundred dollars per annum. On this he could barely support those dependent upon him, leaving Charles the whole task of maintaining himself, his wife, and their child.

To be dunned for money was more than the young man could endure with any kind of patience. But creditor tradesmen had no nice scruples in regard to these matters, and duns came, consequently, thick and fast, until poor Charles was irritated beyond measure. Cold, and sometimes impatient, and half insulting answers to applications for money, were not to be endured by the eager applicants for what was justly their own. Warrants soon followed, as a matter of course, which had to be answered by a personal appearance before city magistrates, thus causing the infliction of a deeper mortification than had yet assailed him. Added to these came the importunities of his landlord, which was met by a response which was deemed insulting, and then came a distraint for rent. The due

bill of the father, saved the son this utter prostration and disgrace.

The effect of all this, was to drive far away from their dwelling the sweet angel of peace and contentment. Fretted and troubled deeply in regard to his present condition and future prospects, Charles had no smiling words for his wife. This, of course, pained her deeply. But she readily found relief from present reality in the world of pure romance. The more powerful fictions of the day, especially the highly wrought idealities of Bulwer, and those of his class, introduced her into a world above that in which she dwelt,—and there she lingered the greatest portion of her time, unconscious of the calls of duty, or the claims of affection.

A single year sufficed to break them up entirely. Expenses far beyond their income, which rose to about three hundred dollars during the first year of Charles' practice at the bar, brought warrants and executions, which the father had no power to stay. To satisfy these, furniture and library had to be sold, and Charles and his wife, child and nurse, which latter Adelaide would retain, were thrown upon old Mr. Fenwick, for support.

For four years did they remain a burden upon the father, during which time, unstimulated to exertion by pressing necessities, Charles made but little progress as a lawyer. Petty cases he despised, and generally refused to undertake, and those of more importance were not trusted to one who had yet to prove himself worthy of a high degree of legal confidence. At the end of that time both his father and mother were suddenly removed to the world of spirits, and he was again thrown entirely upon his own resources.

With no one now to check them in any thing Charles and his wife, after calculating the results of the next year's legal efforts, felt fully justfied in renting a handsome house, and furnishing it on credit. The proceeds of the year's practice rose but little above four hundred dollars, and at its conclusion they found themselves involved in a new debt of three thousand dollars. Then came another breaking up, with all of its harrowing consequences—consequences which to persons of their habits and mode of thinking, are so deeply mortifying,—followed by their shrinking away, with a meagre remnant of their furniture, into a couple of rooms, in an obscure part of the town.

"Adelaide," said the husband, one morning, as he roused himself from a painful reverie.

"Well, what do you want?" she asked abstractedly, lifting her eyes with reluctant air from the pages of a novel.

"I want to talk to you for a little while; so shut your book, if you please."

"Won't some other time do as well? I have just got into the middle of a most interesting scene."

"No—I wish to talk with you now."

"Well, say on," the wife rejoined, closing the book in her hand, with her thumb resting upon the page that still retained her thoughts, and assuming an attitude of reluctant attention.

"There is a school vacant at N——, some twenty miles from the city. The salary is eight hundred dollars a year, with a house and garden included. I can get the situation, if I will accept of it."

"And sink to the condition of a miserable country pedagogue?"

"And support my family comfortably and honestly," Fenwick replied in a tone of bitterness.

"Precious little comfort will your family experience immured in an obscure country village, without a single congenial associate. What in the name of wonder has put that into your head?"

"Adelaide! I cannot succeed at the bar—at least, not for years. Of that I am fully satisfied. It is absolutely necessary, therefore, that I should turn my attention to something that will supply the pressing demands of my family."

"But surely you can get into something better than the office of schoolmaster, to the sons of clodpoles."

"Name something."

"I'm sure I cannot tell. That is a matter for you to think about," and so saying, Mrs. Fenwick re−opened her book, and commenced poring again over the pages of the delightful work she held in her hand.

Irritated, and half disgusted at this, a severe reproof trembled on his tongue, but he suppressed it. In a few minutes after he arose, and left the apartment without his wife seeming to notice the movement.

"Good morning, Mr. Fenwick!" said a well known individual, coming into the lawyer's office a few minutes after he had himself entered.

"That trial comes on this afternoon at four o'clock."

"Well, John, I can't help it. The debt is a just one, but I have no means of meeting it now."

"Try, and do so if you can, Mr. Fenwick, for the plaintiff is a good deal irritated about the matter, and will push the thing to extremities."

"I should be sorry for that. But if so, let him use his own pleasure. Take nothing from nothing, and nothing remains."

"You had better come then with security, Mr. Fenwick, for my orders are, to have an execution issued against your person, as soon as the case is decided."

"You are not in earnest, John?" suddenly ejaculated the lawyer, rising to his feet, and looking at the humble minister of the law with a pale cheek and quivering lip. "Surely Mr.——is not going to push matters to so uncalled−for an extremity!"

"Such, he positively declares, is his fixed determination. So hold yourself prepared, sir, to meet even this unpleasant event."

The debt for which the warrant had been issued against Mr. Fenwick, amounted to ninety dollars.

The whole of the remaining part of that day was spent in the effort to obtain security in the case. But in vain. His friends knew too well his inability to protect them from certain loss, should they step between him and the law. Talents, education, brilliant addresses, fine poetry "and all that," turned to no good and useful ends, he found availed him nothing now. Even many of those with whom he had been in intimate literary association, shrunk away from the penniless individual, and those who did not actually shun him had lost much of their former cordiality.

The idea of being sent to jail for debt, was to him a terrible one. And he turned from it with a sinking at the heart. He said nothing to Adelaide on returning home in the evening, for the high communion of spirit, in which they had promised themselves such deep and exquisite delight, had long since given place to coldness, and a state of non−sympathy. He found her deeply buried, as usual, in some volume of romance, while every thing around her was in disorder, and full of unmitigated realities. They were living alone in two small rooms, and the duty of keeping them in order and providing their frugal meals devolved as a heavy task upon Adelaide—so heavy, that she found it utterly impossible to do it justice.

The fire—that essential preliminary to household operations—had not even been made, when Fenwick reached home, and the dinner table remained still on the floor, with its unwashed dishes strewn over it, in admirable confusion.

With a sigh, Adelaide resigned her book, soon after her husband came in, and commenced preparations for the evening meal. This was soon ready, and despatched in silence, except so far as the aimless prattle of their little girl interrupted it. Tea over, Mrs. Fenwick put Anna to bed, much against her will, and then drew up to the table again with her book.

Cheerless and companionless did her husband feel as he let his eye fall upon her, buried in selfish enjoyment, while his own heart was wrung with the bitterest recollections and the most heart−sickening anticipations.

Thoughts of the gaming table passed through his mind, and with the thought he placed his hand involuntarily upon his pocket. It was empty. Sometimes his mind would rise into a state of vigorous activity, with the internal consciousness of a power to do any thing. But, alas—it was strength without skill—intellectual power without the knowledge to direct it aright.

Late on the next morning he arose from a pillow that had been blessed with but little sleep, and that unrefreshing. It was past eleven o'clock before Adelaide had breakfast on the table. This over, she, without even dressing Anna or arranging her own person sat down to her novel, while he gave himself to the most gloomy and desponding reflections. He feared to go out lest the first man he should meet, should prove an officer with an execution upon his person.

About one o'clock, sick and weary of such a comfortless home, he went out, glad of any change. Ten steps from his own door, he was met by a constable who conveyed him to prison.

Several hours passed before his crushed feelings were aroused sufficiently to cause him even to think of any means of extrication. When his mind did act, it was with clearness, vigor, and decision. The walls of a jail had something too nearly like reality about them, to leave much of the false sentiment which had hitherto marred his prospects in life. There was, too, something deeply humiliating in his condition of an imprisoned debtor.

"What shall I do?" he asked himself, towards the close of the day, with a strong resolution to discover the best course of action, and to pursue that course, unswayed by any extraneous influences. The thought of his wife came across his mind.

"Shall I send her word where I am?"—A pause of some moments succeeded this question.

"No," he at length said, half aloud, while an expression of pain flitted over his countenance. "It is of little consequence to her where I am or what I suffer. She is, I believe, perfectly heartless."

But Fenwick was mistaken in this. She needed, as well as himself, some powerful shock to awaken her to true consciousness. That shock proved to be the knowledge of her husband's imprisonment for debt, which she learned early on the next morning, after the passage of an anxious and sleepless night, full of strange forebodings of approaching evil. She repaired, instantly, to the prison, her heart melted down into true feeling. The interview between herself and husband was full of tenderness, bringing out from each heart the mutual affections which had been sleeping there, alas! too long.

But one right course presented itself to the mind of either of them, and that was naturally approved by both, as the only proper one. It was for Fenwick to come out of prison under the act of insolvency, and thus free himself from the trammels of past obligations, which could not possibly be met.

This was soon accomplished, the requisite security for his personal appearance to interrogatories being readily obtained.

"And now, Adelaide, what is to be done?" he asked of his wife, as he sat holding her hand in his, during the first hour of his release from imprisonment. His own mind had already decided—still he was anxious for her suggestion, if she had any to make.

"Can you still obtain that school you spoke of?" she asked with much interest in her tone.

"Yes. The offer is still open."

"Then take it, Charles, by all means. One such lesson as we have had, is enough for a life time. Satisfied am I, now, that we have not sought for happiness in the right paths."

The school was accordingly taken, and with humbled feelings, modest expectations, and a mutual resolution to be satisfied with little, did Charles Fenwick and his wife re−commence the world at the bottom of the ladder. That he was sincere in his new formed resolutions, is evident from the fact, that in a few years he became the principal of a popular literary institution, for which office he was fully qualified. She, too, learned, by degrees, to act well her part in all her relations, social and domestic—and now finds far more pleasure in the realities, than she ever did in the romance of life.

BOTH TO BLAME.

"OF course, both are to blame."

"Of course. You may always set that down as certain when you see two persons who have formerly been on good terms fall out with each other. For my part, I never take sides in these matters. I listen to what both have to say, and make due allowance for the wish of either party to make his or her own story appear most favorable."

Thus we heard two persons settling a matter of difference between a couple of their friends, and it struck us at the time as not being exactly the true way in all cases. In disputes and differences, there are no doubt times when both are _equally_ to blame; most generally, however, one party is _more_ to blame than the other. And it not unfrequently happens that one party to a difference is not at all to blame, but merely stands on a just and honorable defensive. The following story, which may or may not be from real life, will illustrate the latter position.

"Did you hear about Mrs. Bates and Mrs. Tarleton?" said one friend to another.

"No; what is the matter?"

"They are up in arms against each other."

"Indeed; it's the first I've heard of it. What is the cause?"

"I can hardly tell; but I know that they don't speak. Mrs. Tarleton complains bitterly against Mrs. Bates; and Mrs. Bates, they say, is just as bitter against her. For my part, I've come to the conclusion that both are to blame."

"There is no doubt of that. I never knew a case of this kind where both were not to blame."

"Nor I."

"But don't you know the ground of the difference?"

"They say it is about a head−dress."

"I'll be bound dress has something to do with it," grumbled out Mr. Brierly, the husband of one of the ladies, who sat reading a newspaper while they were talking.

"My husband is disposed to be a little severe on the ladies at times, but you musn't mind him. _I_ never do," remarked Mrs. Brierly, half sarcastically, although she looked at her husband with a smile as she spoke. "He

thinks we care for nothing but dress. I tell him it is very well for him and the rest of the world that we have some little regard at least to such matters. I am sure if I didn't think a good deal about dress, he and the children would soon look like scarecrows."

Mr. Brierly responded to this by a "Humph!" and resumed the perusal of his newspaper.

"It is said," resumed Mrs. Brierly, who had been asked to state the cause of the unhappy difference existing between the two ladies, "that Mrs. Bates received from her sister in New York a new and very beautiful head−dress, which had been obtained through a friend in Paris. Mrs. Tarleton wanted it very badly, and begged Mrs. Bates for the pattern; but she refused to let her have it, because a grand party was to be given by the Listons in a few weeks, and she wanted to show it off there herself. Mrs. Tarleton, however, was not going to take 'no' for an answer; she had set her heart upon the head−dress and must have it. You know what a persevering woman she is when she takes anything into her head. Well, she called in almost every day to see Mrs. Bates, and every time she would have something to say about the head−dress, and ask to see it. In this way she got the pattern of it so perfectly in her mind that she was able to direct a milliner how to make her one precisely like it. All unknown to Mrs. Bates, Mrs. Tarleton came to the party wearing this new style of head−dress, which made her so angry when she discovered it, that she insulted Mrs. Tarleton openly, and then retired from the company."

"Is it possible!"

"That, I believe, is about the truth of the whole matter. I have sifted it pretty closely."

"Well, I declare! I was at the party, but I saw nothing of this. I remember Mrs. Tarleton's head−dress, however, very well. It certainly was very beautiful, and has become quite fashionable since."

"Yes, and is called by some the Tarleton head−dress, from the first wearer of it."

"This no doubt galls Mrs. Bates severely. They say she is a vain woman."

"It is more than probable that this circumstance has widened the breach."

"I must say," remarked the other lady, "that Mrs. Tarleton did not act well."

"No, she certainly did not. At the same time, I think Mrs. Bates was served perfectly right for her selfish vanity. It wouldn't have hurt her at all if there had been two or three head−dresses there of exactly the pattern of hers. But extreme vanity always gets mortified, and in this case I think justly so."

"Besides, it was very unladylike to insult Mrs. Tarleton in public."

"Yes, or anywhere else. She should have taken no notice of it whatever. A true lady, under circumstances of this kind, seems perfectly unaware of what has occurred. She shuns, with the utmost carefulness, any appearance of an affront at so trivial a matter, even if she feels it."

Such was the opinion entertained by the ladies in regard to the misunderstanding, as some others called it, that existed between Mrs. Bates and Mrs. Tarleton. Both were considered to blame, and nearly equally so; but whether the parties really misunderstood their own or each other's true position will be seen when the truth appears.

Mrs. Bates did receive, as has been stated, a beautiful head−dress from a sister in New York, who had obtained it from a friend in Paris. The style was quite attractive, though neither unbecoming nor showy. Mrs. Bates had her own share of vanity, and wished to appear at a large party soon to take place, in this head−dress, where she knew it must attract attention. Although a little vain, a fault that we can easily excuse in a handsome woman, Mrs. Bates had a high sense of justice and right, and possessed all a lady's true delicacy of feeling.

The head−dress, after being admired, was laid aside for the occasion refrered to. A few days afterwards, Mrs. Tarleton, an acquaintance, dropped in.

"I have something beautiful to show you," said Mrs. Bates, after she had chatted awhile with her visitor.

"Indeed! What is it?"

"The sweetest head−dress you ever saw. My sister sent it to me from New York, and she had it direct from a friend in Paris, where it was all the fashion. Mine I believe to be the only one yet received in the city, and I mean to wear it at Mrs. Liston's party.

"Do let me see it," said Mrs. Tarleton, all alive with expectation. She had an extravagant love of dress, and was an exceedingly vain woman.

The head−dress was produced. Mrs. Tarleton lifted her hands and eyes.

"The loveliest thing I ever saw! Let me try it on," she said, laying off her bonnet and taking the head−dress from the hands of Mrs. Bates. "Oh, it is sweet! I never looked so well in anything in my life," she continued, viewing herself in the glass. "I wish I could beg it from you; but that I havn't the heart to do."

Mrs. Bates smiled and shook her head, but made no reply.

"Here, you put it on, and let me see how you look in it," went on Mrs. Tarleton, removing the cap from her own head and placing it upon that of her friend. "Beautiful! How well it becomes you! you must let me have the pattern. We can wear them together at the party. Two will attract more attention than one."

"I am sorry to deny you," replied Mrs. Bates, "but I think I shall have to be alone in my glory this time."

"Indeed, you must let me have the pattern, Mrs. Bates. I never saw anything in my life that pleased me so much, nor anything in which I looked so well. I have been all over town for a head−dress without fnding anything I would wear. If you don't let me have one like yours, I do not know what I will do. Come now, say yes, that is a dear."

But Mrs. Bates said no as gently as she could. It was asking of her too much. She had set her heart upon appearing in that head−dress as something new and beautiful, and could not consent to share the distinction, especially with Mrs. Tarleton, for whom, although a friend, she entertained not the highest esteem, and for the reason that Mrs. Tarleton had rather a vulgar mind, and lacked a lady's true perceptions of propriety.

"Well, I must say you are a selfish woman," returned Mrs. Tarleton, good−humoredly, and yet meaning what she said. "It wouldn't do you a bit of harm to let me have the pattern, and would gratify me more than I can tell."

"I'll tell you what I will do," said Mrs. Bates, to this, with a reluctant effort that was readily perceived by her visitor, "I will give you the head−dress and let you wear it, as long as you seem to have set your heart so upon it."

"Oh no, no; you know I wouldn't do that. But it seems strange that you are not willing for us to wear the same head−dress."

The indelicate pertinacity of her visitor annoyed Mrs. Bates very much, and she replied to this rather more seriously than she had before spoken.

"The fact is, Mrs. Tarleton," she said, "this head−dress is one that cannot fail to attract attention. I have several very intimate friends, between whom and myself relations of even a closer kind exist than have yet existed between you and me. If I give you the pattern of this cap and the privilege of wearing it with me for the first time it is seen in this city, these friends will have just cause to think hard of me for passing them by. This is a reason that would inevitably prevent me from meeting your wishes, even if I were indifferent about appearing in it myself alone."

"I suppose I must give it up, then," said Mrs. Tarleton, in a slightly disappointed tone.

"As I said before," returned Mrs. Bates, "I will defer the matter entirely to you. You shall have the head−dress and I will choose some other one."

"Oh no; I couldn't think of such a thing," returned Mrs. Tarleton. "That is more than I ought to ask or you to give."

"It is the best I can do," Mrs. Bates said, with a quiet smile.

"Sister," said Mrs. Tarleton, on returning home, "you can't imagine what a sweet head−dress Mrs. Bates has just received from Paris through her sister in New York. It is the most unique and beautiful thing I ever saw. I tried hard for the pattern, but the selfish creature wouldn't let me have it. She is keeping it for the Liston's party, where it will be the admiration of every one."

"What is it like?"

"Oh, I can't begin to describe it. It is altogether novel. I wish now I had asked her to let me bring it home to show it to you."

"I wish you had. You must go there again and get it for me."

"I believe I will call in again to−morrow.—Perhaps she will have thought better of it by that time, and changed her mind. At any rate, if not, I will ask her to let me bring it home and show it to you."

This was done. Mrs. Bates did not object to letting Mrs. Tarleton take the head−dress and show it to her sister, for she had the fullest confidence that she would not do anything with it that she knew was against her wishes, which had been clearly expressed.

The sister of Mrs. Tarleton was in raptures with the head−dress.

"It is right down mean and selfish in Mrs. Bates not to let you have the pattern," she said. "What a vain woman she must be. I always thought better of her."

"So did I. But this shows what she is."

"If I were you," remarked the sister, "I would have it in spite of her. It isn't _her_ pattern, that she need

pretend hold it so exclusively. It is a Paris fashion, and any body else may get it just as well as she. She has no property in it."

"No, of course not."

"Then while you have the chance, take it to Madame Pinto and get her to make you one exactly like it."

"I have a great mind to do it; it would serve her perfectly right."

"I wouldn't hesitate a moment," urged the sister. "At the last party, Mrs. Bates managed to have on something new that attracted every one and threw others into the shade, I wouldn't let her have another such triumph."

Thus urged by her sister, Mrs. Tarleton yielded to the evil counsel, which was seconded by her own heart. The head−dress was taken to Madame Pinto, who, after a careful examination of it, said that she would make one exactly similar for Mrs. Tarleton. After charging the milliner over and over again to keep the matter a profound secret, Mrs. Tarleton went away and returned the head−dress to Mrs. Bates. It had been in her possession only a couple of hours.

Mrs. Pinto was a fashionable milliner and dress maker, and was patronized by the most fashionable people in the city, Mrs. Bates among the rest. The latter had called in the aid of this woman in the preparation of various little matters of dress to be worn at the party. Three or four days after Mrs. Tarleton's visit to Mrs. Pinto with the head−dress, Mrs. Bates happened to step in at the milliner's, who, during their consultation, about little matters of dress, drew the lady aside, saying—"I've got something that I know I can venture to show you.—It's for the party, and the loveliest thing you ever saw."

As she said this she took from a box a facsimile of Mrs. Bates' own beautiful head−dress, and held it up with looks of admiration.

"Isn't it sweet?" she said.

"It is the most beautiful head−dress I ever saw," replied Mrs. Bates, concealing her surprise. "Who is it for?"

"It's a secret, but I can tell _you_. It is for Mrs. Tarleton."

"Ah! Where did she get the pattern?"

"I don't know; she brought it here, but said she couldn't leave it for the world. I had to study it all out, and then make it from my recollection of the pattern."

"The pattern did not belong to her?"

"Oh, no. Somebody had it who was going to show it off at the party, she said; but she meant to surprise her."

"Have you any new patterns for head−dresses not chosen by the ladies who have made selections of you for Mrs. Liston's party?" asked Mrs. Bates, not seeming to notice the reply of Mrs. Pinto.

"Oh, yes, ma'am, a good many," and half−a−dozen really handsome head−dresses were shown—none, however, that pleased her half so well as the one she was about throwing aside. She suited herself from the assortment shown her, and directed it to be sent home.

Mrs. Bates felt justly outraged at the conduct of Mrs. Tarleton, but she did not speak of what had taken place, except to one or two very intimate friends and to her husband. The evening of the party at length arrived. Mrs. Tarleton was there a little earlier than Mrs. Bates, in all the glory of her ungenerous triumph. The beautiful head−dress she wore attracted every eye, and in the admiration won by the display of her taste, she lost all the shame she had felt in anticipation of meeting Mrs. Bates, to whom her meanness and dishonesty would be at once apparent.

At length she saw this lady enter the parlors by the side of her husband, and noticed with surprise that her head−dress was entirely different from the one she wore. The truth flashed across her mind. Mrs. Pinto had betrayed her secret, and Mrs. Bates, justly outraged by what had occurred, had thrown aside her beautiful cap and selected another.

Now Mrs. Bates was a woman whom Mrs. Tarleton would be sorry to offend seriously, because her position in certain circles was undoubted, while her own was a little questionable. The fact that Mrs. Bates had declined wearing so beautiful a head−dress because she had obtained one of the same pattern by unfair means, made her fear that serious offence had been given, and dashed her spirits at once. She was not long left in doubt. Before ten minutes had elapsed she was thrown into immediate contact with Mrs. Bates, from whom she received a polite but cold bow.

Mrs. Tarleton was both hurt and offended at this, and immediately after the party, commenced talking about it and mis−stating the whole transaction, so as not to appear so much to blame as she really was. Mrs. Bates, on the

contrary, said little on the subject, except to a few very intimate friends, and to those who made free to ask her about it, to whom she said, after giving fairly the cause of complaint against Mrs. Tarleton—"I spoke to her coldly because I wished our more intimate acquaintance to cease. Her conduct was unworthy of a lady, and therefore I cannot and will not consider her among my friends. No apologies, if she would even make them, could change the wrong spirit from which she acted, or make her any more worthy of my confidence, esteem or love."

"But you will surely forgive her?" said one.

"The wrong done to me I am ready enough to forgive, for it is but a trifling matter; but the violation of confidence and departure from a truly honest principle, of which she has been guilty, I cannot forgive, for they are not sins against me, but against Heaven's first and best laws."

But that did not satisfy some. Persons calling themselves mutual friends strove hard to reconcile what they were pleased to call a misunderstanding in which "both were to blame." But it availed not. To their interference, Mrs. Bates usually replied—"If it will be any satisfaction to Mrs. Tarleton to be recognized by me and treated kindly and politely in company, I will most cheerfully yield her all that; but I cannot feel towards her as heretofore, because I have been deceived in her, and find her to be governed by principles that I cannot approve. We can never again be on terms of intimacy."

But it was impossible to make some understand the difference between acting from principle and wounded pride. The version given by Mrs. Tarleton was variously modified as it passed from mouth to mouth, until it made Mrs. Bates almost as much to blame as herself, and finally, as the coldness continued until all intercourse at last ceased, it was pretty generally conceded, except by a very few, that "both were about equally to blame."

The reader can now make up his own mind on the subject from what has been related. For our part, we do not think Mrs. Bates at all to blame in at once withdrawing herself from intimate association with such a woman as Mrs. Tarleton showed herself to be, and we consider that a false charity which would seek to interfere with or set aside the honest indignation that should always be felt in similar cases of open betrayal of confidence and violation of honest and honorable principles.

We have chosen a very simple and commonplace incident upon which to "hang a moral."—But it is in the ordinary pursuits of business and pleasure where the true character is most prone to exhibit itself, and we must go there if we would read the book of human life aright.

IT'S NONE OF MY BUSINESS.

"WAS N'T that young Sanford?" asked Mrs. Larkin of her husband, as the two stood at a window of their dwelling one Sunday afternoon, noticing the passers by. The individual she alluded to was a young man who had ridden gaily along on a spirited horse.

"Yes," was the reply.

"He rides past here almost every Sunday afternoon, and often in company with Harriet Meadows. He is quite a dashing young fellow."

"He is dashing far beyond his ostensible means. I wonder at Millard for keeping him in his store. I would soon cast adrift any one of my clerks who kept a fast horse, and sported about with the gay extravagance that Sanford does. His salary does not, I am sure, meet half his expenses. I have heard some of my young men speak of his habits. They say money with him is no consideration. He spends it as freely as water."

"Strange that his employer does not see this!"

"It is. But Millard is too unsuspicious, and too ignorant of what is going on out of the narrow business circle. He is like a horse in a mill. He sees nothing outside of a certain limit. He gets up in the morning, dresses himself, goes to his store, and then devotes himself to business until dinner time. Then he goes home and dines. After this he comes back to his store and stays until night. His evenings are either spent in reading or dozing at home, or with a neighbor at checkers. On Sunday morning he goes to church, in the afternoon he sleeps to kill time, and in the evening retires at eight, unless a friend steps in, to sleep away the tedious hours. Of the habits of his clerks, when out of his store, he knows as little as the man in the moon."

"But some one ought to give him a hint."

"It would be a charity."

"Why do n't you do it?"

"Me! Oh, it's none of my business. Let Millard look after his own affairs. I 'm not going to get myself into trouble by meddling with things that do n't concern me. It is his place to see into the habits of his clerks. If he neglects to do so, he deserves to be cheated by them."

"I do n't know. It seems to me that it would be no more than right to give him a hint, and put him on his guard."

"It would be a good turn, no doubt. But I'm not going to do it. It's no affair of mine."

"I do n't think he is fit company for Harriet Meadows," said Mrs. Larkin, after a pause.

"Nor I," returned her husband. "I should be very sorry to see our Jane riding with him, or indeed, associating with him in any way. Surely Harriet's father and mother cannot know that their daughter rides out with him almost every Sunday afternoon."

"Of course not. They are religious people and would think it a sin for her to do so. I am surprised that Harriet should act in such direct violation of what she knows to be their real sentiments."

"Some one ought to give them a hint upon the subject."

"I think so. If it were my child I would take it as a great favor indeed."

"Yes, so would I. Suppose, Ellen, you drop a word in Mrs. Meadows' ear."

"Me!" with a look and tone of surprise. "Oh no, I never interfere in other people's business. Every one ought to look after his or her own concerns. I hate your meddlesome folks. I 'll take good care that my own child do n't form such associations. Let every body else do the same. The fact is, parents are too careless about where their children go, and what kind of company they keep."

"That's very true. Still I think no harm could come of your just giving Mrs. Meadows a hint."

"Oh, no indeed! It's none of my business."

"Well, just as you like," returned Mr. Larkin, indifferently. "Let every one see that his own stable door is locked before the horse is stolen."

Mr. Millard, who was in the same line of business with Larkin, was just the plodding, unobserving,

unsuspicious person that the latter had described him. Sanford was an intelligent clerk and an active salesman. These were valuable qualities, for which he was appreciated by his employer. As to what he did or where he went after business hours, Millard never thought. He, doubtless, on the supposition of the merchant, went into good company, and acted with the same prudence that had governed himself under similar circumstances. But in this he was mistaken. The young man's habits were bad, and his associates often of a vicious character. Bad habits and bad associates always involve the spending of money freely. This consequence naturally occurred in the case of Sanford. To supply his wants his salary proved insufficient. These wants were like the horse−leech, and cried continually—" give, give." They could not be put off. The first recourse was that of borrowing, in anticipation of his quarterly receipt of salary, after his last payment was exhausted. It was not long before, under this system, his entire quarterly receipt had to be paid away to balance his borrowed money account, thus leaving him nothing to meet his increasing wants for the next three months. By borrowing again from some friends immediately, and curtailing his expenses down to the range of his income, he was able to get along for two or three quarters. But, of course, he was always behind hand just the amount of three months' salary. At length, as new wants pressed upon him, he was tempted to exceed in his borrowed money account the sum received as his quarterly dues. This made it impossible for him to pay off, when he received his instalments of salary, the whole amount of borrowed money, and caused him to cast about for some new resource. In balancing the cash account one day,—he had charge of this,—he found that there was an error of one hundred dollars in favor of cash—that is, there were on hand one hundred dollars more than was called for by the account. He went over the account again and again, but could not discover the error. For more than an hour he examined the various entries and additions, but with no better success. At last, however, a little to his disappointment, for he had already began to think of quietly appropriating the surplus, he found the error to consist in the carriage of tens—four instead of five having been carried to the third or column of hundreds on one of the pages of the cash book, thus making the amount called for in the book one hundred dollars less than the real sum on hand.

For some time after this discovery, Sanford sat at his desk in a state of abstraction and irresolution. He was vexed that the error had been found out, for he had already nearly made up his mind to keep the overplus and say nothing about it. He did not attempt to change the erroneous figure.—Why should it not remain so?—he at length asked himself. If it had cost him so much time and labor to find it out, it was not probable that any one else would detect it. Indeed, no one but himself and Mr. Millard had any thing to do with the general cash account of the establishment, and he knew very well that the latter did not examine it with a very close scrutiny. Finally, pressing demands for money determined him to put the surplus into his pocket, at least for the present. He did so, and in that act let into his mind a flood of evil counsellors, whose arguments, enforced by his own cupidities, could at any time afterwards have sufficient control to guide him almost at will. With this sum of one hundred dollars, he paid off a portion of what he owed, and retained the rest to meet the demands that would be made upon him before the arrival of the next quarter day. It was a rule with Millard to pay off his clerks only in quarterly instalments. No other payments were allowed them.

It was not long before a deliberate false entry was made, by which another hundred dollars passed into Sanford's pockets. With this increase of income came a freer expenditure. Hitherto he had been in the habit of riding out on Sundays on hired horses; but now he was inspired with a wish to own a horse himself. A beautiful animal just at this time came under his eye. It was offered at one hundred and fifty dollars. The owner, knowing Sanford's fondness for a gay, fast−going horse, urged him to buy.

The temptation was very strong. He looked at the animal again and again, rode him out, talked about him, until, finally, the desire to own him became almost irresistible. He had not twenty dollars, however, and it would be two months before his salary came due, which at any rate was all wanted for current expenses. The cash book was looked at for a week or ten days before he could make up his mind to pen another false entry. At last, however, he picked up the courage to do so. The horse was purchased, and for a few days the thought of possessing so noble an animal was very pleasant.

On the third day after this act of dishonesty, Mr. Millard, who had been looking over the cash book, discovered the erroneous figures.

"Look here, Sanford," said he, "you have made a mistake here. This figure should be nine instead of eight, and this five instead of four."

The young man's heart gave a quick throb, but he controlled himself by a strong effort.

"Where?" he asked, quickly, coming at once to Mr. Millard, and looking over the cash−book.

"Here—just add up these two columns."

Sanford added them up, and then said—

"Yes, that's a fact. I'm glad you have found it out. The cash has been over about two hundred dollars for several days, and I have tried in vain to find where the error lay. Strange, after adding up these columns for some twenty times or more, I should have still been wrong in these figures. Let me strike a balance for you now, so that you can count the cash, and see that there is just this amount over."

This dispelled all suspicions from the mind of Millard, if any had found a place there.

"No," he replied, "I hav n't time now. I have no doubt of it being right. Make the corrections required."

And as he thus remarked, he turned away from the desk.

Sanford trembled from head to foot the moment his employer left him. He tried to make the corrections, but his hand shook so that he could not hold the pen. In a little while he mastered this agitation so far as to be externally composed. He then changed the erroneous figures. But this did not make the matter straight. The cash account now called for two hundred dollars more than the funds on hand would show. If the money should be counted before he could make other false entries, he would be discovered and disgraced. And now that errors had been discovered, it was but natural to suppose that Mr. Millard would glance less casually at the account than he had been in the habit of doing. At last, he determined to erase a few pages back certain figures, and insert others in their places, and carry down from thence the error by a regular series of erasures and new entries. This he did so skilfully, that none but the eye of suspicion could have detected it. It was some weeks before he again ventured to repeat these acts. When he did so, he permitted the surplus cash to remain in the drawer for eight or ten days, so that if a discovery happened to be made, the balance on hand would show that it was an error. But Mr. Millard thought no more about the matter, and the dishonest clerk was permitted to prosecute his base conduct undetected. In this way month after month passed, until the defalcation rose to over a thousand dollars. Nightly Sanford attended places of public amusement, usually accompanied by a young lady, the daughter of some respectable citizen, who knew as little of the habits and character of the young man as did his employer himself. Among those with whom he had become intimate was Harriet Meadows, the daughter of a merchant possessing a high sense of honor and considerable wealth. Mr. Meadows, so soon as the young man began to visit at his house, gave him to understand by his manner that he was not welcome. This was so plainly done that there was no room for mistake in the matter. Piqued at this, Sanford determined that he would keep the daughter's company in spite of her crusty old father. Harriet was gay and thoughtless, and had been flattered by the attentions of Sanford. She met him a few times after his repulse, at balls, and hesitated not to dance with him. These meetings afforded full opportunity for the young man to push himself still farther into her good opinion, and to prevail upon her at length to meet him clandestinely, which she frequently did on Sunday afternoons, when, as has already been seen, she would ride out in his company. This kind of intimacy soon led to a declaration of love on the part of Sanford, which was fully responded to by the foolish girl. The former had much, he thought, to hope for in in a union with Miss Meadows. Her father was well off, and in a very excellent business. His fortune would be made if he could rise to the position of his son−in−law. He did not hope to do this by a fair and open offer for Harriet's hand. The character of Meadows, which was decided, precluded all hope of gaining his consent after he had once frowned upon his approaches. The only road to success was a secret marriage, and to that he was gradually inclining the mind of the daughter at the time our story opened.

It is not always that a villain remains such alone. He generally, by a kind of intuition, perceives who are like him in interiors, and he associates with these on the principle that birds of a feather flock together. He was particularly intimate with one of Larkin's clerks, a young man named Hatfield, who had no higher views of life than himself, and who was governed by no sounder principles. Hatfield found it necessary to be more guarded than Sanford, from the fact that his employer was gifted with much closer observation than was Millard. He, too, rode a fast trotting horse on Sunday, but he knew pretty well the round taken by Larkin on that day, and the hours when he attended church, and was very careful never to meet him. At some place of public resort, a few miles from the city, he would join Sanford, and together they would spend the afternoon.

On Jane Larkin, his employer's only daughter, Hatfield had for some time looked with a favourable eye. But he felt very certain that neither her father nor mother would favor his addresses. Occasionally, with her parents' knowledge, he would attend her to places of public amusement. But both himself and the young lady saw that

even this was not a thing that fully met their approbation. Hatfield would, on such occasions, ingeniously allude to this fact, and thus gather from Jane how she regarded their coldness. It was not agreeable to her, he quickly perceived. This encouraged him to push matters further.

Soon the two understood each other fully, and soon after the tacit opposition of the parents to their intimacy was a matter of conversation between them, whenever they could get an opportunity of talking together without awakening suspicion.

Harriet Meadows and Jane Larkin were particular friends, and soon became confidants. They were both quite young, and, we need not say, weak and thoughtless. Sanford and Hatfield, as the reader has seen, were also intimate. In a short time after the latter had made up their minds to secure the hands of these two young ladies, if possible, there was a mutual confession of the fact. This was followed by the putting of their heads together for the contrivance of such plans as would best lead to the effectuation of the end each had proposed to himself. It is a curious fact, that on the very Sunday afternoon on which we have seen Mr. and Mrs. Larkin conversing about the danger and impropriety of Harriet Meadows keeping company with a man like Sanford, their own daughter was actually riding out with Hatfield. In this ride they passed the residence of Mr. Meadows, who, in turn, commented upon the fact with some severity of censure towards Mr. Larkin and his wife for not looking more carefully after their only child.

"They certainly cannot know it," finally remarked Mr. Meadows.

"No, I should think not. It would be a real charity for some one just to mention it to them."

"It certainly would."

"Suppose you speak to Mr. Larkin about it," said Mrs. Meadows.

"Me? Oh no!" was the reply. "It is none of my business. I never meddle with family affairs. It is their duty to look after their daughter. If they don't, and she rides about with Tom, Dick and Harry on Sundays, they have no one to blame but themselves for the consequences."

Thus their responsibility in the affair was dismissed. It was no business of theirs.

In the mean time the two clerks were laying their plans for carrying off the young ladies, and marrying them secretly.

"Have you sounded Jane on this subject?" asked Sanford of his friend one evening, when the matter had come up for serious discussion.

"I have."

"How does she stand?"

"I think there is no doubt of her. But how is Harriet?"

"All right. That point we settled last night. She is ready to go at any time that Jane is willing to take a similar step. She would rather not go all alone."

"If she will only second me in urging the absolute necessity of the thing upon Jane, there can be no doubt of the result. And she will do that of course."

"Oh yes—all her influence can be calculated upon. But how do you think Larkin will stand affected after all is over?"

"It's hard to tell. At first he will be as mad as a March hare. But Jane is his only child, and he loves her too well to cast her off. All will settle down quietly after a few weeks' ebullition and I shall be as cosily fixed in the family as I could wish. After that, my fortune is made. Larkin is worth, to my certain knowledge, fifty or sixty thousand dollars, every cent of which will in the end come into my hands. And, besides, Larkin's son−in−law will have to be set up in business. Give me a fair chance, and I'll turn a bright penny for myself."

"How are you off for funds at this present time?"

"Low, very low. The old fellow don't pay me half a salary. I'm in debt three or four hundred dollars, and dunned almost to death whenever I am in the way of duns. All the people I owe know better than to send their bills to the store, for if they were to do so, and by thus exposing me cause me to lose my situation, they are well aware that they might have to whistle for their money."

"Can't you make a raise some how? We must both have money to carry out this matter. In the first place, we must go off a hundred or two miles and spend a week. After we return we may have to board for weeks at pretty high charges before a reconciliation can be brought about. During this time you will be out of a situation, for old Larkin won't take you back into the store until the matter is made up. You ought at least to have a couple of

hundred dollars."

"And I have n't twenty."

"Bad, very bad. But don't you think you could borrow a couple of hundred from Larkin, and pay him back after you become his son−in−law?"

"Borrow from Larkin! Goodness! He'd clear me out in less than no time, if I were to ask him to loan me even fifty dollars."

"No, but you don't understand me," remarked Sanford after a thoughtful pause. "Can 't you borrow it without his knowledge, I mean? No harm meant of course. You intend borrowing his daughter, you know, for a little while, until he consents to give her to you."

Hatfield looked into the face of his tempter with a bewildered air for some moments. He did not yet fully comprehend his drift.

"How am I to borrow without his knowing it? Figure me that out if you please," he said.

"Who keeps the cash?"

"I do."

"Ah! so far so good. You keep the cash. Very well. Now is n't it within the bounds of possibility for you to possess yourself of a couple of hundred dollars in such a way that the deficit need not appear? If you can, it will be the easiest thing in the world, after you come back, and get the handling of a little more money in your right than has heretofore been the case, to return the little loan."

"But suppose it possible for me thus to get possession of two hundred dollars, and suppose I do not get back safely after our adventure, and do not have the handling of more money in my own right—what then?"

"You'll only be supporting his daughter out of his own money—that is all."

"Humph! Quite a casuist."

"But is n't there reason in it?"

"I do n't know. I am not exactly in a state to see reasons clearly just now."

"You can see the necessity of having a couple of hundred dollars, I suppose?"

"Oh yes—as clear as mud."

"You must have that sum at least, or to proceed will be the height of folly."

"I can see that too."

"It is owing to Larkin's mean pride that you are driven to this extremity. He ought to pay for it."

"But how am I to get hold of two hundred dollars? That's the question."

"Is there ordinarily much cash on hand?"

"Yes. We deposit some days as high as ten thousand dollars; particularly at this season, when a good many merchants are in."

"The chance is fair enough. Two hundred won't be missed."

"No, not until the cash is settled, and then it will come to light."

"That does n't follow."

"I think it does."

"You may prevent it."

"How?"

"Miss a couple of tens in your additions on the debit side of the cash book. Do you understand?"

"Not clearly."

"You are dull. Change a figure in footing up your cash book, so that it will balance, notwithstanding a deficit of two hundred dollars. After you come back, this can be set right again. No one will think of adding up the back columns to see if there is any fraud."

"After Sanford ceased speaking, his friend cast his eyes to the floor, and reflected for some time. There was in his mind a powerful struggle between right and wrong. When the plan was first presented, he felt an inward shrinking from it. It involved an act of fraud, that, if found out, would blast his character. But the longer he reflected, and the more fully he looked in the face of the fact that without money he could not proceed to the consummation of his wishes, the more favorable the plan seemed.

"But," he said, lifting his eyes and drawing a long breath, "if it should be found out?"

"Larkin will not expose his son−in−law for his daughter's sake."

"True—there is something there to hope for. Well, I will think of it. I must have two hundred dollars from some source."

And he did think of it to evil purpose. He found no very great difficulty in getting Jane to consent to run away with him, especially as her particular friend, Harriet Meadows, was to accompany her on a like mad−cap expedition with Sanford.

Nothing occurred to prevent the acts proposed. By false entries, Hatfield was enabled to abstract two hundred dollars in a way that promised a perfect concealment of the fraud, although in doing it he felt much reluctance and many compunctions of conscience.

About ten days after the conversation between the young men, just given, Jane Larkin obtained her mother's consent to spend a few days with a cousin who resided some miles from the city on a road along which one of the omnibus lines passed. Harriet Meadows did not use this precaution to elude suspicion. She left her father's house at the time agreed upon, and joined young Sanford at an appointed place, where a carriage was waiting, into which Hatfield and Jane had already entered. The two couples then proceeded to the house of an alderman, who united them in marriage bonds. From thence they drove to a railroad depot, took passage for a neighboring city, and were soon gliding away, a suspicion unawakened in the minds of the young ladies' friends.

The absence of Harriet on the night following alarmed the fears and awakened the suspicions of her father and mother. Early on the next day, Mr. Meadows learned that his daughter had been seen entering the——cars in company with young Sanford. Calling upon Millard, he ascertained that Sanford had not been to the store on the previous day, and was still absent. To merge suspicion and doubt into certainty, the alderman who had married the couples was met accidentally. He testified to the fact of his having united them. Sick at heart, Mr. Meadows returned home to communicate the sad intelligence to the mother of Harriet. When he again went out, he was met by the startling rumor that a defalcation had been discovered on the part of young Sanford to a large amount. Hurrying to the store of Mr. Millard, he was shocked to find that the rumor was but, alas! too true. Already false entries in the cash book had been discovered to the amount of at least five thousand dollars. An officer, he also learned, had been despatched to——, for the purpose of arresting the dishonest clerk and bringing him back to justice.

"Quite an affair this," remarked Larkin to an acquaintance whom he met some time during the day, in a half−serious, half−indifferent tone.

"About Meadows' daughter and Sanford? Yes, and rather a melancholy affair. The worst part of it is, that the foolish young man has been embezzling the money of his employer."

"Yes, that is very bad. But Millard might have known that Sanford could not dash about and spend money as he did upon his salary alone."

"I do n't suppose he knew any thing about his habits. He is an unsuspicious man, and keeps himself quietly at home when not in his store."

"Well, I did then. I saw exactly how he was going on, and could have told him; but it wasn't any of my business."

"I do n't care so much for Millard or his clerk as I do for the foolish girl and her parents. Her happiness is gone and theirs with it."

"Ah, yes—that is the worst part. But they might have known that something of the kind would take place. They were together a good deal, and were frequently to be seen riding out on Sunday afternoons."

"This was not with the knowledge of her parents, I am sure."

"I do n't suppose it was. Still they should have looked more carefully after their child. I knew it and could have told them how things were going—but it was n't any of my business. I always keep myself clear from these matters."

Just at this moment a third person came up. He looked serious.

"Mr. Larkin," he said, "I have just heard that your daughter and Hatfield, your clerk, were married at the same time that Sanford was, and went off with that young man and his bride. Alderman——, it is said, united them."

Larkin turned instantly pale. Hatfield had been away since the morning of the day before, and his daughter was not at home, having asked the privilege of going to see a cousin who resided a few miles from the city. A call upon Alderman——confirmed the afflicting intelligence. The father returned home to communicate the news to his wife, on whom it fell with such a shock that she became quite ill.

"He might have known that something of this kind would have happened," remarked the person who had communicated the intelligence, as soon as Larkin had left. "No man who does n't wish his daughters to marry his clerks, ought to let them go to balls and concerts together, and ride out when they please on Sunday afternoons."

"Did Larkin permit this with Jane and Hatfield?"

"They were often thus together whether he permitted it or not."

"He could n't have known it."

"Perhaps not. I could have given him a hint on the subject, if I had chosen—but it was none of my business."

On the next day all the parties came home—Sanford compulsorily, in the hands of an officer; Hatfield voluntarily, and in terrible alarm. The two brides were of course included. Sanford soon after left the city, and has not since been heard of. His crime was "breach of trust!" As for Hatfield, he was received on the principle that, in such matters, the least said the soonest mended. In the course of a few months he was able to restore the two hundred dollars he had abstracted. After this was done he felt easier in mind. He did not, however, make the foolish creature he had married happy. Externally, or to the world, they seem united, but internally they are not conjoined. Too plainly is this apparent to the father and mother, who have many a heart−ache for their dearly loved child.

THE MOTHER'S PROMISE.

A LADY, handsomely dressed, was about leaving her house to make a few calls, when a little boy ran out from the nursery, and clasping one of her gloved hands in both of his, looked up into her face with a glance of winning entreaty, saying, as he did so:

"Mamma! dear mamma! Won't you buy me a picture−book, just like cousin Edie's?"

"Yes, love," was the unhesitating reply; and the lady stooped to kiss the sweet lips of her child.

"Eddy must be a good boy, and mind nurse while mamma is away," she added.

"I'll be so good," replied Eddy, with all the earnestness of a childish purpose. "You may ask nurse when you come home, if I have not been the goodest little boy that ever was."

Mrs. Herbert kissed her darling boy again, and then went forth to make her morning round of calls. Eddy returned to the nursery, strong in his purpose, to be a good boy, as he had promised.

"Such a dear little picture−book as mamma is going to bring me home," he said to nurse, as he leaned his arms against her, and looked up into her face. "Oh! won't I be so glad. It's to be just like cousin Edie's. Mamma said so; and cousin Edie's book is so beautiful. I 've wanted one ever since I was there. Is'nt mamma good?"

"Yes, Eddy," replied the nurse, "your mamma is very good; and you should love her so much, and do everything she tells you to do."

"I do love her," said the child. "Oh, I love her more than all the world; and I'm going to mind every thing she says."

Then the child went to his play, and was happy with his toys. But his thoughts were on the picture−book, and pleasantly his young imagination lingered amid its attractive pages.

"Is'nt it 'most time for mother to be home?" he asked, at the end of half an hour, coming to the side of his nurse, and gazing up into her face.

"Why no, child," replied the nurse, "not for a long while yet."

Eddy looked disappointed. But that instant the door bell rung.

"There's mamma!" exclaimed the child, clapping his hands; and before nurse could restrain him, he had bounded from the room, and his little feet were heard pattering down the stairs. Slowly he came back, after a little while, and with a look of disappointment on his sweet young face, entered the nursery, saying, as he did so:

"It was only a man with brooms to sell."

"Your mamma won't be home for a long time yet, Eddy," said his nurse, "so it is of no use for you to expect her. Go and build block houses again."

"I'm tired of block houses," replied the little boy, "and now that mamma has promised me a picture−book like cousin Edie's I can't think of anything else."

"Oh, well," said nurse, a little impatiently, "she'll be home in good time. Try and not think of the book. It won't do any good—it won't bring her home a minute sooner."

"I can't help thinking of it," persisted the child, in whom the imaginative faculty was unusually, strong for one of his age.

In a little while, however, something occurred to interest him, and a full hour elapsed before he again recurred to his mother and the expected picture book. As best she could, his nurse diverted his mind, and kept him, in a measure, occupied with what was around him. At length it was full time for Mrs. Herbert to return. Eddy had ceased to find interest in anything appertaining to the nursery. He went down into the parlor, and seating himself at the window, watched, with childish eagerness, for the form of his mother.

Strange as it may seem to the reader, Mrs. Herbert had scarcely passed into the street, ere her promise was forgotten. Not that she was indifferent to the happiness of her child—not that she was a heartless mother. Far very far from this. Purely and truly did she love this sweet boy. But, so much were her thoughts interested in other things, that she did not, at the time, comprehend the earnestness of his childish wishes; nor think of her promise as a sacred thing. The request for a picture book seemed to her but the expression of a sudden thought, that passed

from his mind as soon as uttered. And yet, she had not promised without intending to meet the wishes of her child, for she was an indulgent mother, and rarely said "No," to any request that might reasonably be gratified. She had noticed Cousin Edie's pretty book, and thought that she would, some time or other, get one like it for Eddy. The child's request but seconded this thought. There was will, therefore, in her promise. She meant to do as she had said.

But things of more interest to Mrs. Herbert, than the simple wish of a child, so fully occupied her mind from the time she left her own door, that she never again thought of the book, until she saw Eddy's dear face at the window. It was serious, and slightly impatient, as if he were wearied with watching and waiting; but the moment his eyes rested upon her form, his whole countenance brightened, as though lit up by a sunbeam. Almost as soon as Mrs. Herbert's hand touched the bell, the street door was thrown open, and the glad child stood, like a rebuking spirit, before her.

"Where's my book, mamma? Give me my book, mamma! Oh, I'm so glad you've come!"

Now, the first conviction of wrong, often has an irritating effect upon the mind, obscuring its perceptions, and leading, sometimes, to the impulsive commission of greater wrongs. It was so in the present case. The happy countenance of her child did not bring joy to the mother's heart; for she knew that with a word, she must dash to the ground all his buoyant anticipations. And she remembered, too, at the moment, how poorly he could bear disappointment.

"Eddy, dear," said Mrs. Herbert, taking her little boy by the hand, and advancing toward the parlor door with him, "Eddy, dear, let me tell you something."

Her grave tone and look caused a shiver to pass inward toward the heart of the child. He understood, but too well, that the mother, whose word he had trusted so implicitly, had been faithless to her promise.

Poor child! even this advancing shadow of a coming disappointment, darkened his young face and filled his eyes with tears.

Mrs. Herbert sat down on the nearest chair, as she entered the parlor, and drew Eddy to her side. She saw, from his sad face, that words were not required to make him aware that the promised book was not in her possession; and she knew, from former experience, that trouble was before her. Unhappily, she did not feel softened, but rather irritated, toward the child.

"Eddy," she said firmly, yet with as much tenderness as she could assume, "Eddy, you know you promised me to be such a good boy."

"And I have been good," eagerly answered the little fellow, lifting his swimming eyes to her face, "you may ask nurse if I havn't been good all the time."

"I'm sure you have," said Mrs. Herbert, touched by the manner of her child; "and yet, Eddy, I have not brought your book."

The tears, which had been ready to start, now gushed over his face, and a low cry pained the mother's ears.

"Eddy," said she, seriously, "let me tell you about it. You must listen to reason."

Reason! poor, disappointed little one! He had no ear for the comprehension of reasons.

"Now, Eddy! I can't have this!" Mrs. Herbert spoke firmly, for already the child was weeping bitterly. "Crying will do no good. I promised you the book, and you shall have it. I had no opportunity to get it this morning. Come now! you must stop at once, or I——"

Mrs. Herbert did not utter the threat which came to her lips; for her mind shrunk from the thought of punishing her child, especially as his fault was a consequence of her own actions. But, as he continued to cry on, and in a louder voice, she not only began to feel excessively annoyed, but deemed it her duty to compel a cessation of what could do no possible good, but rather harm.

"Eddy, you must stop this crying!" Firmness had changed to sternness.

The words might as well not have been spoken.

"Then you are not going to stop!" The tones were angry now; and, as Mrs. Herbert uttered them, she caught the arm of her child with a tight grip.

At this moment, the sound of the latch−key was heard in the street door. It was dinner time, and Mr. Herbert entered.

"Bless us! what's the trouble here?" the father of Eddy exclaimed, good−naturedly, as he presented himself in the parlor.

"The trouble is," said Mrs. Herbert, in a fretful voice, "that I promised to buy him a book, and forgot all about it."

"Oho! Is that all?" Mr. Herbert spoke cheerfully. "This trouble can soon be healed. Come, dear, and let us see what I can do for you."

And Mr. Herbert drew forth a small, square packet, and began untying the string, with which it was bound. Eddy ceased crying in an instant, while a rainbow light shone through his tears. Soon a book came to view. It was _the_ book. Singularly enough, Mr. Herbert had, that morning, observed it in a store, and thinking it would please his child, had bought it for him.

"Will that do?" he said, handing the book to Eddy.

What a gush of gladness came to the child's face. A moment or two he stood, like one bewildered, and then throwing his arms around his father's neck and hugging him tightly, he said, in the fullness of his heart,

"Oh! you are a dear good papa! I do love you so much!"

Ere the arms of Eddy were unclasped from his father's neck, Mrs. Herbert had left the room. When, on the ringing of the dinner bell, she joined her husband and child at the table, her countenance wore a sober aspect, and there were signs of tears about her eyes. What her thoughts had been, every true mother can better imagine than we describe. That they were salutary, may be inferred from the fact that no promise, not even the lightest, was ever afterwards made to her child, which was not righteously kept to the very letter.

THE TWO HUSBANDS.

"Jane, how _can_ you tolerate that dull, spiritless creature? I never sat by his side for five minutes, without getting sleepy."

"He does not seem so very dull to me, Cara," replied her companion.

"It is a true saying, that there never was a Jack without a Jill; but I could not have believed that my friend Jane Emory would have been willing to be the Jill to such a Jack."

A slight change was perceptible in the countenance of Jane Emory, and for a moment the color deepened on her cheek. But when she spoke in reply to her friend's remark, no indication that she felt its cutting import, was perceptible.

"I am convinced, from close observation of Walter Gray," said Jane, "that he has in his character that which should ever protect him from jest or ridicule."

"And what is that, my lady Jane?"

"Right thoughts and sound principles."

"Fiddle stick!"

These should not only be respected, but honored wherever found," said Jane, gravely.

"In a bear or a boor!" Cara responded, in a tone of irony.

"My friend Cara is ungenerous in her allusions. Surely, she will not assert that Walter Gray is a bear or a boor?"

"He is boorish enough, at any rate."

"There I differ with you, Cara. His manner is not so showy, nor his attentions to the many little forms and observances of social life, so prompt as to please the fastidious in these matters. These defects, however, are not defects of character, but of education. He has not mingled enough in society to give him confidence."

"They are defects, and are serious enough to make him quite offensive to me. Last evening, at Mrs. Clinton's party, I sat beside him for half an hour, and was really disgusted with his marked disregard of the little courtesies of social life."

"Indeed!" replied Jane, her manner becoming more serious, "and in what did these omissions consist?"

"Why, in the first place, while we were conversing,——"

"He could converse, then?" said Jane, interrupting her friend.

"O, no, I beg pardon! While we were _trying_ to converse—for among his other defects is an inability to talk to a lady on any subject of interest—I dropped my handkerchief, on purpose, of course, but he never offered to lift it for me; indeed, I doubt whether he saw it at all."

"Then, Cara, how could you expect him to pick it up for you, if he did not see it?"

"But he ought to have seen it. He should have had his eyes about him; and so should every gentleman who sits by or is near a lady. I know one that never fails."

"And pray, who is the perfect gentleman?" asked Jane smiling. "Is he one of my acquaintances?"

"Certainly he is. I mean Charles Wilton."

"He is, I must confess, different from Walter Gray," Jane remarked, drily.

"I hope he is!" said Cara, tossing her head, for she felt that something by no means complimentary was implied in the equivocal remark of her friend.

"But, seriously, Cara, I must, in turn, express regret that you allow yourself to feel interested in one like Charles Wilton. Trust me, my friend, he is unworthy of your regard."

"And pray, Miss," said Cara, warming suddenly, "what do you know of Charles Wilton, that will warrant your throwing out such insinuations against him?"

"Little beyond what I have learned by my own observation."

"And what has that taught you? I should like very much to know."

"It has taught me, Cara," replied Jane, seriously, "to estimate him very lightly indeed. From what I have seen,

I am convinced that he possesses neither fixed principles nor any decision of character. In the world, without these a man is like a ship upon the ocean, having neither helm nor compass."

"You make broad and bold charges, Jane. But I am sure you are mistaken."

"I may be. But so certain am I that I am right, that I would rather die this hour than be compelled to link my lot in life with his. Certain I am that I should make shipwreck of hope and affection."

"You deal in riddles, Jane. Speak out more plainly."

"Surely, Cara, long before this you have or ought to have discovered, that Charles Wilton exhibits far too much love of appearance for a sensible man. He dresses in the very best style and may be able to afford it; but that is not all;—he evidently esteems these external embellishments of superior importance to mental or moral endowments. He rarely fails to remark upon men not so well dressed as himself, and to refer to the defect as one sufficient to make the individual contemptible, no matter what may be the circumstances or merit of the person referred to. I have more than once noticed that Charles Wilton passes over every thing in his disgust for defect in dress."

"I do not see a matter of serious importance in that," said Cara. "His love of dress is a mere foible, that may be excused. It certainly has nothing to do with his real character."

"It is an indication of the man's true character," her friend replied. "I am sure that I want no plainer exhibition. If he was simply fond of dress, and indulged in that fondness even to the extent he now does it might indicate a mere weakness of character, in the form of an undue love of admiration. But when, to this, we see a disposition to value others, and to judge of them by their garments, then we may be sure that there is a serious defect of character. The man, Cara, believe me, who has no higher standard of estimation for other men, than the form, manner, and texture of their garments, has not the capacity rightly to value a woman or to know wherein her true merit lies. This is _one_ of the reasons why I said that I would rather die than link my lot in life with that young man."

"Well, as for me, Jane, I am sure that I would rather have a man with some spirit in him, than to be tied to such a drone as Walter Gray. Why, I should die in a week. I can't for my life, see how you can enjoy his society for a moment!"

"I should think any woman ought to be able to enjoy the company of a man of sense," Jane remarked, quietly.

"Surely, Jane, you don't pretend by that to set up Walter Gray as the superior of Charles Wilton in regard to intelligence?"

"Certainly I do, Cara."

"Why, Jane! There is no comparison, in this respect, between them. Every one knows that while Walter is dull, even to stupidity, Charles has a brilliant, well−informed mind. It is only necessary to hear each converse for an hour, to decide upon their respective merits."

"In that last sentence you have uttered the truth, Cara, but the result would depend much upon the character of the listeners. For a time, no doubt, if Charles made an effort to show off, he would eclipse the less brilliant and unobtrusive Walter. But a close and discriminating observer would soon learn to judge between sound and sense, between borrowed thoughts and truthful sentiments originating in a philosophical and ever active mind. The shallow stream runs sparkling and flashing in the sunlight, while the deeper waters lie dark and unattractive."

Cara shook her head as her friend ceased speaking, and replied, laughingly—

"You can beat me at talking, Jane—but all your philosophy and poetry can't make me think Charles Wilton less brilliant and sensible, or Walter Gray less dull and spiritless."

The two young men whose merits Jane Emory and Cara Linton had thus been discussing, had been law students for some years in the same office, and were now just admitted to practice at the bar in one of our Atlantic cities. They were friends, though altogether unlike each other. Walter Gray was modest and retiring, while Charles Wilton was a dashing, off−hand kind of a fellow, with more pretensions than merit. The mind of Walter was rather sluggish, while that of his friend was quick, and what some were disposed to esteem brilliant. The one was fond of dress and show, and effect; while the other paid less regard to these things than was really necessary to make him, with many, an agreeable companion. But the quick perceptions of the one were not equal to the patient, untiring application of the other. When admitted to practice, Wilton could make an effective, brilliant speech, and in ordinary cases, where an appeal to the feelings could influence a jury, was uniformly successful. But, where profound investigation, concise reasoning, and a laborious array of authorities were requisite, he was

no competitor for his friend Gray. He was vain of his personal appearance, as has before been indicated, and was also fond of pleasure and company. In short, he was one of those dashing young men to be met with in all professions, who look upon business as an necessary evil, to be escaped whenever a opportunity offers—whose expectations of future prosperity are always large, and who look for success, not in the roads of patient, laborious application, but by a quicker and more brilliant way. They hope to produce a sensation by their tact or talents, and thus take fortune by storm. Few, indeed we might say none, of this class succeed. Those who startle a community by rapid advances, are, in all cases, such as have, to quick perceptions and brilliant powers, added much labor. Talent is nothing without prolonged and patient application; and they who suppose the road to success lies in any other way, may discover their error too late.

The estimation in which the characters of these two young men was held, at least by two individuals, the preceding conversation has apprised the reader. Each made his impression upon a certain order of mind, and each was regarded, or lightly esteemed accordingly. Although in talents and in a right estimation of life and its true ends, the two young men were altogether dissimilar; yet were they friends, and in many respects intimate. Why they were so, we shall not stop to enquire, but proceed to introduce them more particularly to the reader.

"I suppose you are going to Mrs. Melton's this evening?" said Wilton to his friend, a few weeks after the period indicated in the opening of this story.

"I feel as if I would like to go. A social evening, now and then, I find pleasant, and I have no doubt it is useful to me."

"That is right, Walter. I am glad to see you coming out of your recluse habits. You want the polish and ease that social life will give you."

"I feel that, Wilton. But I fear I am too old now to have all the rough corners knocked off, and worn smooth."

"O, don't despair. You'll make a ladies' man after awhile, if you persevere, and become more particular in your dress. But, to change the subject, a little, tell me what you think of Cara Linton? Her father is worth a plum, and she is just the showy, brilliant woman, of which a man like me ought to be proud of."

"As you ask me, Charles, I must reply candidly. I would think her a dear bargain with all her father's money thrown in with her; and as to your other reasons for thinking of her as a wife, I consider them, to speak plainly, as I always do to you, despicable!"

"And why so, Mr. Philosopher?"

"A wife should be chosen from much higher considerations than these. What do you want with a brilliant, showy wife? You marry, or ought to marry, a companion for yourself—not a woman for the world to admire."

"You are too matter−of−fact, by half, Walter. Your common sense ideas, as you call them, will keep you grubbing in a mole hill all your life.

"I should like to see the woman _you_ would choose for a wife!"

"I wish you had a few of these common sense ideas you despise so much. I am afraid, Charles, that the time is not very distant when you will stand sadly in need of them."

"Don't trouble yourself, Walter. I'll take care of number one. Let me alone for that. But, I should like to know your serious objections to Cara? You sweep her aside with one wave of your hand, as if she were too insignificant to be thought of for a moment."

"I said that _I_ should consider her a dear bargain, and so I would—for she would not suit me at all."

"Ah, there I believe you. But come, let me hear why she would not suit you."

"Because she has no correct and common sense estimation of life and its relations. She is full of poetry and romance, and fashion, and show, and 'all that kind of thing;' none of which, without a great deal of the salt of common sense, would suit me."

"Common sense! Common sense! Common sense! That is your hobby. Verily, Walter, you are a monomaniac on the subject of common sense; but, as for me, I will leave common sense to common people. I go in for uncommon sense."

"The poorest and most unprofitable sense of all, let me tell you. And one of these days you will discover it to be so."

"It is no use for us to compare our philosophical notes, I see plainly enough," Wilton responded. "We shall never view things in the same light. You are not the man of the world you should be, Walter. Men of half your merit will eclipse you, winning opulence and distinction—while you, with your common sense notions, will be

plodding on at a snail's pace. You are behind the age, and a stranger to its powerful, onward impulses."

"And ever do I desire to remain behind the age, Wilton, if mere pretension and show be its ruling and impulsive spirit."

"The old fashioned way of attaining eminence," Charles Wilton replied, assuming an attitude and speaking out truly the thoughts that were in his mind; "by plodding on with the emmet's patience, and storing up knowledge, grain by grain, brings not the hoped for reward, now. You must startle and surprise. The brilliant meteor attracts a thousand times more attention, than the brightest star that shines in the firmament."

"You are trifling, Charles."

"Never was more in earnest in my life. I have made up my mind to succeed; to be known and envied. And to gain the position of eminence I desire, I mean to take the surest way. The world _will_ be deceived, and, therefore, they who would succeed must throw dust in people's eyes."

"Or, in other words, deceive them by pretension. Charles, let me warn you against any such unmanly, and, I must say, dishonest course. Be true to yourself and true to principle."

"I shall certainly be true to myself, Walter. For what pray do we toil over dry and musty law books in a confined office, months and years, if not to gain the power of rising in the world? I have served my dreary apprenticeship—I have learnt the art and mystery, and now for the best and most certain mode of applying it."

"But, remember your responsibility to society. Your——"

Nonsense! What do I, or what does any one else care about society? My motto is, Every one for himself, and the deuce take the hindmost. And that's the motto of the whole world."

"Not of the whole world, Charles."

"Yes, of the whole world, with, perhaps, the single, strange exception of Walter Gray. And he will be flung to the wall, and soon forgotten, I fear."

"You jest on a serious subject, Charles."

"I tell you, Walter, I am in earnest," Wilton replied with emphasis. "He that would be ahead, must get ahead in the best way possible. But I cannot linger here. It is now nearly night; and it will take me full two hours to prepare myself to meet Miss Cara Linton. I must make a captive of the dashing maiden this very evening." And so saying, he turned, and left the office.

That evening, amid a gay and fashionable assemblage at Mrs. Merton's, was to be seen the showy Charles Wilton, with his easy, and even elegant manners, attracting almost as much attention as his vain heart could desire. And the quiet, sensible Walter Gray was there also, looking upon all things with a calm, philosophic mein.

"Your friend Mr. Wilton is quite the centre of attraction for the young ladies, this evening," remarked Jane Emory, who was leaning upon the arm of Walter Gray, and listening with an interest she scarcely dared confess to herself, to his occasional remarks, that indicated a mind active with true and healthful thought.

"And he seems to enjoy it," replied Walter, with a pleasant tone and smile.

"Almost too much so, it seems to me, for a man," his companion said, though with nothing censorious in her manner. She merely expressed a sentiment without showing that it excited unkind feelings.

"Or for a woman, either," was the quick response.

"True. But if pleased with attentions, and even admiration may we not be excused?"

"O, certainly. We may all be excused for our weaknesses; still they are weaknesses, after all."

"And therefore should not be encouraged."

"Certainly not. We should be governed by some higher end than the mere love of admiration—even admiration for good qualities."

"I admit the truth of what you say, and yet, the state is one to which I have not yet attained."

Walter Gray turned a look full of tender interest upon the maiden by his side, as she ceased speaking, and said in a tone that had in it much of tenderness,

"You express, Miss Emory, but the feeling which every one has who truly desires the attainment of true excellence of character. We have not this excellence, naturally, but it is within the compass of effort. Like you, I have had to regret the weaknesses and deficiencies of my own character. But, in self−government, as in everything else, my motto is, Persevere to the end. The same motto, or the same rule of action, clothed in other words, perhaps, I trust—nay, I am sure, rules in your mind."

For a few moments Jane did not reply. She feared to utter any form of words that would mislead. At length

she said, modestly,

"I try to subdue in me what is evil, or that which seems to me to act in opposition to good principles."

Before Walter Gray, pleased with the answer, could frame in his mind a fitting reply, Charles Wilton, with Cara Linton on his arm, was thrown in front of them.

"Has Walter been edifying you with one of the Psalms of David, Miss Emory?" said Wilton, gaily. "One would think so from his solemn face, and the demure, thoughtful expression of yours."

Neither Walter nor his fair companion were what is called quick−witted; and both were so checked in their thoughts and feelings that neither could, on the moment, fitly reply.

"O, I see how it is," the gay young man continued. "He has been reading you some of his moral homilies, and you are tired to death. Well, you must bear with him, Miss Emory, he will learn better after awhile." And the young man and his thoughtless companion turned laughing away.

For a few moments the disturbed thoughts of Walter and his fair friend, trembled upon the surface of their feelings, and then all was again as tranquil as the bosom of a quiet lake.

Enough has now been said, to give a fair idea of the ends which the two young men, we have introduced, set before them upon entering life. Let us now proceed to trace the effects of these ends; effects, which, as a necessary consequence, involved others as much as themselves.

CHAPTER II.

"Well, Gray, the business is all settled," said Wilton, one day, coming into the office of the individual he addressed so familiarly.

"What business, Charles?"

"Why, I've won the rich and beautiful Miss Linton. Last night I told my story, and was referred to the old man, of course. I have just seen him, and he says I am welcome to the hand of his daughter. Now, is not that a long stride up the ladder! The most beautiful and attractive woman in the city for a wife, and an old daddy in law as rich as Croesus!"

"You are what some would call a lucky dog," said Wilton, with a smile.

"And yet there is no luck in it. 'Faint heart, they say, 'never won fair lady.' I knew half−a−dozen clever fellows who were looking to Miss Linton's hand; but while they hesitated, I stepped boldly up and carried off the prize. Let me alone, Walter. I'll work my way through the world."

"And I, too, have been doing something in that line."

"You? Why, Walter, you confound me! I never dreamed that you would have the courage to make love to a woman."

"Wiser ones than you are mistaken, sometimes."

"No doubt of it. But who is the fair lady?"

"Can you not guess?"

"Jane Emory?"

"Of course. She is the most sensible women it has yet been my fortune to meet."

"Has the best common sense, I suppose?"

"Exactly."

"You are a genius, Walter. When you die, I expect you will leave a clause in your will, to the effect that the undertaker shall be a man of good, plain, common sense. O dear! What a dull life you will lead! Darby and Joan!"

"You are still a trifler with serious matters, Charles. But time will sober you, I trust, and do it before such a change will come too late."

"How much is old Emory worth, Walter?" Wilton asked, without regarding the last remark of his friend.

"I am sure I do not know. Not a great deal, I suppose."

"You don't know?"

"No; how should I?"

"Well, you are a queer one! It is time that you did then, let me tell you."

"Why so?"

"In the name of sense, Walter, what are you going to marry his daughter for."

"Because I love her."

"Pah! I know how much of that sort of thing appertains to the business."

"Charles!"

"Don't look so utterly dumfounded, friend Walter."

"I am surprised, and I must say pained, to hear you speak thus. Surely you love the young lady you propose to marry?"

"Of course. But then I have a decent regard for her old father's wealth; and I am by no means insensible to her personal attractions. I group all that is desirable into one grand consideration—beauty, wealth, standing, mental endowments, etc.,—and take her for the whole. But for love—a mere impulse that will die of itself, if left alone,—to marry a young lady! O no,—I am not the simpleton for that!"

Walter Gray looked his friend in the face for a moment or two, but did not reply. He was pained, even shocked at his levity.

"You seem really to doubt my being in earnest?" said Wilton, after a pause.

"I would doubt, if I could, Charles. But I fear you are speaking out too truly, sentiments that I could not have

believed you capable of entertaining."

"You are too simple and unsophisticated to live in this world, my old friend Walter Gray."

"And long may I remain so," was the calm response, "if to be honest and sincere is to be simple and unsophisticated."

"Well, good morning to you, and success to your love marriage."

And so saying, Charles Wilton left the office of his friend.

A few weeks more passed away, and the two young men had, in the meantime, consummated their matrimonial engagements. The wedding of Charles Wilton and Cara Linton was a splendid affair, succeeded by parties and entertainments for five or six weeks. That of Walter Gray and Jane Emory passed off more quietly and rationally.

Three months after their wedding−day, let us look in upon the two friends and their fair partners; and first, upon Charles Wilton and his bride. The time is evening, and they are sitting alone in one of their richly furnished parlors.

"O dear!" yawned out Wilton, rising and walking backwards and forwards, "this is dull work. Is there no place where we can go and spend a pleasant evening?"

"I don't know, dear. Suppose we step over and see Pa?"

"O no. We were there two or three evenings ago. And, any how, I am in no humor for playing at draughts."

"Well, I should like to go there this evening. I want to see Ma about something."

"You can easily go to−morrow, Cara, and stay as long as you choose."

"But I should like to go to night, dear."

"Don't think of it, Cara."

"Then suppose we call in and sit an hour with the Melton's?"

"Not to−night, Cara. The old man is deaf, and talks you out of all patience about sugars and teas cotton and tobacco."

"But the girls are lively and entertaining."

"Not for me, Cara. Think again."

"Why not stay at home?"

"And pray what shall we do here?"

"I'll sing and play for you."

"I am in no humor for music to−night."

His young wife sighed, but Wilton did not notice it.

"Come, let us go over to the Grogans?" he at length said.

"I can't say that I care much about going there," his wife replied.

"Of course not. You never seem to care much about going where I wish to," said Wilton, pettishly.

His wife burst into tears, and sat sobbing for some minutes, during which time Wilton paced the room backwards and forwards, in moody silence. After a while his wife rose up and stole quietly from the room, and in a few minutes returned, dressed, to go out.

"I am ready," she said.

"Ready to go where?"

"To Mr. Grogan's, of course. You wish to go."

"I don't care about going now, as long as you are unwilling."

"Yes, but I am willing, Charles, if the visit will be pleasant to you."

"O, as to that, I don't wish to compel you to go anywhere."

"Indeed, Charles, I am willing to go," said his wife, while her voice trembled and sounded harshly. "Come, now that I am ready. I wish to go."

For a moment longer Wilton hesitated, and then took up his hat and went with her. Few were the words that passed between them as they walked along the street. Arrived at their friend's house they both suddenly changed, and were as gay, and seemed as happy, as the gayest and the happiest.

"Shall we call in upon some pleasant friends to−night or spend our evening alone?" asked Walter Gray, taking a seat upon the sofa beside his happy wife, on the same evening that the foregoing conversation and incidents occurred.

"Let it be as you wish, Walter," was the affectionate, truthful reply.

"As for me, Jane, I am always happy at home—too happy, I sometimes think."

"How, too happy?"

"Too happy to think of others, Jane. We must be careful not to become isolated and selfish in our pleasures. Our social character must not be sacrificed. If it is in our power to add to the happiness of others, it is right that we should mingle in the social circle."

"I feel the truth of what you say, Walter, and yet I find it hard to be thus unselfish. I am sure that I would a thousand times rather remain at home and read with you a pleasant book, or sing and play for you, than to spend an evening away from our pleasant home."

"I feel the same inclinations. But I am unwilling to encourage them. And yet, I am not an advocate for continual visitings. The delights of our own sweet fireside, small though the circle be, I would enjoy often. But these pleasures will be increased tenfold by our willingness to let others share them, and, also, by our joining in their home—delights and social recreations."

A pause of a few moments ensued, when Mrs. Gray said,

"Suppose, then, Walter, we call over and see how they are getting on at 'home?' Pa and Ma are lonesome, now that I am away."

"Just what I was thinking of, Jane. So get on your things, and we will join them and spend a pleasant evening."

These brief conversations will indicate to the reader how each of the young men and their wives were thus early beginning to reap the fruits of true and false principles of action. We cannot trace each on his career, step by step, during the passage of many years, though much that would interest and instruct could be gathered from their histories. The limits of a brief story like this will not permit us thus to linger. On, then, to the grand result of their lives we must pass. Let us look at the summing up of the whole matter, and see which of the young men started with the true secret of success in the world, and which of the young ladies evinced most wisdom in her choice of a husband.

CHAPTER III.

"Poor Mrs. Wilton!" remarked Mrs. Gray, now a cheerful, intelligent woman of forty, with half−a−dozen grown and half−grown up daughters, "it makes me sad whenever I see her, or think of her."

"Her husband was not kind to her, I believe, while she lived with him," said Mrs. Gray's visitor, whom she had addressed.

"It is said so. But I am sure I do not know. I never liked him, nor thought him a man of principle. I said as much as I thought prudent to discourage her from receiving his attentions. But she was a gay girl herself, and was attracted by dashing pretension, rather than by unobtrusive merit."

"It was thought at one time that Mr. Wilton would lead in the profession here. I remember when his name used frequently to get into the newspapers, coupled with high compliments on his brilliant talents."

"Yes. He flashed before the eyes of the crowd for awhile, but it was soon discovered that he had more brilliancy than substance. The loss of two or three important cases, that required solid argument and a well−digested array of facts and authorities, instead of flights of fancy and appeals to the feelings, ruined his standing at the bar. The death of his father−in−law, with an insolvent estate, immediately after, took wonderfully from the estimation in which he was held. Thrown, thus, suddenly back, and upon his own resources, he sunk at once from the point of observation, and lingered around the court−house, picking up petty cases, as a matter of necessity. Long before this, I had noticed that Mrs. Wilton had greatly changed. But now a sadder change took place—a separation from her husband. The cause of this separation I know not. I never asked her, nor to me has she ever alluded to it. But it is said that his manner towards her became insufferable, and that she sought protection and an asylum among her friends. Be the cause what it may, it is enough to make her a poor, heart−stricken creature."

"How well I remember, when their parties were the most splendid and best attended of the season."

"Yes, I well remember it too. Still, even then, gay and brilliant as Mrs. Wilton was, I never thought her happy. Indeed, seeing her often alone as I did, I could not but mark the painful contrast in her spirits. At home, when not entertaining company, she was listless or unhappy. How often have I come in upon her, and noticed her moistened eyes."

"Ah me! it must be a wrong beginning that makes so sad an ending."

The truth of the remark, as applicable in this case, struck Mrs. Gray forcibly, and she mused in thoughtful silence for a few moments.

"Have you heard the news, Judge Gray?" said a lawyer, addressing the individual he had named, about the same hour that the conversation, just noted, occurred.

"No. What is it?"

"Why, Wilton has committed a forgery."

"O no, it cannot be!" said the Judge, in tones of painful surprise.

"It is too true, I fear, Judge."

"Is the amount considerable?"

"Ten thousand dollars is the sum mentioned."

"Has he been arrested?"

"No. But the officers are hard after him. The newspapers will announce the fact to−morrow morning."

Judge Gray leaned his head upon his hand, and, with his eyes cast upon the floor, sat for some moments in painful thought.

"Poor man!" he at length said, looking up. "The end has come at last. I have long feared for him. He started wrong in the beginning."

"I hope they will catch him," remarked the individual he was addressing.

Judge Gray did not reply, but cast his eyes again upon the floor.

"He has lived by gambling these six years," continued the lawyer, "and I suppose he has committed this forgery to pay some 'debt of honor.' Well, I can't say that I am sorry to be rid of him from this bar, for he was not

a pleasant man to be forced into contact with."

"And yet he was a man of some talents," remarked the Judge, musingly.

"And when that is said all is said. Without industry, legal knowledge, or sound principles of action, what was he good for? He would do for a political stump declaimer—but, as a lawyer, in any case of moment, he was not worth a copper."

And thus saying, the lawyer turned away, and left Judge Gray to his own thoughts.

"I have unpleasant news to tell you, Jane," said Judge Gray, coming into the room where sat his wife, an hour afterwards.

"What is that, husband?" asked Mrs. Gray, looking up with a concerned countenance.

"Why, our old friend Charles Wilton has committed a forgery!"

"Poor Cara! It will break her heart," Mrs. Gray said in a sad tone.

"I do not suppose she has much affection for him, Jane."

"No, but she has a good deal of pride left—all, in fact, that sustains her. This last blow, I fear, will be too much for one who has no true strength of character."

"Would it not be well for you to call in and see her to−morrow? The papers will all announce the fact in the morning, and she may need the consolation which a true friend might be able to afford her."

"I will go, most certainly, much as my natural feelings shrink from the task. Where she is, I am sure she has no one to lean upon: for there is not one of her so−called friends, upon whom she feels herself a burden, that can or will sympathize with her truly."

"Go, then. And may mercy's errand find mercy's reward."

On the next morning all the city papers teemed with accounts of the late forgery, and blazoned Charles Wilton's name, with many opprobrious epithets before the public. Some went even so far as to allude to his wife, whom they said he had forsaken years before, and who was now, it was alleged, living in poverty, and, some hinted in disgrace and infamy.

Early in the day, Mrs. Gray repaired to the cheerless home of her early friend. She was shown to her chamber, where she found her lying insensible on the bed, with one of the newspapers in her hand, that alluded to herself in disgraceful terms.

Long and patient efforts to restore her, at length produced the desired result. But it was many days before she seemed distinctly conscious of what was passing or would converse with any degree of coherency.

"Come and spend a few weeks with me, Cara."

Mrs. Gray said to her, one day, on calling in to see her; "I am sure it will do you good."

There was a sad, but grateful expression in the pale face of Mrs. Wilton, as she looked into the eye of her old friend, but ventured no reply.

"You will come, will you not, Cara?" urged Mrs. Gray.

"My presence in your happy family would be like the shadow of an evil wing," said she bitterly.

"Our happy family, say−rather, would chase away the gloomy shadows that darken your heart. Come then, and we will give you a cheerful welcome."

"I feel much inclined, and yet I hesitate, for I ought not to throw a gloom over your household," and the tears filled her eyes, and glistened through the lids which were closed suddenly over them.

"Come, and welcome!" Mrs. Gray urged, taking her hand and gently pressing it.

That evening Mrs. Wilton spent in the pleasant family of her old friend.

Three weeks afterwards, Mrs. Gray asked of her husband, if anything had been heard of Mr. Wilton.

"Nothing," he replied. "He has escaped all pursuit thus far, and the officers, completely at fault, have returned."

"I cannot say that I am sorry, at least for the sake of his wife. She seems more cheerful since she came here. I feel sometimes as if I should like to offer her a home, for she has none, that might truly be so called."

"Act up to your kind desire, Jane, if you think it right to do so," said her husband. "Perhaps in no other home open to her could so much be done for her comfort."

The home was accordingly offered, and tearfully accepted.

"Jane," said the sad hearted woman, "I cannot tell you how much I have suffered in the last twenty years. How much from heart−sickening disappointments, and lacerated affections. High hopes and brilliant expectations that

made my weak brain giddy to think of, have all ended thus. How weak and foolish—how mad we were! But my husband was not all to blame. I was as insane in my views of life as he. We lived only for ourselves—thought and cared only for ourselves—and here is the result. How wisely and well did you choose, Jane. Where my eye saw nothing to admire, yours more skilled, perceived the virgin ore of truth. I was dazzled by show, while you looked below the surface, and saw true character, and its effect in action. How signally has each of us been rewarded!" and the heart−stricken creature bowed her head and wept.

And now, kind reader, if there be one who has followed us thus far, are you disappointed in not meeting some startling denoument, or some effective point in this narrative. I hope not. Natural results have followed, in just order, the adoption of true and false principles of action—and thus will they ever follow. Learn, then, a lesson from the history of the two young men and the maidens of their choice. Let every young man remember, that all permanent success in life depends upon the adoption of such principles of action as are founded in honesty and truth; and let every young woman take it to heart, that all her married life will be affected by the principles which her husband sets down as rules of action. Let her give no consideration to his brilliant prospect, or his brilliant mind, if sound moral principles do not govern him.

"But what became of Charles Wilton and his wife?" I hear a bright−eyed maiden asking, as she turns half impatient from my homily.

Wilton has escaped justice thus far, and his wife, growing more and more cheerful every day, is still the inmate of Judge Gray's family, and I trust will remain so until the end of her journeying here. And what is more, she is learning the secret, that there is more happiness in caring for others, than in being all absorbed in selfish consideration. Still, she is a sad wreck upon the stream of life—a warning beacon for your eyes, young lady.

VISITING AS NEIGHBORS.

"I see that the house next door has been taken," remarked Mr. Leland to his wife, as they sat alone one pleasant summer evening.

"Yes. The family moved in to−day," returned Mrs. Leland.

"Do you know their name?"

"It is Halloran."

"Halloran, Halloran," said Mr. Leland, musingly. "I wonder if it's the same family that lived in Parker Street."

"Yes, the same; and I wish they had stayed there."

"Their moving in next door need not trouble us, Jane. They are not on our list of acquaintances."

"But I shall have to call upon Mrs. Haloran; and Emma upon her grown−up daughter Mary."

"I do not see how that is to follow as a consequence of their removal into our neighborhood."

"Politeness requires us to visit them as neighbors."

"Are they really our neighbors?" asked Mr. Leland, significantly.

"Certainly they are. How strange that you should ask the question!"

"What constitutes them such? Not mere proximity, certainly. Because a person happens to live in a house near by, can that make him or her really a neighbor, and entitled to the attention and consideration due a neighbor?"

This remark caused Mrs. Leland to look thoughtful. "It ought not," she said, after sitting silent a little while, "but still, it does."

"I do not think so. A neighbor—that is, one to whom kind offices is due—ought to come with higher claims than the mere fact of living in a certain house located near by the dwelling in which we reside. If mere location is to make any one a neighbor, we have no protection against the annoyance and intrusions of persons we do not like; nay, against evil−minded persons, who would delight more in doing us injury than good. These Hallorans for instance. They move in good society; but they are not persons to our mind. I should not like to see you on terms of intimacy with Mrs. Halloran, or Jane with her daughter. In fact, the latter I should feel, did it exist, to be a calamity."

"Still they _are_ our neighbors," Mrs. Leland said. "I do not see how we can avoid calling upon them."

"Perhaps," remarked the husband, "you have not thought seriously enough on the subject.

"Who is my neighbor? is a question of importance, and ought to be answered in every mind. Something more than living in the same street, or block of houses, is evidently implied in the word neighbor. It clearly involves a reciprocity of good feelings. Mere proximity in space cannot effect this. It requires another kind of nearness—the nearness of similar affections; and these must, necessarily, be unselfish; for in selfishness there is no reciprocity. Under this view, could you consider yourself the neighbor of such a person as Mrs. Halloran?"

"No matter what the character, we should be kind to all. Every one should be our neighbor, so far as this is concerned. Do you not think so?"

"I do not, Jane."

"Should we not be kind to every one?"

"Yes, kind; but not in the acceptation of the word as you have used it. There is a false, as well as a true kindness. And it often happens that true kindness appears to be any thing but what it really is. In order to be kind to another, we are not always required to exhibit flattering attentions. These often injure where distance and reserve would do good. Besides, they too frequently give power to such as are evil−disposed—a power that is exercised injuriously to others."

"But the simple fact of my calling upon Mrs. Halloran cannot, possibly, give her the power of injuring me or any one else."

"I think differently. The fact that you have called upon her will be a reason for some others to do the same; for, you know, there are persons who never act from a distinct sense of right, but merely follow in the wake of others. Thus the influence of a selfish, censorious, evil−minded woman will be extended. So far as you are

concerned, the danger may be greater than you imagine. Is Mary Halloran, in your estimation, a fit companion for our daughter? Could she become intimate with her, and not suffer a moral deterioration?"

"I think not."

"Are you sure that a call upon Mrs. Halloran will not lead to this result?"

"No, I am not _sure_. Still, I do not apprehend any danger."

"I should be very much afraid of the experiment."

"But, do you not think, husband, that, apart from all these fears, I am bound to extend to Mrs. Halloran the courtesies due a neighbor?"

"I cannot, in the true sense of the word, consider her a neighbor; and, therefore, do not see that you owe her the courtesies to which you allude. It is the good in any one that really makes the neighbor. This good should ever be regarded. But, to show attentions, and give eminence and consideration to an evil−minded person, is to make evil, instead of good, the neighbor.—It is to give that power to evil which is ever exercised in injury to others."

Mrs. Leland's mind perceived only in a small degree the force of what her husband said.—She was not a woman who troubled herself about the characters of those who stood upon a certain level in society. Mrs. Halloran claimed her place from wealth and family connexions, and this place was rather above than below that occupied by Mrs. Leland. The temptation to call upon her was, therefore, pretty strong. It was not so much a regard for her new neighbor, as a desire to make her acquaintance, that influenced her.—Acting in opposition to her husband's judgment, in a few days she called upon Mrs. Halloran.

She found her, to use her own words, a "charming woman." The next move was for the daughter to call upon Mary Halloran. Before the week passed, these calls had been returned. In a month the two families—that is, the female members of them—had become quite intimate. This intimacy troubled Mr. Leland. He was a man of pure principles, and could tolerate no deviation from them. Deeply did he regret any association that might tend to weaken the respect for such principles with which he had sought to inspire the mind of his daughter. In them he knew lay the power that was to protect her in the world. But he could not interfere, arbitrarily, with his wife; that he would have considered more dangerous than to let her act in freedom. But he felt concerned for the consequence, and frequently urged her not to be too intimate with her new neighbor.

"Some evil, I am sure, will grow out of it," he would say, whenever allusion was in any way made to the subject of his wife's intimacy with Mrs. Halloran. "No one can touch pitch and not be defiled."

"I really must blame you," Mrs. Leland replied to a remark like this, "for your blind opposition to Mrs. Halloran. The more I see of her, the better I like her. She is a perfect lady. So kind, so affable, so—so"—

Mr. Leland shook his head.

"The mere gloss of polite society," he returned. "There is no soundness in her heart. We know that, for the tree is judged by its fruit."

"We have seen no evil fruit," said the wife.

"Others have, and we _know_ that others have.—Her conduct in the case of the Percys is notorious."

"Common report is always exaggerated."

"Though it usually has some foundation in truth. But granting all the exaggeration and false judgment that usually appertain to common report, is it not wiser to act as if common report were true, until we know it to be false?"

But it was useless for Mr. Leland to talk.—His wife was charmed with the fascinating neighbor, and would hear nothing against her. Jane, too, had become intimate with Mary Halloran, a bold−faced girl, who spent half of her time in the street, and talked of little else but beaux and dress. Jane was eighteen, and before her acquaintance with Mary, had been but little into company. Her intimacy with Mary soon put new notions into her head. She began to think more of dress, and scarcely a day passed that she did not go out with her very intimate and pleasant friend. Mrs. Leland did not like this. Much as she was pleased Mrs. Halloran, she never fancied the daughter a great deal, and would have been much better satisfied if the two young ladies had not become quite so intimate.

"Where are you going?" she said to Jane, who came down stairs dressed to go out, one morning.

"Mary and I are going to make some calls," she replied.

"You were out making calls, yesterday, with Mary, and the day before also. This is too great a waste of time, Jane. I would rather see you at home more."

"I don't know why you should wish to confine me down to the house. Mary Halloran goes and comes when

she pleases."

"Mary Halloran is in the street a great deal too much. I am far from wishing to see you imitate her example."

"But what harm is there in it, mother?"

"A great deal, Jane. It gives idle habits, and makes the mind dissatisfied with the more sober duties of life."

"I am too young for the sober duties of life," said Jane, rather pertly.

"That is, doubtless, one of your friend Mary's sentiments; and it is worthy of her."

This was true, and Jane did not deny it.

"Go now," said Mrs. Leland, with much sobriety of manner. "But remember that I disapprove of this gadding about, and object to its continuance. I should be very sorry to have your father know to what extent you are carrying it."

Jane went out and called for Mary, and the two young ladies made a few calls, and then walked the streets until dinner time; not, however, alone, but accompanied by a dashing young fellow, who had been introduced to Mary a few evenings before, and now made bold to follow up the acquaintance, encouraged by a glance from the young lady's bright, inviting eyes.

Mrs. Leland, in the mean time, felt unhappy. Her daughter was changing, and the change troubled her. The intimacy formed with Mary Halloran, it was clear, was doing her no good, but harm. By this time, too, she had noticed some things in the mother that were by no means to her taste. There was a coarseness, vulgarity and want of delicacy about her, that showed itself more and more every day, traits of character particularly offensive to Mrs. Leland, who was a woman of refined sentiments. Besides, Mrs. Halloran's conversation involved topics neither interesting nor instructing to her neighbors; and often of a decidedly objectionable kind. In fact, she liked her less and less every day, and felt her too frequently repeated visits as an annoyance; and though "Why don't you come in to see me oftener?" was repeated almost daily, she did not return more than one out of every half dozen calls she received.

"I've seen Jane in the street with that Mary Halloran no less than three times this week," said Mr. Leland, one day, "and on two of these occasions there was a beau accompanying each of the young ladies."

"She goes out too often, I know," returned Mrs. Leland seriously. "I have objected to it several times, but the girl's head seems turned with that Mary Halloran. I do wish she had never known her."

"So do I, from my heart. We knew what she was, and never should have permitted Jane to make her acquaintance, if it had been in our power to prevent it."

"It is too late now, and can't be helped."

"Too late to prevent the acquaintance, but not too late to prevent some of the evil consequences likely to grow out of such an improper intimacy, which must cease from the present time."

"It will be a difficult matter to break it off now."

"No matter how difficult it may be, it must be done. The first step toward it you will have to make, in being less intimate with the mother, whom I like less and less the oftener I meet her."

"That step, so far as I am concerned, has already been taken. I have ceased visiting Mrs. Halloran almost entirely; but she is here just as often, and sadly annoys me. I dislike her more and more every day."

"If I saw as much in any one to object to as you see in Mrs. Halloran, I would soon make visiting a thing by no means agreeable. You can easily get rid of her intrusive familiarity if you think proper."

"Yes, by offending her, and getting the ill−will of a low−minded unprincipled woman; a thing that no one wants."

"Better offend her than suffer, as we are likely to suffer, from a continuance of the acquaintance. Offend the mother, I say, and thus you get rid of the daughter."

But Mrs. Leland was not prepared for this step, yet. From having been fascinated by Mrs. Halloran, she now began to fear her.

"I should not like to have her talk of me as she talks of some people whom I think a great deal better than she is."

"Let her talk. What she says will be no scandal," returned Mr. Leland.

"Even admit that, I don't want to be on bad terms with a neighbor. If she were to remove from the neighborhood, the thing would assume a different aspect. As it is, I cannot do as I please."

"Can't you indeed? Then I think we had better move forthwith, in order that you may be free to act right.

There is one thing that I intend doing, immediately, in any event, and that is, to forbid Jane from associating any longer with Mary Halloran."

"She cannot help herself. Mary calls for her every day."

"She can help going out with her and returning her calls; and this she must do."

"I wish it could be prevented. But I am afraid of harsh measures."

"I am more afraid of the consequences to our daughter. We know not into what company this indiscreet young lady may introduce, nor how deeply she may corrupt her. Our duty to our child requires us at once to break up all intercourse with the family."

The necessity Mrs. Leland saw clearly enough, but she hesitated. Her husband, however, was not a man to hold back when his duty was before him. Neither fear nor favor governed him in his actions toward others. When satisfied that a thing ought to be done, he entered fearlessly upon the work, leaving consequences to take care of themselves.

While they were yet conversing Jane came to the door, accompanied by a young gallant. Mr. Leland happened to be sitting near the window and saw him.

"Bless my heart!" he said, in an excited voice.

"Here she is now, in company with that good−for−nothing son of Mr. Clement. She might almost as well associate with Satan himself."

"With John Clement?" asked Mrs. Leland, in surprise.

"It is too true; and the fellow had the assurance to kiss his hand to her. This matter has gone quite far enough now, in all conscience, and must be stopped, if half the world become offended."

Mrs. Leland doubted and hesitated no longer. The young man who had come home with Jane bore a notoriously bad character. It was little less than disgrace, in the eyes of virtuous people, for a lady to be seen in the street with him. Mr. and Mrs. Leland were shocked and distressed at the appearance of things; and mutually resolved that all intercourse with Mrs. Halloran and her daughter should cease. This could not be effected without giving offence; but no matter, offence would have to be given.

On that very afternoon Mrs. Halloran called in. But Mrs. Leland sent her word that she was engaged.

"Engaged, indeed!" said the lady to the servant, tossing her head. "I'm never engaged to a neighbor."

The servant repeated the words.

"Be engaged again, if she calls," said Mr. Leland, when his wife mentioned the remark of her visitor. "It will raise an effectual barrier between you."

Some serious conversation was had with Jane that day by her mother, but Jane was by no means submissive.

"Your father positively forbids any farther intimacy between you and Mary Halloran. I shall have nothing more to do with her mother."

Jane met this declaration with a passionate gush of tears, and an intimation that she was not prepared to sacrifice the friendship of Mary, whom she believed to be quite as good as herself.

"It must be done, Jane. Your father has the best of reasons for desiring it, and I hope you will not think for a moment of opposing his wishes."

"He doesn't know Mary as I know her. His prejudices have no foundation in truth," said Jane.

"No matter how pure she may be," replied the mother, "she has already introduced you into bad company. A virtuous young lady should blush to be seen in the street with the man who came home with you to−day."

"Who, Mr. Clement?" inquired Jane.

"Yes, John Clement. His bad conduct is so notorious as to exclude him entirely from the families of many persons, who have the independence to mark with just reprehension his evil deeds. It grieves me to think that you were not instinctively repelled by him the moment he approached you."

Jane's manner changed at these words. But the change did not clearly indicate to her mother what was passing in her mind. From that moment she met with silence nearly every thing that her mother said.

Early on the next day Mary Halloran called for Jane, as she was regularly in the habit of doing. Mrs. Leland purposely met her at the door, and when she inquired for Jane, asked her, with an air of cold politeness, to excuse her daughter, as she was engaged.

"Not engaged to _me_," said Mary, evincing surprise.

"You must excuse her, Miss Halloran; she is engaged this morning," returned the mother, with as much

distance and formality as at first.

Mary Halloran turned away, evidently offended.

"Ah me!" sighed Mrs. Leland, as she closed the door upon the giddy young girl; "how much trouble has my indiscreetness cost me. My husband was right, and I felt that he was right; but, in the face of his better judgment, I sought the acquaintance of this woman, and now, where the consequences are to end, heaven only knows."

"Was that Mary Halloran?" inquired Jane, who came down stairs as her mother returned along the passage.

"It was," replied the mother.

"Why did she go away?"

"I told her you were engaged."

"Why, mother!" Jane seemed greatly disturbed.

"It is your father's wish as well as mine," said Mrs. Leland calmly, "that all intercourse between you and this young lady cease, and for reasons that I have tried to explain to you. She is one whose company you cannot keep without injury."

Jane answered with tears, and retired to her chamber, where she wrote a long and tender letter to Mary, explaining her position. This letter she got the chambermaid to deliver, and bribed her to secrecy. Mary replied, in an epistle full of sympathy for her unhappy condition, and full of indignation at the harsh judgment of her parents in regard to herself. The letter contained various suggestions in regard to the manner in which Jane ought to conduct herself, none of them at all favorable to submission and concluded with warm attestations of friendship.

From that time an active correspondence took place between the young ladies, and occasional meetings at times when the parents of Jane supposed her to be at the houses of some of their friends.

As for Mrs. Halloran, she was seriously offended at the sudden repulse both she and her daughter had met, and spared no pains, and let no opportunity go unimproved, for saying hard things of Mrs. Leland and her family. Even while Mary was carrying on a tender and confidential correspondence with Jane, she was hinting disreputable things against the thoughtless girl, and doing her a serious injury.

The first intimation that the parents had of any thing being wrong, was the fact that two very estimable ladies, for whom they had a high respect, and with whose daughters Jane was on terms of intimacy, twice gave Jane the same answer that Mrs. Leland had given Mary Halloran; thus virtually saying to her that they did not wish her to visit their daughters. Both Mr. and Mrs. Leland, when Jane mentioned these occurrences, left troubled. Not long after, a large party was given by one of the ladies, but no invitations were sent to either Mr. or Mrs. Leland, or their daughter. This was felt to be an intended omission.

After long and serious reflection on the subject, Mrs. Leland felt it to be her duty, as a parent, to see this lady, and frankly ask the reason of her conduct towards Jane, as well as toward her and her husband. She felt called upon to do this, in order to ascertain if there were not some things injurious to her daughter in common report. The lady seemed embarrassed on meeting Mrs. Leland, but the latter, without any excitement, or the appearance of being in the least offended, spoke of what had occurred, and then said—

"Now, there must be a reason for this. Will you honestly tell me what it is?"

The lady seemed confused and hesitated.

"Do not fear to speak plainly, my dear madam. Tell me the whole truth. There is something wrong, and I ought to know it. Put yourself in my place, and you will not long hesitate what to do."

"It is a delicate and painful subject for me to speak of to you, Mrs. Leland."

"No matter. Speak out without disguise."

After some reflection, the lady said—

"I have daughters, and am tremblingly alive to their good. I feel it to be my duty to protect them from all associations likely to do them an injury. Am I not right in this?"

"Undoubtedly."

"There is one young man in this city whose very name should shock the ear of innocence and purity. I mean Clement."

"You cannot think worse of him than I do."

"And yet, I am told, Mrs. Leland, that your daughter may be seen on the street with him almost every day; and not only on the streeet, but at balls, concerts, and the theatre."

"Who says so?"

"I have heard it from several," replied the lady, speaking slower and more thoughtfully. "Mrs. Halloran mentioned it to the person who first told me; and, since then, I have frequently heard it spoken of."

In answer to this, Mrs. Leland related the whole history of her intercourse with Mrs. Halloran, and the cause of its interruption. She then said—

"Once, only, are we aware of our daughter's having met this young man. Since then, she has gone out but rarely, and has not been from home a single evening, unless in our company; so that the broad charge of association with Clement is unfounded, and has had its origin in a malignant spirit."

"I understand it all, now, clearly," replied the lady. "Mrs. Halloran is a woman of no principle. You have deeply offended her, and she takes this method of being revenged."

"That is the simple truth. I was urged by my husband not to call upon her when she moved in our square, but I felt it to be only right to visit her as a neighbor."

"A woman like Mrs. Halloran is not to be regarded as a neighbor," replied the lady.

"So my husband argued, but I was blind enough to think differently, and to act as I thought. Dearly enough am I paying for my folly. Where the consequences will end is more than I can tell."

"We may be able to counteract them to a certain extent," said the lady. "Understanding as I now do, clearly, your position toward Mrs. Halloran, I will be able to neutralize a great deal that she says. But I am afraid your daughter is misleading you in some things, and giving color to what is said of her."

"How so?" asked Mrs. Leland in surprise.

"Was she out yesterday?"

"Yes. She went to see her cousins in the morning."

"One of my daughters says she met her in the street, in company with the very individual of whom we are speaking."

"Impossible!"

"My daughter says she is not mistaken," returned the lady.

Mrs. Leland's distress of mind, as to this intelligence, may be imagined. On returning home, she found that Jane had gone out during her absence. She went up into her daughter's room, and found a note addressed to Jane lying upon her table. After some reflection, she felt it to be her duty to open the note, which she did. It was from Mary Halloran, and in these words:—

"MY SWEET FRIEND,—I saw Mr. Clement last night at the opera. He had a great deal to say about you, and uttered many flattering compliments on your beauty. He says that he would like to meet you to−morrow evening, and will be at the corner of Eighth and Pine streets at half past seven o'clock. Can you get away at that time, without exciting suspicion? If you can, don't fail to meet him, as he is very desirous that you should do so. I was delighted with the opera, and wished a hundred times that you were with me to enjoy it.

"Yours, forever,

"MARY."

Mrs. Leland clasped her hands together, and leaned forward upon the bureau near which she had been standing, scarcely able to sustain her own weight. It was many minutes before she could think clearly. After much reflection, she thought it best not to say anything to Jane about the note. This course was approved by Mr. Leland, who believed with his wife, that it was better that Jane should be kept in ignorance of its contents, at least until the time mentioned for her joining Clement had passed. Both the parents were deeply troubled; and bitterly did Mrs. Leland repent her folly in making the acquaintance of their new neighbor, simply because she was a neighbor according to proximity.

It was after seven o'clock when the tea bell rang that evening. Mr. and Mrs. Leland descended to the dining−room, and took their places at the table.

"Where is Jane?" asked Mrs. Leland, after they had been seated a few moments.

"She went out five or ten minutes ago," replied the waiter.

Both the mother and father started, with exclamations of surprise and alarm, from the table. Mr. Leland seized his hat and cane, and rushing from the house, ran at full speed toward the place which Clement had appointed for a meeting with his daughter. He arrived in time to see a lady hastily enter a carriage, followed by a man. The carriage drove off rapidly. A cab was passing near him at the time, to the driver of which he called in an excited voice.

"Do you see that carriage?" Mr. Leland said eagerly, as the man reined up his horse. "Keep within sight of it until it stops, and I will give you ten dollars."

"Jump in," returned the driver. "I'll keep in sight."

For nearly a quarter of an hour the wheels of the cab rattled in the ears of Mr. Leland. It then stopped, and the anxious father sprang out upon the pavement. The carriage had drawn up a little in advance, and a lady was descending from it, assisted by a man. Mr. Leland knew the form of his daughter. Ere the young lady and her attendant could cross the pavement, he had confronted them. Angry beyond the power of control, he seized the arm of Jane with one hand, and, as he drew away from her companion, knocked him down with a tremendous blow from the cane which he held in the other. Then dragging, or rather carrying, his frightened daughter to the cab, thrust her in, and, as he followed after, gave the driver the direction of his house, and ordered him to go there at the quickest speed. Jane either was, or affected to be, unconscious, when she arrived at home.

Two days after, this paragraph appeared in one of the daily papers.

"SAVED FROM THE BRINK OF RUIN.—A young man of notoriously bad character, yet connected with one of our first families, recently attempted to draw aside from virtue an innocent but thoughtless and unsuspecting girl, the daughter of a respectable citizen. He appointed a meeting with her in the street at night, and she was mad enough to join him at the hour mentioned. Fortunately it happened that the father, by some means, received intelligence of what was going on, and hurried to the place. He arrived in time to see them enter a carriage and drive off. He followed in another carriage, and when they stopped before a house, well known to be one of evil repute, he confronted them on the pavement, knocked the young villain down, and carried his daughter off home. We forbear to mention names, as it would do harm, rather than good, the young lady being innocent of any evil intent, and unsuspicious of wrong in her companion. We hope it will prove a lesson that she will never forget. She made a most fortunate escape."

When Jane Leland was shown this paragraph, she shuddered and turned pale; and the shudder went deeper, and her cheek became still paler, a few weeks later when the sad intelligence came that Mary Halloran had fallen into the same snare that had been laid for her feet; a willing victim too many believed, for she was not ignorant of Clement's real character.

By sad experience Mrs. Leland was taught the folly of any weak departure from what is clearly seen to be a right course of action; and she understood, better than she had ever done before, the oft−repeated remark of her husband that "only those whose principles and conduct we approve are to be considered, in any true sense, neighbors."

NOT AT HOME.

JONAS BEBEE has one merit, if he possesses no other, and that is, the merit of being able to make himself completely at home with all his friends, male or female, high or low, rich or poor, under any and all circumstances. His good opinion of himself leaves no room for his imagination to conceive the idea, that possibly there may be, in his character, certain peculiarities not agreeable to all. It never occurs to him, that he may chance to make a _mal apropos_ visit, nor that the prolongation of a call may be a serious annoyance; for he is so entirely satisfied with himself that he is sure every one else must feel his presence as a kind of sunshine.

Of course, such being the character of Mr. Jonas Bebee, it may readily be inferred that he is very likely to commit an occasional mistake, and blunder, though unconsciously, into the commission of acts most terribly annoying to others. His evening calls upon ladies generally produce a marked effect upon those specially selected for the favor. The character of the effect will appear in the following little scene, which we briefly sketch—

"Gentleman in the parlor," says a servant coming into a room where two or three young ladies sit sewing or reading.

"Who is he?" is the natural inquiry.

"Mr. Bebee."

"Goodness!"

"Say we are not at home, Kitty."

"No—no, Kitty, you mustn't say that," interposes one. "Tell him the ladies will be down in a little while."

Kitty accordingly retires.

"I'm not going down," says one, more self willed and independent than the rest.

You've as much right to be annoyed with him as we have," is replied to this.

"I don't care."

"I wish he'd stay away from here. Nobody wants him."

"He's after you, Aggy."

"After me!" replied Agnes. "Goodness knows I don't want him. I hate the very sight of him!"

"It's no use fretting ourselves over the annoyance, we've got to endure it," says one of the young ladies. "So, come, let's put on the best face possible."

"You can go, Cara, if you choose, but I'm in no hurry; nor will he be in any haste to go. Say to him that I'll be along in the course of half an hour."

"No, you must all make your own apologies."

In the meantime Mr. Bebee patiently awaits the arrival of the ladies, who make their appearance, one after the other, some time during the next half hour. He compliments them, asks them to sing and play, and leads the conversation until towards eleven o'clock, when he retires in the best possible humor with himself and the interesting young ladies favored with his presence. He has not even a distant suspicion of the real truth, that his visit was considered an almost unendurable infliction.

Mr. Bebee's morning calls are often more unwelcome. He walks in, as a matter of course, takes his seat in the parlor, and sends up his name by the servant. If told that the lady is not at home, a suspicion that it may not be so does not cross his mind; for he cannot imagine it possible that any one would make such an excuse in order to avoid seeing _him_. Should the lady not be willing to utter an untruth, nor feel independent enough to send word that she is engaged, an hour's waste of time, at least, must be her penalty; for Mr. Bebee's morning calls are never of shorter duration. He knows, as well as any one, that visits of politeness should be brief; but he is on such familiar terms with all his friends, that he can waive all ceremony—and he generally does so, making himself "at home," as he says, wherever he goes.

One day Mr. Jonas Bebee recollected that he had not called upon a certain Mrs. Fairview, for some weeks; and as the lady was, like most of his acquaintances, a particular friend, he felt that he was neglecting her. So he started forth to make her a call.

It was Saturday, and Mrs. Fairview, after having been, for the greater part of the morning, in the kitchen making cake, came up to the parlor to dust and re−arrange some of the articles there a little more to her liking. Her hair was in papers, and her morning wrapper not in a very elegant condition, having suffered a little during the cake−making process. It was twelve o'clock, and Mrs. Fairview was about leaving the parlor, when some one rung the bell. Gliding noiselessly to the window, she obtained a view of Mr. Bebee.

"O, dear!" she sighed, "am I to have this infliction to−day? But it's no use; I won't see him!"

By this time the servant was moving along the passage towards the door.

"Hannah!" called the lady, in a whisper, beckoning at the same time with her hand.

Hannah came into the parlor.

"Say I'm not at home, Hannah."

"Yes, ma'am," replied the girl, who proceeded on towards the street door, while Mrs. Fairview remained in the parlor.

"Is Mrs. Fairview in?" the latter heard the visitor ask.

"No, sir," replied Hannah.

"Not in?"

"No, sir. She's gone out."

By this time Mr. Bebee stood within the vestibule.

"O, well; I reckon I'll just drop in and wait awhile. No doubt she'll be home, soon."

"I don't think she will return before two o'clock," said Hannah, knowing that her mistress, looking more like a scarecrow than a genteel lady, was still in the parlor, and seeing that the visiter was disposed to pass her by and make himself a temporary occupant of the same room.

"No matter," returned the gentleman, "I'll just step in for a little while and enjoy myself by the parlor fire. It's a bitter cold day—perhaps she will be home sooner."

"O, no, sir. She told me that she would not come back until dinner−time," said the anxious Hannah, who fully appreciated the dilemma in which her mistress would find herself, should Mr. Bebee make his way into the parlor.

"It's no consequence. You can just say to her, if she does not return while I am here, that I called and made myself at home for half an hour or so." And with this, Mr. Bebee passed by the girl, and made his way towards the parlor.

In despair, Hannah ran back to her place in the kitchen, wondering what her mistress would say or do when Mr. Bebee found that she was at home—and, moreover, in such a plight!

In the meantime, Mrs. Fairview, who had been eagerly listening to what passed between Hannah and the visiter, finding that he was about invading her parlor, and seeing no way of escape, retreated into a little room, or office, built off from and communicating only with the parlor. As she entered this room and shut the door, the cold air penetrated her garments and sent a chill through her frame. There was no carpet on the floor of this little box of a place, and it contained neither sofa, chair, nor anything else to sit upon. Moreover, it had but a single door, and that one led into the parlor. Escape, therefore, was cut off, entirely; and to remain long where she was could not be done except at the risk of taking a severe cold.

Through the openings in a Venitian blind that was hung against the glass door, Mrs. Fairview saw the self−satisfied Mr. Bebee draw up the large cushioned chair before the grate, and with a book in his hand, seat himself comfortably and begin to make himself entirely "at home." The prospect was, that he would thus remain "at home," for at least the next half hour, if not longer. What was she to do? The thermometer was almost down to zero, and she was dressed for a temperature of seventy.

"I shall catch my death a cold," she sighed, as the chilly air penetrated her garments, and sent a shudder through her frame.

Comfortably, and as much at home as if he were in his own parlor, sat Mr. Bebee in front of the roaring grate, rocking himself in the great arm−chair, and enjoying a new book which he had found upon the table.

As Mrs. Fairview looked at him, and saw the complete repose and satisfaction of his manner, she began to feel in utter despair. Already her teeth were beginning to chatter, and she was shivering as if attacked by a fit of ague. Five, ten, fifteen, twenty minutes elapsed—but there sat the visiter, deeply absorbed in his book; and there stood the unfortunate lady who was "not at home," so benumbed with cold as almost to have lost the sense of bodily feeling. A certain feeling in the throat warned her that she was taking cold, and would, in all probability, suffer

from inflammation of the windpipe and chest. Five, ten, fifteen minutes more went by; but Mr. Beebe did not move from his place. He was far too comfortable to think of that.

At last after remaining in prison for nearly an hour, Mrs. Fairview, who by this time was beginning to suffer, besides excessive fatigue, from a sharp pain through her breast to her left shoulder blade, and who was painfully aware that she had taken a cold that would, in all probability, put her in bed for a week, determined to make her escape at all hazards. Mr. Beebe showed no disposition to go, and might remain for an hour longer. Throwing an apron over her head and face, she softly opened the door, and gliding past her visiter, escaped into the hall, and ran panting up stairs. Mr. Beebe raised his head at this unexpected invasion of the parlor, but on reflection concluded that the person who so suddenly appeared and disappeared was merely a servant in the family.

About an hour afterwards, finding that Mrs. Fairview did not return, Mr. Beebe left his card on the table, and departed in his usual comfortable state of mind.

Poor Mrs. Fairview paid dearly for her part in this transaction. A severe attack of inflammation of the lungs followed, which came near resulting in death. It was nearly three weeks before she was able to leave her room, and then her physician said she must not venture out before the mild weather of the opening spring.

A few days after the lady was able to go about the house again, Mr. Bebee called to congratulate her on her recovery. Two of her children were in the parlor; one eleven years old, and the other a child in her fourth year.

"O, you naughty man, you!" exclaimed the latter, the moment she saw Mr. Bebee. The oldest of the two children, who understood in a moment what her little sister meant, whispered: "H−u−s−h!—h−u−s−h! Mary!"

"What am I naughty about, my little sis?" said Mr. Bebee.

"O, because you are a naughty man! You made my mother sick, so you did! And mother says she never wants to look in your face again. You are a naughty man!"

"Mary! Mary! Hush! hush!" exclaimed the elder sister, trying to stop the child.

"Made your mother sick?" said Mr. Bebee. "How did I do that?"

"Why, you shut her up in that little room there, all in the cold, when you were here and staid so long, one day. And it made her sick—so it did."

"Shut her up in that room! what does the child mean?" said Mr. Bebee, speaking to the elder sister.

"Mary! Mary! I'm ashamed of you. Come away!" was the only response made to this.

Mr. Bebee was puzzled. He asked himself as to the meaning of this strange language. All at once, he remembered that after he had been sitting in the parlor for an hour, on the occasion referred to, some one had come out of the little room referred to by the child, and swept past him almost as quick as a flash. But it had never once occurred to him that this was the lady he had called to visit, who, according to the servant, was not at home.

"I didn't shut your mother up in that room, Mary," said he, to the child.

"O, but you did. And she got cold, and almost died."

At this the elder sister, finding that she could do nothing with little Mary, escaped from the parlor, and running up stairs, made a report to her mother of what was going on below.

"Mercy!" exclaimed the lady, in painful surprise.

"She told him that you said you never wanted to look upon his face again," said the little girl.

"She did!"

"Yes. And she is telling him a great deal more. I tried my best to make her stop, but couldn't."

"Rachel! Go down and bring that child out of the parlor!" said Mrs. Fairview, to a servant. "It is too bad! I had no idea that the little witch knew anything about it. So much for talking before children!"

"And so much for not being at home when you are," remarked a sister of Mrs. Fairview, who happened to be present.

"So much for having an acquaintance who makes himself at home in your house, whether you want him or not."

"No doubt you are both sufficiently well punished."

"I have been, I know."

The heavy jar of the street door was heard at this moment.

"He's gone, I do believe!"

And so it proved. What else little Mary said to him was never known, as the violent scolding she received when her mother got hold of her, sealed her lips on the subject, or drove all impressions relating thereto from her

memory.

Mr. Bebee never called again.

THE FATAL ERROR.

"CLINTON!" said Margaret Hubert, with a look of supreme contempt. Don't speak of him to me, Lizzy. His very name is an offence to my ears!" and the lady's whole manner became disturbed.

"He will be at the ball to−night, of course, and will renew his attentions," said the friend, in an earnest, yet quiet voice. "Now, for all your expressions of dislike, I have thought that you were really far from being indifferent to Mr. Clinton, and affected a repugnance at variance with your true feelings."

"Lizzy, you will offend me if you make use of such language. I tell you he is hateful to me," replied Miss Hubert.

"Of course, you ought to know your own state of mind best," said Lizzy Edgar. "If it is really as you say, I must confess that my observation has not been accurate. As to there being anything in Mr. Clinton to inspire an emotion of contempt, or create so strong a dislike as you express, I have yet to see it. To me he has ever appeared in the light of a gentleman."

"Then suppose you make yourself agreeable to him, Lizzy," said Miss Hubert.

"I try to make myself agreeable to every one," replied the even−minded girl. "That is a duty I owe to those with whom I associate."

"Whether you like them or not?"

"It doesn't follow, because I do not happen to like a person, that I should render myself disagreeable to him."

"I never tolerate people that I don't like," said Miss Hubert.

"We needn't associate too intimately with those who are disagreeable to us," returned her friend; "but when we are thrown together in society, the least we can do is to be civil."

"You may be able to disguise your real feelings, but I cannot. Whatever emotion passes over my mind is seen in my face and discovered in my tone of voice. All who know me see me as I am."

And yet, notwithstanding this affirmation, Margaret Hubert did not, at all times, display her real feelings. And her friend Lizzy Edgar was right in assuming that she was by no means indifferent to Mr. Clinton. The appearance of dislike was assumed as a mask, and the distance and reserve she displayed towards him were the offspring of a false pride and unwomanly self−esteem. The truth was, her heart had, almost unsought, been won. The manly bearing, personal grace and brilliant mind of Philip Clinton, had captivated her feelings and awakened an emotion of love ere she was conscious that her heart was in danger. And she had even leaned towards him instinctively, and so apparently that the young man observed it, and was attracted thereby. The moment, however, he became at all marked in his attentions, the whole manner of Margaret changed. She was then aware of the rashness she had displayed, and her pride instantly took the alarm. Reserve, dignity, and even hauteur, characterized her bearing towards Clinton; and to those who spoke of him as a lover, she replied in terms nearly similar to what she used to her friend Lizzy Edgar, on the occasion to which reference has just been made.

All this evidenced weakness of mind as well as pride. She wished to be sought before she was won—at least, that was the language she used to herself. Her lover must come, like a knight of old, and sue on bended knee for favor.

Clinton observed the marked change in her manner. Fortunately for his peace of mind, he was not so deeply in love as to be very seriously distressed. He had admired her beauty, her accomplishments, and the winning grace of her manners; and more, had felt his heart beginning to warm towards her. But the charm with which she had been invested, faded away the moment the change of which we have spoken became apparent. He was not a man of strong, ungovernable impulses; all his passions were under the control of right reason, and this gave him a clear judgment. Consequently, he was the last person in the world for an experiment such as Margaret Hubert was making. At first he thought there must be some mistake, and continued to offer the young lady polite attentions, coldly and distantly as they were received. He even went farther than his real feelings bore him out in going, and made particular advances, in order to be perfectly satisfied that there was no mistake about her dislike or repugnance.

But there was one thing which at first Clinton did not understand. It was this. Frequently, when in company where Margaret was present, he would, if he turned his eyes suddenly upon her, find that she was looking at him with an expression which told him plainly that he was not indifferent to her. This occurred so often, and was so frequently attended with evident confusion on her part, that he began to have a suspicion of the real truth, and to feel disgust at so marked an exhibition of insincerity. Besides, the thought of being experimented upon in this way, did not in the least tend to soften his feelings towards the fair one. He believed in frankness, honesty and reciprocal sincerity. He liked a truthful, ingenuous mind, and turned instinctively from all artifice, coquetry or affectation.

The game which Miss Hubert was playing had been in progress only a short time, when her friend Lizzy Edgar, who was on terms of close intimacy, spent the day with her, occupying most of the time in preparation for a fancy ball that was to come off that night. The two young ladies attired themselves with much care, each with a view to effect. Margaret looked particularly to the assumption of a certain dignity, and her costume for the evening had been chosen with that end in view. A ruff, and her grand−mother's rich silk brocade, did give to her tall person all the dignity she could have desired.

At the proper time the father of Miss Hubert accompanied the young ladies to the ball, preparations for which had for some time been in progress. As soon almost as Margaret entered the room, her eyes began to wander about in search of Mr. Clinton. It was not long before she discovered him—nor long before his eyes rested upon and recognized her stately figure.

"If she be playing a part, as I more than half suspect," said the young man to himself, "her performance will end to−night, so far as I am concerned."

And with the remark, he moved towards that part of the room where the two young ladies were standing. Lizzy returned his salutations with a frank and easy grace, but Margaret drew herself up coldly, and replied to his remarks with brief formality. Clinton remained with them only long enough to pass a few compliments, and then moved away and mingled with the crowd in another part of the large saloon, where the gay company were assembled. During the next hour, he took occasion now and then to search out Margaret in the crowd, and more than once he found that her eyes were upon him.

"Once more," he said, crossing the room and going up to where she was leaning upon the arm of an acquaintance.

"May I have the pleasure of dancing with you in the next set?"

"Thank you, sir," replied Margaret, with unbending dignity; "I am already engaged."

Clinton bowed and turned away. The fate of the maiden was sealed. She had carried her experiment too far. As the young man moved across the room, he saw Lizzy Edgar sitting alone, her face lit up with interest as she noted the various costumes, and observed the ever−forming and dissolving tableaux that filled the saloon, and presented to the eye a living kaleidoscope.

"Alone," he said, pausing before the warm−hearted, even tempered girl.

"One cannot be alone here," she replied, with a sweet smile irradiating her countenance. "What a fairy scene it is," she added, as her eyes wandered from the face of Clinton and again fell upon the brilliant groups around them.

"Have you danced this evening?" asked Clinton.

"In one set," answered Lizzy.

"Are you engaged for the next in which you may feel disposed to take the floor?"

"No, sir."

"Then may I claim you for my partner?"

"If it is your pleasure to do so," replied Lizzy, smiling.

In a cotillion formed soon afterward in that part of the room, were Margaret Hubert and her sweet friend Lizzy Edgar. Margaret had a warmer color on her cheeks than usual, and her dignity towered up into an air of haughtiness, all of which Clinton observed. Its effect was to make his heart cold towards her, instead of awakening an ardent desire to win a proud and distant beauty.

In vain did Margaret look for the young man to press forward, the moment the cotillion was dissolved, and claim her for the next. He lingered by the side of Miss Edgar, more charmed with her than he had ever been, until some one else came and engaged the hand of Miss Hubert. The disappointed and unhappy girl now unbent herself from the cold dignity that had marked her bearing since her entrance into the ball−room, and sought to win him to

her side by the flashing brilliancy of her manners; but her efforts were unavailing. Clinton had felt the sweeter, purer, stronger attractions of one free from all artifice; and when he left her side, he had no wish to pass to that of one whose coldness had repelled, and whose haughtiness had insulted him.

On the next day, when Lizzy called upon her friend, she found her in a very unhappy state of mind. As to the ball and the people who attended, she was exceedingly captious in all her remarks. When Clinton was mentioned, she spoke of him with a sneer. Lizzy hardly knew how to take her. Why the young man should be so offensive, she was at a loss to imagine, and honestly came to the conclusion that she had been mistaken in her previous supposition that Margaret really felt an interest in him.

A few evenings only elapsed before Clinton called upon Miss Edgar, and from that time visited her regularly. An offer of marriage was the final result. This offer Lizzy accepted.

The five or six months that elapsed from the time Clinton became particular in his attentions to Miss Edgar, until he formally declared himself a lover, passed with Margaret Herbert in one long−continued and wild struggle with her feelings. Conscious of her error, and madly conscious, because conviction had come too late, she wrestled vigorously, but in vain, with a passion that, but for her own folly, would have met a free and full return. Lizzy spoke to her of Clinton's marked attentions, but did not know how, like heavy and painful strokes, every word she uttered fell upon her heart. She saw that Margaret was far from being happy, and often tenderly urged her to tell the cause, but little dreamed of the real nature of her sufferings.

At last Lizzy told her, with a glowing cheek, that Clinton had owned his love for her, and claimed her hand in marriage. For some moments after this communication was made, Margaret could offer no reply. Her heart trembled faintly in her bosom and almost ceased to beat; but she rallied herself, and concealed what she felt under warm congratulations. Lizzy was deceived, though in her friend's manner there was something that she could not fully comprehend.

"You must be my bridesmaid," said the happy girl, a month or two afterwards.

"Why not choose some one else?" asked Margaret.

"Because I love you better than any friend I have," replied Lizzy, putting an arm around the neck of Margaret and kissing her.

"No, no; I cannot—I cannot!" was the unexpressed thought of Margaret—while something like a shudder went over her. But the eyes of her friend did not penetrate the sad secret of her heart.

"Come, dear, say yes. Why do you hesitate? I would hardly believe myself married if you were not by my side when the nuptial pledge was given."

"It shall be as you wish," replied Margaret.

"Perhaps you misunderstood me," said Lizzy, playfully; "I was not speaking of my funeral, but of my wedding."

This sportive sally gave Margaret an opportunity to recover herself, which she did promptly; and never once, from that time until the wedding day of her friend arrived, did she by look or word betray what was in her heart.

Intense was the struggle that went on in the mind of Margaret Hubert. But it was of no avail; she loved Clinton with a wild intensity that was only the more fervid from its hopelessness. But pride and a determined will concealed what neither could destroy.

At last the wedding night of Lizzy Edgar arrived, and a large company assembled to witness the holy rite that was to be performed, and to celebrate the occasion with appropriate festivities. Margaret, when the morning of that day broke coldly and drearily upon her, felt so sad at heart that she wept, and, weeping, wished that she could die. There had been full time for reflection since, by her own acts, she had repulsed one in whom her heart felt a deep interest, and repulsed him with such imprudent force that he never returned to her again. Suffering had chastened her spirit, although it could not still the throbbings of pain. As the time approached when she must stand beside her friend and listen to vows of perpetual love that she would have given all the world, were it in her possession, to hear as her own, she felt that she was about entering upon a trial for which her strength would be little more than adequate.

But there was no retreat now. The ordeal had to be passed through. At last the time of trial came, and she descended with her friend, and stood up with her before the minister of God, who was to say the fitting words and receive the solemn vows required in the marriage covenant. From the time Margaret took her place on the floor, she felt her power over herself failing. Most earnestly did she struggle for calmness and self−control, but the very

fear that inspired this struggle made it ineffectual. When the minister in a deeply impressive voice, said, "I pronounce you husband and wife," her eyes grew dim, and her limbs trembled and failed; she sunk forward, and was only kept from falling by the arm of the minister, which was extended in time to save her.

Twenty years have passed since that unhappy evening, and Margaret Hubert is yet unmarried. It was long before she could quench the fire that had burned so fiercely in her heart. When it did go out, the desolate hearth it left remained ever after cold and dark.

FOLLOWING THE FASHIONS.

"WHAT is this?" asked Henry Grove of his sister Mary, lifting, as he spoke, a print from the centre−table.

"A fashion plate," was the quiet reply.

"A fashion plate? What in the name of wonder, are you doing with a fashion plate?"

"To see what the fashions are."

"And what then?"

"To follow them, of course."

"Mary, is it possible you are so weak? I thought better of my sister."

"Explain yourself, Mr. Censor," replied Mary with an arch look, and a manner perfectly self−possessed.

"There is nothing I despise so much as a heartless woman of fashion."

"Such an individual is certainly, not much to be admired, Henry. But there is a vast difference you must recollect, between a lady who regards the prevailing mode of dress and a _heartless_ woman, be she attired in the latest style, or in the costume of the times of good queen Bess. A fashionably dressed woman need not, of necessity, be heartless."

"O no, of course not; nor did I mean to say so. But it is very certain, to my mind, that any one who follows the fashions cannot be very sound in the head. And where there is not much head, it seems to me there is never a superabundance of heart."

"Quite a philosopher!"

"You needn't try to beat me off by ridicule, Mary. I am in earnest."

"What about?"

"In condemning this blind slavery to fashion."

"You follow the fashions."

"No, Mary, I do not."

"Your looks very much belie you, then."

"Mary!"

"Nonsense! Don't look so grave. What I say is true. You follow the fashion as much as I do."

"I am sure I never examined a plate of fashions in my life."

"If you have not, your tailor has for you, many a time."

"I don't believe a word of it. I don't have my clothes cut in the height of the fashion. They are made plain and comfortable. There is nothing about them that is put on merely because it is fashionable."

"I beg your pardon, sir."

"It is a fact."

"Why do you have your lappels made to roll three button−holes instead of two. There's father's old coat, made, I don't know when, that roll but two."

"Because, I suppose, its now the fash—"

"Ah, exactly! Didn't I get you there nicely?"

"No, but Mary, that's the tailor's business, not mine."

"Of course,—you trust to him to make you clothes according to the fashion, while I choose to see if the fashions are just such as suits my stature, shape, and complexion, that I may adopt them fullly, or deviate from them in a just and rational manner. So there is this difference between us; you follow the fashions blindly, and I with judgment and discrimination!"

"Indeed, Mary, you are too bad."

"Do I speak anything but the truth?"

"I should be very sorry, indeed, if your deductions were true in regard to my following the fashions so blindly, if indeed at all."

"But don't you follow them?"

"I never think about them."

"If you don't, somehow or other, you manage to be always about even with the prevailing modes. I don't see any difference between your dress and that of other young men."

"I don't care a fig for the fashions, Mary!" rejoined Henry, speaking with some warmth.

"So you say."

"And so I mean."

"Then why do you wear fashionable clothes?"

"I don't wear fashionable clothes—that is—I——"

"You have figured silk or cut velvet buttons, on your coat, I believe. Let me see? Yes. Now, lasting buttons are more durable, and I remember very well when you wore them. But they are out of fashion! And here is your collar turned down over your black satin stock, (where, by the by, have all the white cravats gone, that were a few years ago so fashionable?) as smooth as a puritan's! Don't you remember how much trouble you used to have, sometimes, to get your collar to stand up just so? Ah, brother, you are an incorrigible follower of the fashions!"

"But, Mary, it is a great deal less trouble to turn the collar over the stock."

"I know it is, now that it is fashionable to do so."

"It is, though, in fact."

"Really?"

"Yes, really."

"But when it was fashionable to have the collar standing, you were very willing to take the trouble."

"You would not have me affect singularity, sister?"

"Me? No, indeed! I would have you continue to follow the fashions as you are now doing. I would have you dress like other people. And there is one other thing that I would like to see in you."

"What is that."

"I would like to see you willing to allow me the same privilege."

"You have managed your case so ingeniously, Mary," her brother now said, "as to have beaten me in argument, though I am very sure that I am right, and you in error, in regard to the general principle. I hold it to be morally wrong to follow the fashions. They are unreasonable and arbitrary in their requirements, and it is a species of miserable folly, to be led about by them. I have conversed a good deal with old aunt Abigail on the subject, and she perfectly agrees with me. Her opinions, you can not, of course, treat with indifference?"

"No, not my aunt's. But for all that, I do not think that either she or uncle Absalom is perfectly orthodox on all matters."

"I think that they can both prove to you beyond a doubt that it is a most egregious folly to be ever changing with the fashions."

"And I think that I can prove to them that they are not at all uninfluenced by the fickle goddess."

"Do so, and I will give up the point. Do so and I will avow myself an advocate of fashion."

"As you are now in fact. But I accept your challenge, even though the odds of age and numbers are against me. I am very much mistaken, indeed, if I cannot maintain my side of the argument, at least to my own satisfaction."

"You may do that probably; but certainly not to ours."

"We will see," was the laughing reply.

It was a few evenings after, that Henry Grove and his sister called in to see uncle Absalom and aunt Abigail, who were of the old school, and rather ultra−puritanical in their habits and notions. Mary could not but feel, as she came into their presence, that it would be rowing against wind and tide to maintain her point with them—confirmed as they were in their own views of things, and with the respect due to age to give weight to their opinions. Nevertheless, she determined resolutely to maintain her own side of the question, and to use all the weapons, offensive and defensive, that came to her hand. She was a light−hearted girl, with a high flow of spirits, and a quick and discriminating mind. All these were in her favor. The contest was not long delayed, for Henry, feeling that he had powerful auxiliaries on his side, was eager to see his own positions triumph, as he was sure that they must. The welcome words that greeted their entrance had not long been said, before he asked, turning to his aunt,—

"What do you think I found on Mary's table, the other day, Aunt Abigail?"

"I don't know, Henry. What was it?"

"You will be surprised to hear,—a fashion plate! And that is not all. By her own confession, she was studying it in order to conform to the prevailing style of dress. Hadn't you a better opinion of her?"

"I certainly had," was aunt Abigail's half smiling, half grave reply.

"Why, what harm is there in following the fashions, aunt?" Mary asked.

"A great deal, my dear. It is following after the vanities of this life. The apostle tells us not to be conformed to this world."

"I know he does; but what has that to do with the fashions? He doesn't say that you shall not wear fashionable garments; at least I never saw the passage."

"But that is clearly what he means, Mary."

"I doubt it. Let us hear what he further says; perhaps that will guide us to a truer meaning?"

"He says: 'But be ye transformed by the renewing of your minds.' That elucidates and gives force to what goes before."

"So I think, clearly upsetting your position. The apostle evidently has reference to a deeper work than mere _external_ non−conformity in regard to the cut of the coat, or the fashion of the dress. Be ye not conformed to this world in its selfish, principles and maxims—be ye not as the world, lovers of self more than lovers of God—but be ye transformed by the renewing of your minds. That is the way I understand him."

"Then you understand him wrong, Mary," uncle Absalom spoke up. "If he had meant that, he would have said it in plain terms."

"And so he has, it seems to me. But I am not disposed to excuse my adherence to fashion upon any passage that allows of two interpretations. I argue for it upon rational grounds."

"Fashion and rationality! The idea is absurd, Mary!" said uncle Absalom, with warmth. "They are antipodes."

"Not by any means, uncle, and I think I can make it plain to you."

Uncle Absalom shook his head, and aunt Abigail fidgeted in her chair.

"You remember the celebrated John Wesley—the founder of that once unfashionable people, the Methodists?" Mary asked.

"O, yes."

"What would you think if I proved to you that he was an advocate for fashion upon rational principles?"

"You can't do it."

"I can. On one occasion, it is related of him, that he called upon a tailor to make him a coat. 'How will you have it made?' asked the tailor. 'O, make it like other people's,' was the reply. 'Will you have the sleeves in the new fashion?' 'I don't know, what is it?' 'They have been made very tight, you know, for some time,' the tailor said, 'but the newest fashion is loose sleeves.' 'Loose sleeves, ah? Well, they will be a great deal more comfortable than these. Make mine loose.' What do you think of that, uncle? Do you see no rationality there?"

"Yes, but Mary," replied aunt Abigail, "fashion and comfort hardly ever go together."

"There you are mistaken, aunt. Most fashionable dress−makers aim at producing garments comfortable to the wearers; and those fashions which are most comfortable, are most readily adopted by the largest numbers."

"You certainly do not pretend to say, Mary," Henry interposed, "that all changes in fashions are improvements in comfort?"

"O no, certainly not. Many, nay, most of the changes are unimportant in that respect."

"And are the inventions and whims of fashion makers," added aunt Abigail with warmth.

"No doubt of it," Mary readily admitted.

"And you are such a weak, foolish girl, as to adopt, eagerly, every trifling variation in fashion?" continued aunt Abigail.

"No, not eagerly, aunt."

"But at all?"

"I adopt a great many, certainly, for no other reason than because they are fashionable."

"For shame, Mary, to make such an admission! I really thought better of you."

"But don't you follow the fashions, aunt?"

"Why Mary," exclaimed both uncle Absalom and her brother, at once.

"Me follow the fashions, Mary?" broke in aunt Abigail, as soon as she could recover her breath, for the

question struck her almost speechless. "Me follow the fashions? Why, what can the girl mean?"

"I asked the question," said Mary. "And if you can't answer it, I can."

"And how will you answer it, pray?"

"In the affirmative, of course."

"You are trifling, now, Mary," said uncle Absalom, gravely.

"Indeed I am not, uncle. I can prove to her satisfaction and yours, too, that aunt Abigail is almost as much a follower of the fashions as I am."

"For shame, child!"

"I can though, uncle; so prepare yourself to be convinced. Did you never see aunt wear a different shaped cap from the one she now has on?"

"O yes, I suppose so. I don't take much notice of such things. But I believe she has changed the pattern of her cap a good many times."

"And what if I have, pray?" asked aunt Abigail, fidgeting uneasily.

"O, nothing, only that in doing so, you were following some new fashion," replied Mary.

"It is no such thing!" said aunt Abigail.

"I can prove it."

"You can't."

"Yes I can, and I will. Don't you remember when the high crowns were worn?"

"Of course I do."

"And you wore them, of course."

"Well, suppose I did?"

"And then came the close, low−crowned cap. I remember the very time you adopted that fashion, and thought it so much more becoming than the great tower of lace on the back part of the head."

"And so it was."

"But why didn't you think so before," asked Mary, looking archly into the face of her aunt.

"Why—because−because—"

"O, I can tell you, so you needn't search all over the world for a reason. It was because the high crowns were fashionable. Come out plain and aboveboard and say so."

"Indeed, I won't say any such thing."

"Then what was the reason?"

"Every body wore them, and their unsightly appearance had not been made apparent by contrast."

"Exactly! They were fashionable. But when a new fashion laughed them out of countenance, you cast them aside, as I do an old fashion for a new one. Then came the quilled border all around. Do you remember that change? and how, in a little while after, the plain piece of lace over your forehead disappeared? Why was that, aunt Abigail? Was there no regard for fashion there? And now, at this very time your cap is one that exhibits the latest and neatest style for old ladies' caps. I could go on and prove to your satisfaction, or at least to my own, that you have followed the fashion almost as steadily as I have. But I have sufficiently made out my case. Don't you think so, Henry?"

Thus appealed to, her brother, who had been surprised at the turn the conversation had taken, not expecting to see Mary carry the war home so directly as she had done, hardly knew how to reply. He, however, gave a reluctant

"Yes."

"But there is some sense in your aunt's adoption of fashion," said uncle Absalom.

"Though not much, it would seem in yours, if you estimate fashion by use," retorted Mary.

"What does the girl mean?" asked aunt Abigail in surprise.

"Of what use, uncle, are those two buttons on the back of your coat?"

"I am sure I don't know."

"Then why do you wear them if you don't know their use, unless it be that you wish to be in the fashion? Then there are two more at the bottom of the skirt, half hid, half seen, as if they were ashamed to be found so much out of their place. Then, can you enlighten me as to the use of these two pieces of cloth here, called, I believe, flaps?"

"To give strength to that part of the coat, I presume."

"And yet it is only a year or two since it was the fashion to have no flaps at all. I do not remember ever to have seen a coat torn there, do you? It is no use, uncle—you might as well be out of the world as out of the fashion. And old people feel this as well as young. They have their fashions, and we have ours, and they are as much the votaries of their peculiar modes as we are of our. The only difference is, that, as our states of mind change more rapidly, there is a corresponding and more rapid change in our fashions. You change as well as we do—but slower."

"How could you talk to uncle Absalom and aunt Abigail as you did?" said Henry Grove to his sister, as they walked slowly home together.

"Didn't I make out my point? Didn't I prove that they too were votaries of the fickle goddess?"

"I think you did, in a measure."

"And in a good measure too. So give up your point, as you promised, and confess yourself an advocate of fashion."

"I don't see clearly how I can do that, notwithstanding all that has passed to−night; for I do not rationally perceive the use of all these changes in dress."

"I am not certain that I can enlighten you fully on the subject; but think that I may, perhaps in a degree, if you will allow my views their proper weight in your mind."

"I will try to do so; but shall not promise to be convinced."

"No matter. Convinced or not convinced you will still be carried along by the current. As to the primary cause of the change in fashion it strikes me that it is one of the visible effects of that process of change ever going on in the human mind. The fashion of dress that prevails may not be the true exponent of the internal and invisible states, because they must necessarily be modified in various ways by the interests and false tastes of such individuals as promulgate them. Still, this does not affect the primary cause."

"Granting your position to be true, Mary, which I am not fully prepared to admit or deny—why should we blindly follow these fashions?"

"We need not _blindly_. For my part, I am sure that I do not blindly follow them."

"You do when you adopt a fashion without thinking it becoming."

"That I never do."

"But, surely, you do not pretend to say that all fashions are becoming?"

"All that prevail to any extent, appear so, during the time of their prevalence, unless they involve an improper exposure of the person, or are injurious to health."

"That is singular."

"But is it not true."

"Perhaps it is. But how do you account for it?"

"On the principle that there are both external and internal causes at work, modifying the mind's perceptions of the appropriate and beautiful."

"Mostly external, I should think, such as a desire to be in the fashion, etc."

"That feeling has its influence no doubt, and operates very strongly."

"But is it a right feeling?"

"It is right or wrong, according to the end in view. If fashion be followed from no higher view than a selfish love of being admired, then the feeling is wrong."

"Can we follow fashion with any other end?"

"Answer the question yourself. You follow the fashions."

"I think but little about them, Mary."

"And yet you dress very much like people who do."

"That may be so. The reason is, I do not wish to be singular."

"Why?"

"For this reason. A man who affects any singularity of dress or manners, loses his true influence in society. People begin to think that there must be within, a mind not truly balanced and therefore do not suffer his opinions, no matter how sound, to have their true weight."

"A very strong and just argument why we should adopt prevailing usages and fashions, if not immoral or injurious to health. They are the badges by which we are known—diplomas which give to our opinions their

legitimate value. I could present this subject in many other points of view. But it would be of little avail, if you are determined not to be convinced."

"I am not so determined, Mary. What you have already said, greatly modifies my view of the subject. I shall, at least, not ridicule your adherence to fashion, if I do not give much thought to it myself."

"I will present one more view. A right attention to dress looks to the development of that which is appropriate and beautiful to the eye. This is a universal benefit. For no one can look upon a truly beautiful object in nature or art without having his mind correspondingly elevated and impressed with beautiful images, and these do not pass away like spectrums, but remain ever after more or less distinct, bearing with them an elevating influence upon the whole character. Changes in fashion, so far as they present new and beautiful forms, new arrangements, and new and appropriate combination of colors, are the dictates of a true taste, and so far do they tend to benefit society."

"But fashion is not always so directed by true taste."

"A just remark. And likewise a reason why all who have a right appreciation of the truly beautiful should give some attention to the prevailing fashion in dress, and endeavor to correct errors, and develop the true and the beautiful here as in other branches of art."

A DOLLAR ON THE CONSCIENCE.

"FIFTY−FIVE cents a yard, I believe you said?" The customer was opening her purse.

Now fifty cents a yard was the price of the goods, and so Mr. Levering had informed the lady. She misunderstood him, however.

In the community, Mr. Levering had the reputation of being a conscientious, high−minded man. He knew that he was thus estimated, and self−complacently appropriated the good opinion as clearly his due.

It came instantly to the lip of Mr. Levering to say, "Yes, fifty−five." The love of gain was strong in his mind, and ever ready to accede to new plans for adding dollar to dollar. But, ere the words were uttered, a disturbing perception of something wrong restrained him.

"I wish twenty yards," said the customer taking it for granted that fifty−five cents was the price of the goods.

Mr. Levering was still silent; though he commenced promptly to measure off the goods.

"Not dear at that price," remarked the lady.

"I think not," said the storekeeper. "I bought the case of goods from which this piece was taken very low."

"Twenty yards at fifty−five cents! Just eleven dollars." The customer opened her purse as she thus spoke, and counted out the sum in glittering gold dollars. "That is right, I believe," and she pushed the money towards Mr. Levering, who, with a kind of automatic movement of his hand, drew forward the coin and swept it into his till.

"Send the bundle to No. 300 Argyle Street," said the lady, with a bland smile, as she turned from the counter, and the half−bewildered store−keeper.

"Stay, madam! there is a slight mistake!" The words were in Mr. Levering's thoughts, and on the point of gaining utterance, but he had not the courage to speak. He had gained a dollar in the transaction beyond his due, and already it was lying heavily on his conscience. Willingly would he have thrown it off; but when about to do so, the quick suggestion came, that, in acknowledging to the lady the fact of her having paid five cents a yard too much, he might falter in his explanation, and thus betray his attempt to do her wrong. And so he kept silence, and let her depart beyond recall.

Any thing gained at the price of virtuous self−respect is acquired at too large a cost. A single dollar on the conscience may press so heavily as to bear down a man's spirits, and rob him of all the delights of life. It was so in the present case. Vain was it that Mr. Levering sought self−justification. Argue the matter as he would, he found it impossible to escape the smarting conviction that he had unjustly exacted a dollar from one of his customers. Many times through the day he found himself in a musing, abstracted state, and on rousing himself therefrom, became conscious, in his external thought, that it was the dollar by which he was troubled.

"I'm very foolish," said he, mentally, as he walked homeward, after closing his store for the evening. "Very foolish to worry myself about a trifle like this. The goods were cheap enough at fifty−five, and she is quite as well contented with her bargain as if she had paid only fifty."

But it would not do. The dollar was on his conscience, and he sought in vain to remove it by efforts of this kind.

Mr. Levering had a wife and three pleasant children. They were the sunlight of his home. When the business of the day was over, he usually returned to his own fireside with buoyant feeling. It was not so on this occasion. There was a pressure on his bosom—a sense of discomfort—a want of self−satisfaction. The kiss of his wife, and the clinging arms of his children, as they were twined around his neck, did not bring the old delight.

"What is the matter with you this evening, dear? Are you not well?" inquired Mrs. Levering, breaking in upon the thoughtful mood of her husband, as he sat in unwonted silence.

I'm perfectly well," he replied, rousing himself, and forcing a smile.

"You look sober."

"Do I?" Another forced smile.

"Something troubles you, I'm afraid."

"O no; it's all in your imagination."

"Are you sick, papa?" now asks a bright little fellow, clambering upon his knee.

"Why no, love, I'm not sick. Why do you think so?"

"Because you don't play horses with me."

"Oh dear! Is that the ground of your suspicion?" replied the father, laughing. "Come! we'll soon scatter them to the winds."

And Mr. Levering commenced a game of romps with the children. But he tired long before they grew weary, nor did he, from the beginning, enter into this sport with his usual zest.

"Does your head ache, pa?" inquired the child who had previously suggested sickness, as he saw his father leave the floor, and seat himself, with some gravity of manner, on a chair.

"Not this evening, dear," answered Mr. Levering.

"Why don't you play longer, then?"

"Oh pa!" exclaimed another child, speaking from a sudden thought, "you don't know what a time we had at school to−day."

"Ah! what was the cause?"

"Oh! you'll hardly believe it. But Eddy Jones stole a dollar from Maggy Enfield!"

"Stole a dollar!" ejaculated Mr. Levering. His voice was husky, and he felt a cold thrill passing along every nerve.

"Yes, pa! he stole a dollar! Oh, wasn't it dreadful?"

"Perhaps he was wrongly accused," suggested Mrs. Levering.

"Emma Wilson saw him do it, and they found the dollar in his pocket. Oh! he looked so pale, and it made me almost sick to hear him cry as if his heart would break."

"What did they do with him?" asked Mrs. Levering.

"They sent for his mother, and she took him home. Wasn't it dreadful?"

"It must have been dreadful for his poor mother," Mr. Levering ventured to remark.

"But more dreadful for him," said Mrs. Levering. "Will he ever forget his crime and disgrace? Will the pressure of that dollar on his conscience ever be removed? He may never do so wicked an act again; but the memory of this wrong deed cannot be wholly effaced from his mind."

How rebukingly fell all these words on the ears of Mr. Levering. Ah! what would he not then have given to have the weight of that dollar removed? Its pressure was so great as almost to suffocate him. It was all in vain that he tried to be cheerful, or to take an interest in what was passing immediately around him. The innocent prattle of his children had lost its wonted charm, and there seemed an accusing expression in the eye of his wife, as, in the concern his changed aspect had occasioned, she looked soberly upon him. Unable to bear all this, Mr. Levering went out, something unusual for him, and walked the streets for an hour. On his return, the children were in bed, and he had regained sufficient self−control to meet his wife with a less disturbed appearance.

On the next morning, Mr. Levering felt something better. Sleep had left his mind more tranquil. Still there was a pressure on his feelings, which thought could trace to that unlucky dollar. About an hour after going to his store, Mr. Levering saw his customer of the day previous enter, and move along towards the place where he stood behind his counter. His heart gave a sudden bound, and the color rose to his face. An accusing conscience was quick to conclude as to the object of her visit. But he soon saw that no suspicion of wrong dealing was in the lady's mind. With a pleasant half recognition, she asked to look at certain articles, from which she made purchases, and in paying for them, placed a ten dollar bill in the hand of the storekeeper.

"That weight shall be off my conscience," said Mr. Levering to himself, as he began counting out the change due his customer; and, purposely, he gave her one dollar more than was justly hers in that transaction. The lady glanced her eyes over the money, and seemed slightly bewildered. Then, much to the storekeeper's relief, opened her purse and dropped it therein.

"All right again!" was the mental ejaculation of Mr. Levering, as he saw the purse disappear in the lady's pocket, while his breast expanded with a sense of relief.

The customer turned from the counter, and had nearly gained the door, when she paused, drew out her purse, and emptying the contents of one end into her hand, carefully noted the amount. Then walking back, she said, with a thoughtful air—

"I think you 've made a mistake in the change, Mr. Levering."

"I presume not, ma'am. I gave you four and thirty−five," was the quick reply.

"Four, thirty−five," said the lady, musingly.

"Yes, here is just four, thirty−five."

"That's right; yes, that's right," Mr. Levering spoke, somewhat nervously.

"The article came to six dollars and sixty−five cents, I believe?"

"Yes, yes; that was it!"

"Then three dollars and thirty−five cents will be my right change," said the lady, placing a small gold coin on the counter. "You gave me too much."

The customer turned away and retired from the store, leaving that dollar still on the conscience of Mr. Levering.

"I'll throw it into the street," said he to himself, impatiently. "Or give it to the first beggar that comes along."

But conscience whispered that the dollar wasn't his, either to give away or to throw away. Such prodigality, or impulsive benevolence, would be at the expense of another, and this could not mend the matter.

"This is all squeamishness," said Mr. Levering trying to argue against his convictions. But it was of no avail. His convictions remained as clear and rebuking as ever.

The next day was the Sabbath, and Mr. Levering went to church, as usual, with his family. Scarcely had he taken a seat in his pew, when, on raising his eyes, they rested on the countenance of the lady from whom he had abstracted the dollar. How quickly his cheek flushed! How troubled became, instantly, the beatings of his heart! Unhappy Mr. Levering! He could not make the usual responses that day, in the services; and when the congregation joined in the swelling hymn of praise, his voice was heard not in the general thanksgiving. Scarcely a word of the eloquent sermon reached his ears, except something about "dishonest dealing;" he was too deeply engaged in discussing the question, whether or no he should get rid of the troublesome dollar by dropping it into the contribution box, at the close of the morning service, to listen to the words of the preacher. This question was not settled when the box came round, but, as a kind of desperate alternative, he cast the money into the treasury.

For a short time, Mr. Levering felt considerable relief of mind. But this disposition of the money proved only a temporary palliative. There was a pressure on his feelings; still a weight on his conscience that gradually became heavier. Poor man! What was he to do? How was he to get this dollar removed from his conscience? He could not send it back to the lady and tell her the whole truth. Such an exposure of himself would not only be humiliating, but hurtful to his character. It would be seeking to do right, in the infliction of a wrong to himself.

At last, Mr. Levering, who had ascertained the lady's name and residence, inclosed her a dollar, anonymously, stating that it was her due; that the writer had obtained it from her, unjustly, in a transaction which he did not care to name, and could not rest until he had made restitution.

Ah! the humiliation of spirit suffered by Mr. Levering in thus seeking to get ease for his conscience! It was one of his bitterest life experiences. The longer the dollar remained in his possession, the heavier became its pressure, until he could endure it no longer. He felt not only disgraced in his own eyes, but humbled in the presence of his wife and children. Not for worlds would he have suffered them to look into his heart.

If a simple act of restitution could have covered all the past, happy would it have been for Mr. Levering. But this was not possible. The deed was entered in the book of his life, and nothing could efface the record. Though obscured by the accumulating dust of time, now and then a hand sweeps unexpectedly over the page, and the writing is revealed. Though that dollar has been removed from his conscience, and he is now guiltless of wrong, yet there are times when the old pressure is felt with painful distinctness.

Earnest seeker after this world's goods, take warning by Mr. Levering, and beware how, in a moment of weak yielding, you get a dollar on your conscience. One of two evils must follow. It will give you pain and trouble, or make callous the spot where it rests. And the latter of these evils is that which is most to be deplored.

AUNT MARY'S SUGGESTION.

"JOHN THOMAS!" Mr. Belknap spoke in a firm, rather authoritative voice. It was evident that he anticipated some reluctance on the boy's part, and therefore, assumed, in the outset, a very decided manner.

John Thomas, a lad between twelve and thirteen years of age, was seated on the doorstep, reading. A slight movement of the body indicated that he heard; but he did not lift his eyes from the book, nor make any verbal response.

"John Thomas!" This time the voice of Mr. Belknap was loud, sharp, and imperative.

"Sir," responded the boy, dropping the volume in his lap, and looking up with a slightly flushed, but sullen face.

"Did n't you hear me when I first spoke?" said Mr. Belknap, angrily.

"Yes, sir."

"Then, why did n't you answer me? Always respond when you are spoken to. I'm tired of this ill−mannerd, disrespectful way of yours."

The boy stood up, looking, now, dogged, as well as sullen.

"Go get your hat and jacket." This was said in a tone of command, accompanied by a side toss of the head, by the way of enforcing the order.

"What for?" asked John Thomas, not moving a pace from where he stood.

"Go and do what I tell you. Get your hat and jacket."

The boy moved slowly and with a very reluctant air from the room.

"Now, don't be all day," Mr. Belknap called after him, "I'm in a hurry. Move briskly."

How powerless the father's words died upon the air. The motions of John Thomas were not quickened in the slightest degree. Like a soulless automaton passed he out into the passage and up the stairs; while the impatient Mr. Belknap could with difficulty restrain an impulse to follow after, and hasten the sulky boy's movements with blows. He controlled himself, however, and resumed the perusal of his newspaper. Five, ten minutes passed, and John Thomas had not yet appeared to do the errand upon which his father designed to send him. Suddenly Mr. Belknap dropped his paper, and going hastily to the bottom of the stairs, called out:

"You John! John Thomas!"

"Sir!" came a provokingly indifferent voice from one of the chambers.

"Did n't I tell you to hurry—say?"

"I can't find my jacket."

"You don't want to find it. Where did you lay it when you took it off last night?"

"I don't know. I forget."

"If you're not down here, with your jacket on, in one minute, I'll warm your shoulders well for you."

Mr. Belknap was quite in earnest in this threat, a fact plainly enough apparent to John Thomas in the tone of his father's voice. Not just wishing to have matters proceed to this extremity, the boy opened a closet, and, singularly enough, there hung his jacket in full view. At the expiration of the minute, he was standing before his disturbed father, with his jacket on, and buttoned up to the chin.

"Where's your hat?" now asked Mr. Belknap.

"I don't know, sir."

"Well, find it, then."

"I've looked everywhere."

"Look again. There! What is that on the hat rack, just under my coat?"

The boy answered not, but walked moodily to the rack, and took his hat therefrom.

"Ready at last. I declare I'm out of all patience with your slow movements and sulky manner. What do you stand there for, knitting your brows and pouting your lips? Straighten out your face, sir! I won't have a boy of mine put on such a countenance."

The lad, thus angrily and insultingly rated, made a feeble effort to throw a few rays of sunshine into his face. But, the effort died fruitless. All was too dark, sullen, and rebellious within his bosom.

"See here." Mr. Belknap still spoke in that peculiar tone of command which always stifles self−respect in the one to whom it is addressed.

"Do you go down to Leslie's and tell him to send me a good claw hammer and three pounds of eightpenny nails. And go quickly."

The boy turned off without a word of reply, and was slowly moving away, when his father said, sharply:

"Look here, sir!"

John Thomas paused and looked back.

"Did you hear me?"

"Yes, sir."

"What did I tell you to do?"

"Go get a claw hammer and three pounds of eightpenny nails."

"Very well. Why did n't you indicate, in some way, that you heard me? Have n't I already this morning read you a lecture about this very thing? Now, go quickly. I'm in a hurry."

For all this impatience and authority on the part of Mr. Belknap, John Thomas moved away at a snail's pace; and as the former in a state of considerable irritability, gazed after the boy, he felt strongly tempted to call him back, and give him a good flogging in order that he might clearly comprehend the fact of his being in earnest. But as this flogging was an unpleasant kind of business, and had, on all previous occasions, been succeeded by a repentant and self−accusing state, Mr. Belknap restrained his indignant impulses.

"If that stubborn, incorrigible boy returns in half an hour, it will be a wonder," muttered Mr. Belknap, as he came back into the sitting−room. "I wish I knew what to do with him. There is no respect or obedience in him. I never saw such a boy. He knows that I'm in a hurry; and yet he goes creeping along like a tortoise, and ten chances to one, if he does n't forget his errand altogether before he is halfway to Leslie's. What is to be done with him, Aunt Mary?"

Mr. Belknap turned, as he spoke to an elderly lady, with a mild, open face, and clear blue eyes, from which goodness looked forth as an angel. She was a valued relative, who was paying him a brief visit.

Aunt Mary let her knitting rest in her lap, and turned her mild, thoughtful eyes upon the speaker.

"What is to be done with that boy, Aunt Mary?" Mr. Belknap repeated his words. "I've tried everything with him; but he remains incorrigible."

"Have you tried—"

Aunt Mary paused, and seemed half in doubt whether it were best to give utterance to what was in her mind.

"Tried what?" asked Mr. Belknap.

"May I speak plainly?" said Aunt Mary.

"To me? Why yes! The plainer the better."

"Have you tried a kind, affectionate, unimpassioned manner with the boy? Since I have been here, I notice that you speak to him in a cold, indifferent, or authoritative tone. Under such treatment, some natures, that soften quickly in the sunshine of affection, grow hard and stubborn."

The blood mounted to the cheeks and brow of Mr. Belknap.

"Forgive me, if I have spoken too plainly," said Aunt Mary.

Mr. Belknap did not make any response for some time, but sat, with his eyes upon the floor, in hurried self−examination.

"No, Aunt Mary, not too plainly," said he, as he looked at her with a sobered face. "I needed that suggestion, and thank you for having made it."

"Mrs. Howitt has a line which beautifully expresses what I mean," said Aunt Mary, in her gentle, earnest way. "It is

'For love hath readier will than fear.'

Ah, if we could all comprehend the wonderful power of love! It is the fire that melts; while fear only smites, the strokes hardening, or breaking its unsightly fragments. John Thomas has many good qualities, that ought to be made as active as possible. These, like goodly flowers growing in a carefully tilled garden, will absorb the latent vitality in his mind, and thus leave nothing from which inherent evil tendencies can draw nutrition."

Aunt Mary said no more, and Mr. Belknap's thoughts were soon too busy with a new train of ideas, to leave him in any mood for conversation.

Time moved steadily on. Nearly half an hour had elapsed, in which period John Thomas might have gone twice to Leslie's store, and returned; yet he was still absent. Mr. Belknap was particularly in want of the hammer and nails, and the delay chafed him very considerably; the more particularly, as it evidenced the indifference of his son in respect to his wishes and commands. Sometimes he would yield to a momentary blinding flush of anger, and resolve to punish the boy severely the moment he could get his hands on him. But quickly would come in Aunt Mary's suggestion, and he would again resolve to try the power of kind words. He was also a good deal strengthened in his purposes, by the fact that Aunt Mary's eyes would be upon him at the return of John Thomas. After her suggestion, and his acknowledgment of its value, it would hardly do for him to let passion so rule him as to act in open violation of what was right. To wrong his son by unwise treatment, when he professed to desire only his good.

The fact is, Mr. Belknap had already made the discovery, that if he would govern his boy, he must first govern himself. This was not an easy task. Yet he felt that it must be done.

"There comes that boy now," said he, as he glanced forth, and saw John Thomas coming homeward at a very deliberate pace. There was more of impatience in his tone of voice than he wished to betray to Aunt Mary, who let her beautiful, angel−like eyes rest for a moment or two, penetratingly, upon him. The balancing power of that look was needed; and it performed its work.

Soon after, the loitering boy came in. He had a package of nails in his hand, which he reached, half indifferently, to his father.

"The hammer!" John started with a half frightened air.

"Indeed, father, I forgot all about it!" said he, looking up with a flushed countenance, in which genuine regret was plainly visible.

"I'm sorry," said Mr. Belknap, in a disappointed, but not angry or rebuking voice. "I've been waiting a long time for you to come back, and now I must go to the store without nailing up that trellice for your mother's honeysuckle and wisteria, as I promised."

The boy looked at his father a moment or two with an air of bewilderment and surprise; then he said, earnestly:

"Just wait a little longer. I'll run down to the store and get it for you in a minute. I'm very sorry that I forgot it."

"Run along, then," said Mr. Belknap, kindly.

How fleetly the lad bounded away! His father gazed after him with an emotion of surprise, not unmixed with pleasure.

"Yes—yes," he murmured, half aloud, "Mrs. Howitt never uttered a wiser saying. 'For love hath readier will than fear.'"

Quicker than even Aunt Mary, whose faith in kind words was very strong, had expected, John came in with the hammer, a bright glow on his cheeks and a sparkle in his eyes that strongly contrasted with the utter want of interest displayed in his manner a little while before.

"Thank you, my son," said Mr. Belknap, as he took the hammer; "I could not have asked a prompter service."

He spoke very kindly, and in a voice of approval. "And now, John," he added, with the manner of one who requests, rather than commands, "if you will go over to Frank Wilson's, and tell him to come over and work for two or three days in our garden, you will oblige me very much. I was going to call there as I went to the store this morning; but it is too late now."

"O, I'll go, father—I'll go," replied the boy, quickly and cheerfully. "I'll run right over at once."

"Do, if you please," said Mr. Belknap, now speaking from an impulse of real kindness, for a thorough change had come over his feelings. A grateful look was cast, by John Thomas, into his father's face, and then he was off to do his errand. Mr. Belknap saw, and understood the meaning of that look.

"Yes—yes—yes,—" thus he talked with himself as he took his way to the store,—"Aunt Mary and Mrs. Howitt are right. Love hath a readier will. I ought to have learned this lesson earlier. Ah! how much that is deformed in this self−willed boy, might now be growing in beauty."

HELPING THE POOR.

"I'M on a begging expedition," said Mr. Jonas, as he came bustling into the counting−room of a fellow merchant named Prescott. "And, as you are a benevolent man, I hope to get at least five dollars here in aid of a family in extremely indigent circumstances. My wife heard of them yesterday; and the little that was learned, has strongly excited our sympathies. So I am out on a mission for supplies. I want to raise enough to buy them a ton of coal, a barrel of flour, a bag of potatoes, and a small lot of groceries."

"Do you know anything of the family for which you propose this charity?" inquired Mr. Prescott, with a slight coldness of manner.

"I only know that they are in want and that it is the first duty of humanity to relieve them," said Mr. Jonas, quite warmly.

"I will not question your inference," said Mr. Prescott. "To relieve the wants of our suffering fellow creatures is an unquestionable duty. But there is another important consideration connected with poverty and its demands upon us."

"What is that pray?" inquired Mr. Jonas, who felt considerably fretted by so unexpected a damper to his benevolent enthusiasm.

"How it shall be done," answered Mr. Prescott, calmly.

"If a man is hungry, give him bread; if he is naked, clothe him," said Mr. Jonas. "There is no room for doubt or question here. This family I learn, are suffering for all the necessaries of life, and I can clearly see the duty to supply their wants."

"Of how many does the family consist?" asked Mr. Prescott.

"There is a man and his wife and three or four children."

"Is the man sober and industrious?"

"I don't know anything about him. I've had no time to make inquiries. I only know that hunger and cold are in his dwelling, or, at least were in his dwelling yesterday."

"Then you have already furnished relief?"

"Temporary relief. I shouldn't have slept last night, after what I heard, without just sending them a bushel of coal, and a basket of provisions."

"For which I honor your kindness of heart, Mr. Jonas. So far you acted right. But, I am by no means so well assured of the wisdom and humanity of your present action in the case. The true way to help the poor, is to put it into their power to help themselves. The mere bestowal of alms is, in most cases an injury; either encouraging idleness and vice, or weakening self−respect and virtuous self−dependence. There is innate strength in every one; let us seek to develop this strength in the prostrate, rather than hold them up by a temporary application of our own powers, to fall again, inevitably, when the sustaining hand is removed. This, depend upon it, is not true benevolence. Every one has ability to serve the common good, and society renders back sustenance for bodily life as the reward of this service."

"But, suppose a man cannot get work," said Mr. Jonas. "How is he to serve society, for the sake of a reward?"

"True charity will provide employment for him rather than bestow alms."

"But, if there is no employment to be had Mr. Prescott?"

"You make a very extreme case. For all who are willing to work, in this country, there is employment."

"I'm by no means ready to admit this assertion."

"Well, we'll not deal in general propositions; because anything can be assumed or denied. Let us come direct to the case in point, and thus determine our duty towards the family whose needs we are considering. Which will be best for them? To help them in the way you propose, or to encourage them to help themselves?"

"All I know about them at present," replied Mr. Jonas, who was beginning to feel considerably worried, "is, that they are suffering for the common necessaries of life. It is all very well to tell a man to help himself, but, if his arm be paralyzed, or he have no key to open the provision shop, he will soon starve under that system of

benevolence. Feed and clothe a man first, and then set him to work to help himself. He will have life in his heart and strength in his hands."

"This sounds all very fair, Mr. Jonas; and yet, there is not so much true charity involved there as appears on the surface. It will avail little, however, for us to debate the matter now. Your time and mine are both of too much value during business hours for useless discussion. I cannot give, understandingly, in the present case, and so must disappoint your expectations in this quarter."

"Good morning, then," said Mr. Jonas, bowing rather coldly.

"Good morning," pleasantly responded Mr. Prescott, as his visitor turned and left his store.

"All a mean excuse for not giving," said Mr. Jonas, to himself, as he walked rather hurriedly away. "I don't believe much in the benevolence of your men who are so particular about the whys and wherefores—so afraid to give a dollar to a poor, starving fellow creature, lest the act encourage vice or idleness."

The next person upon whom Mr. Jonas called, happened to be very much of Mr. Prescott's way of thinking; and the next chanced to know something about the family for whom he was soliciting aid. "A lazy, vagabond set!" exclaimed the individual, when Mr. Jonas mentioned his errand, "who would rather want than work. They may starve before I give them a shilling."

"Is this true?" asked Mr. Jonas, in surprise.

"Certainly it is. I've had their case stated before. In fact, I went through the sleet and rain one bitter cold night to take them provisions, so strongly had my sympathies in regard to them been excited. Let them go to work."

"But can the man get work?" inquired Mr. Jonas.

"Other poor men, who have families dependent on them, can get work. Where there's a will there's a way. Downright laziness is the disease in this case, and the best cure for which is a little wholesome starvation. So, take my advice, and leave this excellent remedy to work out a cure."

Mr. Jonas went back to his store in rather a vexed state of mind. All his fine feelings of benevolence were stifled. He was angry with the indigent family, and angry with himself for being "the fool to meddle with any business but his own."

"Catch me on such an errand again," said he, indignantly. "I'll never seek to do a good turn again as long as I live."

Just as he was saying this, his neighbor Prescott came into his store.

"Where does the poor family live, of whom you were speaking to me?" he inquired.

"O, don't ask me about them!" exclaimed Mr. Jonas. "I've just found them out. They're a lazy, vagabond set."

"You are certain of that?"

"Morally certain. Mr. Caddy says he knows them like a book, and they'd rather want than work. With him, I think a little wholesome starvation will do them good."

Notwithstanding this rather discouraging testimony, Mr. Prescott made a memorandum of the street and number of the house in which the family lived, remarking as he did so:

"I have just heard where the services of an able−bodied man are wanted. Perhaps Gardiner, as you call him, may be glad to obtain the situation."

"He won't work; that's the character I have received of him," replied Mr. Jonas, whose mind was very much roused against the man. The pendulum of his impulses had swung, from a light touch, to the other extreme.

"A dollar earned, is worth two received in charity," said Mr. Prescott; "because the dollar earned corresponds to service rendered, and the man feels that it is his own—that he has an undoubted right to its possession. It elevates his moral character, inspires self−respect, and prompts to new efforts. Mere alms−giving is demoralizing for the opposite reason. It blunts the moral feelings, lowers the self−respect, and fosters inactivity and idleness, opening the way for vice to come in and sweep away all the foundations of integrity. Now, true charity to the poor is for us to help them to help themselves. Since you left me a short time ago, I have been thinking, rather hastily, over the matter; and the fact of hearing about the place for an able−bodied man, as I just mentioned, has led me to call around and suggest your making interest therefor in behalf of Gardiner. Helping him in this way will be true benevolence."

"It's no use," replied Mr. Jonas, in a positive tone of voice. "He's an idle good−for−nothing fellow, and I'll have nothing to do with him."

Mr. Prescott urged the matter no farther, for he saw that to do so would be useless. On his way home, on

leaving his store, he called to see Gardiner. He found, in two small, meagerly furnished rooms, a man, his wife, and three children. Everything about them indicated extreme poverty; and, worse than this, lack of cleanliness and industry. The woman and children had a look of health, but the man was evidently the subject of some wasting disease. His form was light, his face thin and rather pale, and his languid eyes deeply sunken. He was very far from being the able−bodied man Mr. Prescott had expected to find. As the latter stepped into the miserable room where they were gathered, the light of expectation, mingled with the shadows of mute suffering, came into their countenances. Mr. Prescott was a close observer, and saw, at a glance, the assumed sympathy−exciting face of the mendicant in each.

"You look rather poor here," said he, as he took a chair, which the woman dusted with her dirty apron before handing it to him.

"Indeed, sir, and we are miserably off," replied the woman, in a half whining tone. "John, there, hasn't done a stroke of work now for three months; and—"

"Why not!" interrupted Mr. Prescott.

"My health is very poor," said the man. "I suffer much from pain in my side and back, and am so weak most of the time, that I can hardly creep about."

"That is bad, certainly," replied Mr. Prescott, "very bad." And as he spoke, he turned his eyes to the woman's face, and then scanned the children very closely.

"Is that boy of yours doing anything?" he inquired.

"No, sir," replied the mother. "He's too young to be of any account."

"He's thirteen, if my eyes do not deceive me."

"Just a little over thirteen."

"Does he go to school?"

"No sir. He has no clothes fit to be seen in at school."

"Bad—bad," said Mr. Prescott, "very bad. The boy might be earning two dollars a week; instead of which he is growing up in idleness, which surely leads to vice."

Gardiner looked slightly confused at this remark, and his wife, evidently, did not feel very comfortable under the steady, observant eyes that were on her.

"You seem to be in good health," said Mr. Prescott, looking at the woman.

"Yes sir, thank God! And if it wasn't for that, I don't know what we should all have done. Everything has fallen upon me since John, there, has been ailing."

Mr. Prescott glanced around the room, and then remarked, a little pleasantly:

"I don't see that you make the best use of your health and strength."

The woman understood him, for the color came instantly to her face.

"There is no excuse for dirt and disorder," said the visitor, more seriously. "I once called to see a poor widow, in such a state of low health that she had to lie in bed nearly half of every day. She had two small children, and supported herself and them by fine embroidery, at which she worked nearly all the time. I never saw a neater room in my life than hers, and her children, though in very plain and patched clothing, were perfectly clean. How different is all here; and yet, when I entered, you all sat idly amid this disorder, and—shall I speak plainly—filth."

The woman, on whose face the color had deepened while Mr. Prescott spoke, now rose up quickly, and commenced bustling about the room, which, in a few moments, looked far less in disorder. That she felt his rebuke, the visiter regarded as a good sign.

"Now," said he, as the woman resumed her seat, "let me give you the best maxim for the poor in the English language; one that, if lived by, will soon extinguish poverty, or make it a very light thing,—'God helps those who help themselves.' To be very plain with you, it is clear to my eyes, that you do not try to help yourselves; such being the case, you need not expect gratuitous help from God. Last evening you received some coal and a basket of provisions from a kind−hearted man, who promised more efficient aid to−day. You have not yet heard from him, and what is more, will not hear from him. Some one, to whom he applied for a contribution happened to know more about you than he did, and broadly pronounced you a set of idle vagabonds. Just think of bearing such a character! He dropped the matter at once, and you will get nothing from him. I am one of those upon whom he called. Now, if you are all disposed to help yourselves, I will try to stand your friend. If not, I shall have nothing to do with you. I speak plainly; it is better; there will be less danger of apprehension. That oldest boy of yours

must go to work and earn something. And your daughter can work about the house for you very well, while you go out to wash, or scrub, and thus earn a dollar or two, or three, every week. There will be no danger of starvation on this income, and you will then eat your bread in independence. Mr. Gardiner can help some, I do not in the least doubt."

And Mr. Prescott looked inquiringly at the man.

"If I was only able−bodied," said Gardiner, in a half reluctant tone and manner.

"But you are not. Still, there are many things you may do. If by a little exertion you can earn the small sum of two or three dollars a week, it will be far better—even for your health—than idleness. Two dollars earned every week by your wife, two by your boy, and three by yourself, would make seven dollars a week; and if I am not very much mistaken, you don't see half that sum in a week now."

"Indeed, sir, and you speak the truth there," said the woman.

"Very well. It's plain, then, that work is better than idleness."

"But we can't get work." The woman fell back upon this strong assertion.

"Don't believe a word of it. I can tell you how to earn half a dollar a day for the next four or five days at least. So there's a beginning for you. Put yourself in the way of useful employment, and you will have no difficulty beyond."

"What kind of work, sir?" inquired the woman.

"We are about moving into a new house, and my wife commences the work of having it cleaned to−morrow morning. She wants another assistant. Will you come?"

The woman asked the number of his residence, and promised to accept the offer of work.

"Very well. So far so good," said Mr. Prescott, cheerfully, as he arose. "You shall be paid at the close of each day's work; and that will give you the pleasure of eating your own bread—a real pleasure, you may depend upon it; for a loaf of bread earned is sweeter than the richest food bestowed by charity, and far better for the health."

"But about the boy, sir?" said Gardiner, whose mind was becoming active with more independent thoughts.

"All in good time," said Mr. Prescott smiling. "Rome was not built in a day, you know. First let us secure a beginning. If your wife goes to−morrow, I shall think her in earnest; as willing to help herself, and, therefore, worthy to be helped. All the rest will come in due order. But you may rest assured, that, if she does not come to work, it is the end of the matter as far as I am concerned. So good evening to you."

Bright and early came Mrs. Gardiner on the next morning, far tidier in appearance than when Mr. Prescott saw her before. She was a stout, strong woman, and knew how to scrub and clean paint as well as the best. When fairly in the spirit of work, she worked on with a sense of pleasure. Mrs. Prescott was well satisfied with her performance, and paid her the half dollar earned when her day's toil was done. On the next day, and the next, she came, doing her work and receiving her wages.

On the evening of the third day, Mr. Prescott thought it time to call upon the Gardiners.

"Well this is encouraging!" said he, with an expression of real pleasure, as he gazed around the room, which scarcely seemed like the one he had visited before. All was clean, and everything in order; and, what was better still, the persons of all, though poorly clad, were clean and tidy. Mrs. Gardiner sat by the table mending a garment; her daughter was putting away the supper dishes; while the man sat teaching a lesson in spelling to their youngest child.

The glow of satisfaction that pervaded the bosom of each member of the family, as Mr. Prescott uttered these approving words, was a new and higher pleasure than had for a long time been experienced, and caused the flame of self−respect and self−dependence, rekindled once more, to rise upwards in a steady flame.

"I like to see this," continued Mr. Prescott. "It does me good. You have fairly entered the right road. Walk on steadily, courageously, unweariedly. There is worldly comfort and happiness for you at the end. I think I have found a very good place for your son, where he will receive a dollar and a half a week to begin with. In a few months, if all things suit, he will get two dollars. The work is easy, and the opportunities for improvement good. I think there is a chance for you, also, Mr. Gardiner. I have something in my mind that will just meet your case. Light work, and not over five or six hours application each day—the wages four dollars a week to begin with, and a prospect of soon having them raised to six or seven dollars. What do you think of that?"

"Sir!" exclaimed the poor man, in whom personal pride and a native love of independence were again awakening, "if you can do this for me, you will be indeed a benefactor."

"It shall be done," said Mr. Prescott, positively. "Did I not say to you, that God helps those who help themselves? It is even thus. No one, in our happy country who is willing to work, need be in want; and money earned by honest industry buys the sweetest bread."

It required a little watching, and urging, and admonition, on the part of Mr. and Mrs. Prescott, to keep the Gardiners moving on steadily, in the right way. Old habits and inclinations had gained too much power easily to be broken; and but for this watchfulness on their part, idleness and want would again have entered the poor man's dwelling.

The reader will hardly feel surprise, when told, that in three or four years from the time Mr. Prescott so wisely met the case of the indigent Gardiners, they were living in a snug little house of their own, nearly paid for out of the united industry of the family, every one of which was now well clad, cheerful, and in active employment. As for Mr. Gardiner, his health has improved, instead of being injured by light employment. Cheerful, self−approving thoughts, and useful labor, have temporarily renovated a fast sinking constitution.

Mr. Prescott's way of helping the poor is the right way. They must be taught to help themselves. Mere alms−giving is but a temporary aid, and takes away, instead of giving, that basis of self−dependence, on which all should rest. Help a man up, and teach him to use his feet, so that he can walk alone. This is true benevolence.

COMMON PEOPLE.

"ARE you going to call upon Mrs. Clayton and her daughters, Mrs. Marygold?" asked a neighbor, alluding to a family that had just moved into Sycamore Row.

"No, indeed, Mrs. Lemmington, that I am not. I don't visit everybody."

"I thought the Claytons were a very respectable family," remarked Mrs. Lemmington.

"Respectable! Everybody is getting respectable now−a−days. If they are respectable, it is very lately that they have become so. What is Mr. Clayton, I wonder, but a school−master! It's too bad that such people will come crowding themselves into genteel neighborhoods. The time was when to live in Sycamore Row was guarantee enough for any one—but, now, all kinds of people have come into it."

"I have never met Mrs. Clayton," remarked Mrs. Lemmington, "but I have been told that she is a most estimable woman, and that her daughters have been educated with great care. Indeed, they are represented as being highly accomplished girls."

"Well, I don't care what they are represented to be. I'm not going to keep company with a schoolmaster's wife and daughters, that's certain."

"Is there anything disgraceful in keeping a school?"

"No, nor in making shoes, either. But, then, that's no reason why I should keep company with my shoemaker's wife, is it? Let common people associate together—that's my doctrine."

"But what do you mean by common people, Mrs. Marygold?"

"Why, I mean common people. Poor people. People who have not come of a respectable family. That's what I mean."

"I am not sure that I comprehend your explanation much better than I do your classification. If you mean, as you say, poor people, your objection will not apply with full force to the Claytons, for they are now in tolerably easy circumstances. As to the family of Mr. Clayton, I believe his father was a man of integrity, though not rich. And Mrs. Clayton's family I know to be without reproach of any kind."

"And yet they are common people for all that," persevered Mrs. Marygold. "Wasn't old Clayton a mere petty dealer in small wares. And wasn't Mrs. Clayton's father a mechanic?"

"Perhaps, if some of us were to go back for a generation or two, we might trace out an ancestor who held no higher place in society," Mrs. Lemmington remarked, quietly. "I have no doubt but that I should."

"I have no fears of that kind," replied Mrs. Marygold, in an exulting tone. "I shall never blush when my pedigree is traced."

"Nor I neither, I hope. Still, I should not wonder if some one of my ancestors had disgraced himself, for there are but few families that are not cursed with a spotted sheep. But I have nothing to do with that, and ask only to be judged by what I am—not by what my progenitors have been."

"A standard that few will respect, let me tell you."

"A standard that far the largest portion of society will regard as the true one, I hope," replied Mrs. Lemmington. "But, surely, you do not intend refusing to call upon the Claytons for the reason you have assigned, Mrs. Marygold."

"Certainly I do. They are nothing but common people, and therefore beneath me. I shall not stoop to associate with them."

"I think that I will call upon them. In fact, my object in dropping in this morning was to see if you would not accompany me," said Mrs. Lemmington.

"Indeed, I will not, and for the reasons I have given. They are only common people. You will be stooping."

"No one stoops in doing a kind act. Mrs. Clayton is a stranger in the neighborhood, and is entitled to the courtesy of a call, if no more; and that I shall extend to her. If I find her to be uncongenial in her tastes, no intimate acquaintanceship need be formed. If she is congenial, I will add another to my list of valued friends. You and I, I find, estimate differently. I judge every individual by merit, you by family, or descent."

"You can do as you please," rejoined Mrs. Marygold, somewhat coldly. "For my part, I am particular about my associates. I will visit Mrs. Florence, and Mrs. Harwood, and such an move in good society, but as to your schoolteachers' wives and daughters, I must beg to be excused."

"Every one to her taste," rejoined Mrs. Lemmington, with a smile, as she moved towards the door, where she stood for a few moments to utter some parting compliments, and then withdrew.

Five minutes afterwards she was shown into Mrs. Clayton's parlors, where, in a moment or two, she was met by the lady upon whom she had called, and received with an air of easy gracefulness, that at once charmed her. A brief conversation convinced her that Mrs. Clayton was, in intelligence and moral worth, as far above Mrs. Marygold, as that personage imagined herself to be above her. Her daughters, who came in while she sat conversing with their mother, showed themselves to possess all those graces of mind and manner that win upon our admiration so irresistably. An hour passed quickly and pleasantly, and then Mrs. Lemmington withdrew.

The difference between Mrs. Lemmington and Mrs. Marygold was simply this. The former had been familiar with what is called the best society from her earliest recollection, and being therefore, constantly in association with those looked upon as the upper class, knew nothing of the upstart self−estimation which is felt by certain weak ignorant persons, who by some accidental circumstance are elevated far above the condition into which they moved originally. She could estimate true worth in humble garb as well as in velvet and rich satins. She was one of those individuals who never pass an old and worthy domestic in the street without recognition, or stopping to make some kind inquiry—one who never forgot a familiar face, or neglected to pass a kind word to even the humblest who possessed the merit of good principles. As to Mrs. Marygold, notwithstanding her boast in regard to pedigree, there were not a few who could remember when her grandfather carried a pedlar's pack on his back—and an honest and worthy pedlar he was, saving his pence until they became pounds, and then relinquishing his peregrinating propensities, for the quieter life of a small shop−keeper. His son, the father of Mrs. Marygold, while a boy had a pretty familiar acquaintance with low life. But, as soon as his father gained the means to do so, he was put to school and furnished with a good education. Long before he was of age, the old man had become a pretty large shipper; and when his son arrived at mature years, he took him into business as a partner. In marrying, Mrs. Marygold's father chose a young lady whose father, like his own, had grown rich by individual exertions. This young lady had not a few false notions in regard to the true genteel, and these fell legitimately to the share of her eldest daughter, who, when she in turn came upon the stage of action, married into an old and what was called a highly respectable family, a circumstance that puffed her up to the full extent of her capacity to bear inflation. There were few in the circle of her acquaintances who did not fully appreciate her, and smile at her weakness and false pride. Mrs. Florence, to whom she had alluded in her conversation with Mrs. Lemmington, and who lived in Sycamore Row, was not only faultless in regard to family connections, but was esteemed in the most intelligent circles for her rich mental endowments and high moral principles. Mrs. Harwood, also alluded to, was the daughter of an English barrister and wife of a highly distinguished professional man, and was besides richly endowed herself, morally and intellectually. Although Mrs. Marygold was very fond of visiting them for the mere _eclat_ of the thing, yet their company was scarcely more agreeable to her, than hers was to them, for there was little in common between them. Still, they had to tolerate her, and did so with a good grace.

It was, perhaps, three months after Mrs. Clayton moved into the neighborhood, that cards of invitation were sent to Mr. and Mrs. Marygold and daughter to pass a social evening at Mrs. Harwood's. Mrs. M. was of course delighted and felt doubly proud of her own importance. Her daughter Melinda, of whom she was excessively vain, was an indolent, uninteresting girl, too dull to imbibe even a small portion of her mother's self−estimation. In company, she attracted but little attention, except what her father's money and standing in society claimed for her.

On the evening appointed, the Marygolds repaired to the elegant residence of Mrs. Harwood and were ushered into a large and brilliant company, more than half of whom were strangers even to them. Mrs. Lemmington was there, and Mrs. Florence, and many others with whom Mrs. Marygold was on terms of intimacy, besides several "distinguished strangers." Among those with whom Mrs. Marygold was unacquainted, were two young ladies who seemed to attract general attention. They were not showy, chattering girls, such as in all companies attract a swarm of shallow−minded youug fellows about them. On the contrary, there was something retiring, almost shrinking in their manner, that shunned rather than courted observation. And yet, no one, who, attracted by their sweet, modest faces, found himself by their side that did not feel inclined to linger there.

"Who are those girls, Mrs. Lemmington?" asked Mrs. Marygold, meeting the lady she addressed in crossing the room.

"The two girls in the corner who are attracting so much attention?"

"Yes."

"Don't you know them?"

"I certainly do not."

"They are no common persons, I can assure you, Mrs. Marygold."

"Of course, or they would not be found here. But who are they?"

"Ah, Mrs. Lemmington! how are you?" said a lady, coming up at this moment, and interrupting the conversation. "I have been looking for you this half hour." Then, passing her arm within that of the individual she had addressed, she drew her aside before she had a chance to answer Mrs. Marygold's question.

In a few minutes after, a gentleman handed Melinda to the piano, and there was a brief pause as she struck the instrument, and commenced going through the unintelligible intricacies of a fashionable piece of music. She could strike all the notes with scientific correctness and mechanical precision. But there was no more expression in her performance than there is in that of a musical box. After she had finished her task, she left the instrument with a few words of commendation extorted by a feeling of politeness.

"Will you not favor us with a song?" asked Mr. Harwood, going up to one of the young ladies to whom allusion has just been made.

"My sister sings, I do not," was the modest reply, "but I will take pleasure in accompanying her."

All eyes were fixed upon them as they moved towards the piano, accompanied by Mr. Harwood, for something about their manners, appearance and conversation, had interested nearly all in the room who had been led to notice them particularly. The sister who could not sing, seated herself with an air of easy confidence at the instrument, while the other stood near her. The first few touches that passed over the keys showed that the performer knew well how to give to music a soul. The tones that came forth were not the simple vibrations of a musical chord, but expressions of affection given by her whose fingers woke the strings into harmony. But if the preluding touches fell witchingly upon every ear, how exquisitely sweet and thrilling was the voice that stole out low and tremulous at first, and deepened in volume and expression every moment, until the whole room seemed filled with melody! Every whisper was hushed, and every one bent forward almost breathlessly to listen. And when, at length, both voice and instrument were hushed into silence, no enthusiastic expressions of admiration were heard, but only half− whispered ejaculations of "exquisite!" "sweet!" "beautiful!" Then came earnestly expressed wishes for another and another song, until the sisters, feeling at length that many must be wearied with their long continued occupation of the piano, felt themselves compelled to decline further invitations to sing. No one else ventured to touch a key of the instrument during the evening.

"Do pray, Mrs. Lemmington, tell me who those girls are—I am dying to know," said Mrs. Marygold, crossing the room to where the person she addressed was seated with Mrs. Florence and several other ladies of "distinction," and taking a chair by her side.

"They are only common people," replied Mrs. Lemmington, with affected indifference.

"Common people, my dear madam! What do you mean by such an expression?" said Mrs. Florence in surprise, and with something of indignation latent in her tone.

"I'm sure their father, Mr. Clayton, is nothing but a teacher."

"Mr. Clayton! Surely those are not Clayton's daughters!" ejaculated Mrs. Marygold, in surprise.

"They certainly are ma'am," replied Mrs. Florence in a quiet but firm voice, for she instantly perceived, from something in Mrs. Marygold's voice and manner, the reason why her friend had alluded to them as common people.

"Well, really, I am surprised that Mrs. Harwood should have invited them to her house, and introduced them into genteel company."

"Why so, Mrs. Marygold?"

"Because, as Mrs. Lemmington has just said, they are common people. Their father is nothing but a schoolmaster."

"If I have observed them rightly," Mrs. Florence said to this, "I have discovered them to be a rather uncommon kind of people. Almost any one can thrum on the piano; but you will not find one in a hundred who

can perform with such exquisite grace and feeling as they can. For half an hour this evening I sat charmed with their conversation, and really instructed and elevated by the sentiments they uttered. I cannot say as much for any other young ladies in the room, for there are none others here above the common run of ordinarily intelligent girls—none who may not really be classed with common people in the true acceptation of the term."

"And take them all in all," added Mrs. Lemmington with warmth, "you will find nothing common about them. Look at their dress; see how perfect in neatness, in adaptation of colors and arrangement to complexion and shape, is every thing about them. Perhaps there will not be found a single young lady in the room, besides them, whose dress does not show something not in keeping with good taste. Take their manners. Are they not graceful, gentle, and yet full of nature's own expression. In a word, is there any thing about them that is 'common?'"

"Nothing that my eye has detected," replied Mrs. Florence.

"Except their origin," half−sneeringly rejoined Mrs. Marygold.

"They were born of woman," was the grave remark. "Can any of us boast a higher origin?"

"There are various ranks among women," Mrs. Marygold said, firmly.

"True. But, 'The rank is but the guinea's stamp, The man's the gold for a' that.'

"Mere position in society does not make any of us more or less a true woman. I could name you over a dozen or more in my circle of acquaintance, who move in what is called the highest rank; who, in all that truly constitutes a woman, are incomparably below Mrs. Clayton; who, if thrown with her among perfect strangers, would be instantly eclipsed. Come then, Mrs. Marygold, lay aside all these false standards, and estimate woman more justly. Let me, to begin, introduce both yourself and Melinda to the young ladies this evening. You will be charmed with them, I know, and equally charmed with their mother when you know her."

"No, ma'am," replied Mrs. Marygold, drawing herself up with a dignified air. "I have no wish to cultivate their acquaintance, or the acquaintance of any persons in their station. I am surprised that Mrs. Harwood has not had more consideration for her friends than to compel them to come in contact with such people."

No reply was made to this; and the next remark of Mrs. Florence was about some matter of general interest.

"Henry Florence has not been here for a week," said Mrs. Marygold to her daughter Melinda, some two months after the period at which the conversation just noted occurred.

"No; and he used to come almost every evening," was Melinda's reply, made in a tone that expressed disappointment.

"I wonder what can be the reason?" Mrs. Marygold said, half aloud, half to herself, but with evident feelings of concern. The reason of her concern and Melinda's disappointment arose from the fact that both had felt pretty sure of securing Henry Florence as a member of the Marygold family—such connection, from his standing in society, being especially desirable.

At the very time the young man was thus alluded to by Mrs. Marygold and her daughter, he sat conversing with his mother upon a subject that seemed, from the expression of his countenance, to be of much interest to him.

"So you do not feel inclined to favor any preference on my part towards Miss Marygold?" he said, looking steadily into his mother's face.

"I do not, Henry," was the frank reply.

"Why not?"

"There is something too common about her, if I may so express myself."

"Too common! What do you mean by that?"

"I mean that there is no distinctive character about her. She is, like the large mass around us, a mere made−up girl."

"Speaking in riddles."

"I mean then, Henry, that her character has been formed, or made up, by mere external accretions from the common−place, vague, and often too false notions of things that prevail in society, instead of by the force of sound internal principles, seen to be true from a rational intuition, and acted upon because they are true. Cannot you perceive the difference?"

"O yes, plainly. And this is why you use the word 'common,' in speaking of her?"

"The reason. And now my son, can you not see that there is force in my objection to her—that she really possess any character distinctively her own, that is founded upon a clear and rational appreciation of abstractly correct principles of action?"

"I cannot say that I differ from you very widely," the young man said, thoughtfully. "But, if you call Melinda 'common,' where shall I go to find one who may be called 'uncommon?'"

"I can point you to one."

"Say on."

"You have met Fanny Clayton?"

"Fanny Clayton!" ejaculated the young man, taken by surprise, the blood rising to his face. "O yes, I have met her."

"She is no common girl, Henry," Mrs. Florence said, in a serious voice. "She has not her equal in my circle of acquaintances."

"Nor in mine either," replied the young man, recovering himself. "But you would not feel satisfied to have your son address Miss Clayton?"

"And why not, pray? Henry, I have never met with a young lady whom I would rather see your wife than Fanny Clayton."

"And I," rejoined the young man with equal warmth, "never met with any one whom I could truly love until I saw her sweet young face."

"Then never think again of one like Melinda Marygold. You could not be rationally happy with her."

Five or six months rolled away, during a large portion of which time the fact that Henry Florence was addressing Fanny Clayton formed a theme for pretty free comment in various quarters. Most of Henry's acquaintance heartily approved his choice; but Mrs. Marygold, and a few like her, all with daughters of the "common" class, were deeply incensed at the idea of a "common kind of a girl" like Miss Clayton being forced into genteel society, a consequence that would of course follow her marriage. Mrs. Marygold hesitated not to declare that for her part, let others do as they liked, she was not going to associate with her—that was settled. She had too much regard to what was due to her station in life. As for Melinda, she had no very kind feelings for her successful rival—and such a rival too! A mere schoolmaster's daughter! And she hesitated not to speak of her often and in no very courteous terms.

When the notes of invitation to the wedding at length came, which ceremony was to be performed in the house of Mr. Clayton, in Sycamore Row, Mrs. Marygold declared that to send her an invitation to go to such a place was a downright insult. As the time, however, drew near, and she found that Mrs. Harwood and a dozen others equally respectable in her eyes were going to the wedding, she managed to smother her indignation so far as, at length, to make up her mind to be present at the nuptial ceremonies. But it was not until her ears were almost stunned by the repeated and earnestly expressed congratulations to Mrs. Florence at the admirable choice made by her son, and that too by those whose tastes and opinions she dared not dispute, that she could perceive any thing even passable in the beautiful young bride.

Gradually, however, as the younger Mrs. Florence, in the process of time, took her true position in the social circle, even Mrs. Marygold could begin to perceive the intrinsic excellence of her character, although even this was more a tacit assent to a universal opinion than a discovery of her own.

As for Melinda, she was married about a year after Fanny Clayton's wedding, to a sprig of gentility with about as much force of character as herself. This took place on the same night that Lieut. Harwood, son of Mrs. Harwood before alluded to, led to the altar Mary Clayton, the sister of Fanny, who was conceded by all, to be the loveliest girl they had ever seen—lovely, not only in face and form, but loveliness itself in the sweet perfections of moral beauty. As for Lieut. Harwood, he was worthy of the heart he had won.

MAKING A SENSATION.

"Do you intend going to Mrs. Walshingham's party, next week, Caroline?" asked Miss Melvina Fenton of her friend Caroline Gay. "It is said that it will be a splendid affair."

"I have not made up my mind, Melvina."

"O you'll go of course. I wouldn't miss it for the world."

"I am much inclined to think that I will stay at home or spend my evening in some less brilliant assemblage," Caroline Gay replied in a quiet tone.

"Nonsense, Caroline! There hasn't been such a chance to make a sensation this season."

"And why should I wish to make a sensation, Melvina?"

"Because it's the only way to attract attention. Now−a−days, the person who creates a sensation, secures the prize that a dozen quiet, retiring individuals are looking and longing after, in vain. We must dazzle if we would win."

"That is, we must put on false colors, and deceive not only ourselves, but others."

"How strangely you talk, Caroline! Every one now is attracted by show and _eclat_."

"Not every one, I hope, Melvina."

"Show me an exception."

Caroline smiled as she answered,

"Your friend Caroline, as you call her, I hope is one."

"Indeed! And I suppose I must believe you. But come, don't turn Puritan. You are almost behind the age, as it is, and if you don't take care, you will get clear out of date, and either live and die an old maid, or have to put up with one of your quiet inoffensive gentlemen who hardly dare look a real briliant belle in the face."

Caroline Gay could not help smiling at her friend's light bantering, even while she felt inclined to be serious in consideration of the false views of life that were influencing the conduct and affecting the future prospects of one, whose many good qualities of heart, won her love.

"And if I should get off," she said, "with one of those quiet gentlemen you allude to, it will be about the height of my expectation."

"Well, you are a queer kind of a girl, any how! But, do you know why I want to make a sensation at Mrs. Walshingham's?"

"No. I would be pleased to hear."

"Then I will just let you into a bit of a secret. I've set my heart on making a conquest of Henry Clarence."

"Indeed!" ejaculated Caroline, with an emphasis that would have attracted Melvina's attention, had her thoughts and feelings not been at the moment too much engaged.

"Yes, I have. He's so calm and cold, and rigidly polite to me whenever we meet, that I am chilled with the frigid temperature of the atmosphere that surrounds him. But as he is a prize worth the trouble of winning, I have set my heart on melting him down, and bringing him to my feet."

Caroline smiled as her friend paused, but did not reply.

"I know half a dozen girls now, who are breaking their hearts after him," continued the maiden. "But I'll disappoint them all, if there is power in a woman's winning ways to conquer. So you see, my lady Gay—Grave it should be—that I have some of the strongest reasons in the world, for wishing to be present at the 'come off' next week. Now you'll go, won't you?"

"Perhaps I will, if it's only to see the effect of your demonstrations on the heart of Henry Clarence. But he is one of your quiet, inoffensive gentlemen, Melvina. How comes it that you set him as a prize?"

"If he is quiet, there is fire in him. I've seen his eye flash, and his countenance brighten with thought too often, not to know of what kind of stuff he is made."

"And if I were to judge of his character, he is not one to be caugnt by effect," Caroline remarked.

"O, as to that, all men have their weak side. There isn't one, trust me, who can withstand the brilliant

attractions of the belle of the ball room, such as, pardon my vanity, I hope to be on next Tuesday evening. I have seen a little of the world in my time, and have always observed, that whoever can eclipse all her fair compeers at one of these brilliant assemblages, possesses, for the time, a power that may be used to advantage. All the beaux flock around her, and vie with each other in kind attentions. If, then, she distinguish some individual of them above the rest, by her marked reciprocation of his attentions, he is won. The grateful fellow will never forsake her."

"Quite a reasoner, upon my word! And so in this way you intend winning Henry Clarence?"

"Of course I do. At least, I shall try hard."

"And you will fail, I am much disposed to think."

"I'm not sure of that. Henry Clarence is but a man."

"Yet he is too close an observer to be deceived into any strong admiration of a ball−room belle."

"You are behind the age, Caroline. Your quiet unobtrusiveness will I fear cause you to be passed by, while some one not half so worthy, will take the place which you should have held in the affections of a good husband."

"Perhaps so. But, I wish to be taken for what I am. I want no man, who has not the good sense and discrimination to judge of my real character."

"You will die an old maid, Caroline."

"That may be. But, in all sincerity, I must say that I hope not."

"You will go to the ball, of course?"

"I think I will, Melvina."

"Well, that settled, what are you going to wear?"

"Something plain and simple, of course. But I have not thought of that."

"O don't Caroline. You will make yourself singular."

"I hope not, for I dislike singularity. But how are you going to dress? Splendid, of course, as you expect to make a sensation."

"I'll try my best, I can assure you?"

"Well, what kind of a dress are you going to appear in?"

"I have ordered a robe of blue tulle, to be worn over blue silk. The robe to be open in front, of course, and confined to the silk−skirt with variegated roses."

"And your head−dress?"

"I shall have my hair ornamented with variegated roses, arranged over the brow like a coronet. Now, how do you like that?"

"Not at all."

"O, of course not. I might have known that your taste was too uneducated for that."

"And I hope it will ever remain so, Melvina."

"But how will _you_ dress, Caroline. Do let me hear, that I may put you right if you fix on any thing _outre_."

"Well, really, Melvina, I have not given the subject a thought. But it never takes me long to choose. Let me see. A plain—"

"Not plain, Caroline, for mercy sake!"

"Yes. A plain white dress, of India muslin."

"Plain white! O, don't Caroline—let me beg of you."

"Yes, white it shall be."

"Plain white! Why nobody will see you!"

"O, yes. Among all you gay butterflies, I will become the observed of all observers," said Caroline, laughing.

"Don't flatter yourself. But you will have some pink trimming, will you not?"

"No, not a flower, nor ribbon, nor cord, nor tassel."

"You will be an object of ridicule."

"Not in a polite company of gentlemen and ladies, I hope!"

"No; but—. And your head−dress, Caroline. That I hope will atone for the rest."

"No, my own dark hair, plain—"

"For mercy sake, Caroline! Not plain."

"Yes, my hair plain."

"And no ornament!"

"O, yes—a very beautiful one."

"Ah, that may help a little. A ray of sunshine on a barren waste."

"A simple sprig of buds and half blown flowers."

"The color?"

"White, of course."

"You are an original, Caroline. But I suppose I can't make you change your taste?"

I hope not, Melvina."

"I am sorry that I shall be compelled to throw you so far in the shade, my little Quakeress friend. The world will never know half your real worth, Caroline. You are hiding your light.

"Many a gem of purest ray serene, The deep unfathomed caves of ocean bear— Full many a flower is born to blush unseen, And waste its sweetness on the desert air."

And as she repeated these lines, applying them to her friend, Melvina rose to depart.

"You are resolved on trying to make a sensation, then?" said Caroline.

"Of course, and what is more, I will succeed."

"And win Henry Clarence?"

"I hope so. He must be made of sterner stuff than I think him, if I do not."

"Well, we shall see."

"Yes, we will. But good−bye; I must go to the mantua−maker's this morning, to complete my orders."

After Melvina Felton had gone, Caroline Gay's manner changed a good deal. Her cheek, the color of which had heightened during her conversation with her friend, still retained its beautiful glow, but the expression of her usually calm face was changed, and slightly marked by what seemed troubled thoughts. She sat almost motionless for nearly two minutes, and then rose up slowly with a slight sigh, and went to her chamber.

It was early on the same evening that Henry Clarence, the subject of her conversation with Melvina, called in, as he not unfrequently did, to spend an hour in pleasant conversation with Caroline Gay. He found her in the parlor reading.

"At your books, I see," he remarked, in a pleasant tone, as he entered.

"Yes; I find my thoughts need exciting by contact with the thoughts of others. A good book helps us much sometimes."

"You were reading a book then. May I ask its author?"

"Degerando."

"You are right in calling this a good book, Caroline," he said, glancing at the title page, to which she had opened, as she handed him the volume. "Self−education is a most important matter, and with such a guide as Degerando, few can go wrong."

"So I think. He is not so abstract, nor does he border on transcendentalism, like Coleridge, who notwithstanding these peculiarities I am yet fond of reading. Degerando opens for you your own heart, and not only opens it, but gives you the means of self−control at every point of your exploration."

The beautiful countenance of Caroline was lit up by pure thoughts, and Henry Clarence could not help gazing upon her with a lively feeling of admiration.

"I cannot but approve your taste," he said.—"But do you not also read the lighter works of the day?"

"I do not certainly pass all these by. I would lose much were I to do so. But I read only a few, and those emanating from such minds as James, Scott, and especially our own Miss Sedgwick. The latter is particularly my favorite. Her pictures, besides being true to nature, are pictures of home. The life she sketches, is the life that is passing all around us—perhaps in the family, unknown to us, who hold the relation of next door neighbors."

"Your discrimination is just. After reading Miss Sedgwick, our sympathies for our fellow creatures take a more humane range. We are moved by an impulse to do good—to relieve the suffering—to regulate our own action in regard to others by a higher and better rule. You are a reader of the poets, too—and like myself, I believe, are an admirer of Wordsworth's calm and deep sympathy with the better and nobler principles of our nature."

"The simple beauty of Wordsworth has ever charmed me. How much of the good and true, like precious jewels set in gold, are scattered thickly over his pages!"

"And Byron and Shelly—can you not enjoy them?" Clarence asked, with something of lively interest in her reply, expressed in his countenance.

"It were but an affectation to say that I can find nothing in them that is beautiful, nothing to please, nothing to admire. I have read many things in the writings of these men that were exquisitely beautiful. Many portions of Childe Harold's Pilgrimage are not surpassed for grandeur, beauty, and force, in the English language: and the Alastor of Shelly, is full of passages of exquisite tenderness and almost unequalled finish of versification. But I have never laid either of them down with feelings that I wished might remain. They excite the mind to a feverish and unhealthy action. We find little in them to deepen our sympathies with our fellows—little to make better the heart, or wiser the head."

"You discriminate with clearness, Caroline," he said; "I did not know that you looked so narrowly into the merits of the world's favorites. But to change the subject; do you intend going to Mrs. Walsingham's next week?"

"Yes, I think I will be there."

"Are you fond of such assemblages?" the young man asked.

"Not particularly so," Caroline replied. "But I think it right to mingle in society, although all of its forms are not pleasant to me."

"And why do you mingle in it then, if its sphere is uncongenial?"

"I cannot say, Mr. Clarence, that it is altogether uncongenial. Wherever we go, into society, we come in contact with much that is good. Beneath the false glitter, often assumed and worn without the heart's being in it, but from a weak spirit of conformity, lies much that is sound in principle, and healthy in moral life. In mingling, then, in society, we aid to develope and strengthen these good principles in others. We encourage, often, the weak and wavering, and bring back such as are beginning to wander from the simple dignity and truth of nature."

"But is there not danger of our becoming dazzled by the false glitter?"

"There may be. But we need not fear this, if we settle in our minds a right principle of action, and bind ourselves firmly to that principle."

A pause followed this last remark, and then the subject of conversation was again changed to one of a more general nature.

An evening or two after, Henry Clarence called in to see Melvina Fenton. Melvina was what may be called a showy girl. Her countenance, which was really beautiful, when animated, attracted every eye. She had a constant flow of spirits, had dipped into many books, and could make a little knowledge in these matters go a great way. Clarence could not conceal from himself that he admired Melvina, and, although his good sense and discrimination opposed this admiration, he could rarely spend an evening with Miss Fenton, without a strong prepossession in her favor. Still, with her, as with every one, he maintained a consistency of character that annoyed her. He could not be brought to flatter her in any way; and for this she thought him cold, and often felt under restraint in his society. One thing in her which he condemned, was her love of dress. Often he would express a wonder to himself, how a young woman of her good sense and information could be guilty of such a glaring departure from true taste.

On this evening she received him in her very best manner. And she was skilful at acting; so skilful, as even to deceive the keen eye of Henry Clarence. Fully resolved on making a conquest, she studied his character, and tried to adapt herself to it.

"I have your favorite here," she remarked, during the evening, lifting a copy of Wordsworth from the centre table.

"Ah, indeed! so you have. Do you ever look into him, Miss Fenton?"

"O yes. I did not know what a treasure was hid in this volume, until, from hearing your admiration of Wordsworth, I procured and read it with delighted interest."

"I am glad that you are not disappointed. If you have a taste for his peculiar style of thinking and writing, you have in that volume an inexhaustible source of pleasure."

"I have discovered that, Mr. Clarence, and must thank you for the delight I have received, and I hope I shall continue to receive."

Nearly two hours were spent by the young man in the company of Miss Fenton, when he went away, more prepossessed in her favor than he had yet been. She had played her part to admiration. The truth was, Wordsworth, except in a few pieces, she had voted a dull book. By tasking herself, she had mastered some

passages, to which she referred during the evening, and thus obtained credit for being far more familiar with the poet of nature than she ever was or ever would be. She went upon the principle of making a sensation, and thus carrying hearts, or the heart she wished to assault, by storm.

"I believe that I really love that girl," Henry Clarence said, on the evening before the party at Mrs. Walsingham's to a young friend.

"Who, Melvina Fenton?"

"Yes."

"She is certainly a beautiful girl."

"And interesting and intelligent."

"Yes—I know of no one who, in comparison with her, bears off the palm."

"And still, there is one thing about her that I do not like. She is too fond of dress and display."

"O, that is only a little foible. No one is altogether perfect."

"True—and the fault with me is, in looking after perfection."

"Yes, I think you expect too much."

"She is affectionate, and that will make up for many deficiencies. And what is more, I can see plainly enough that her heart is interested. The brightening of her cheek, the peculiar expression of her eye, not to be mistaken, when certain subjects are glanced at, convince me that I have only to woo to win her."

"What do you think of Caroline Gay?" asked his friend.

"Well, really, I can hardly tell what to think of her. She has intelligence, good sense, and correct views on almost every subject. But she is the antipodes of Melvina in feeling. If she were not so calm and cold, I could love her; but I do not want a stoic for a wife. I want a heart that will leap to my own, and send its emotion to the cheek and eye."

"I am afraid you will not find an angel in this world," his friend said, smiling.

"No, nor do I want an angel. But I want as perfect a woman as I can get."

"You will have to take Melvina, then, for she has three exceeding good qualities, at least, overshadowing all others."

"And what are they?"

"Beauty."

"Well?"

"An affectionate heart."

"Something to be desired above every thing else. And her next good quality?"

"Her father is worth a 'plum.'"

"I would dispense with that, were she less fond of show, and effect, and gay company."

"O, they are only the accompaniments of girlhood. As a woman and a wife, she will lay them all aside."

"I should certainly hope so, were I going to link my lot with hers."

"Why, I thought your mind was made up."

"Not positively. I must look on a little longer, and scan a little closer before I commit myself."

"Well, success to your marrying expedition. I belong yet to the free list."

In due time Mrs. Walshingham's splendid affair came off.

"Isn't she an elegant woman!" exclaimed a young man in an under tone, to a friend, who stood near Henry Clarence, as Melvina swept into the room dressed in a style of elegance and effect that attracted every eye.

"Beautiful!" responded his companion. "I must dance with her to−night. I always make a point to have one round at least with the belle of the ball−room."

The individual who last spoke, was well known to all in that room as the betrayer of innocence. And Henry Clarence felt his cheek burn and his heart bound with an indignant throb as he heard this remark.

"He will be disappointed, or I am mistaken," he said to himself as the two, who had been conversing near him, moved to another part of the room. "But if Melvina Fenton has so little of that sensitive innocence, that shrinks from the presence of guilt as to dance with him, and suffer her hand to be touched by his, my mind is made up. I will never marry her."

"She is the queen of beauty to−night, Clarence," said a friend coming to Henry's side, and speaking in an under tone.

"She is, indeed, very beautiful; but I cannot help thinking a little too showy. Her dress would be very good for the occasion were those variegated roses taken from their blue ground. Flowers never grow on such a soil; and her head dress is by far too conspicuous, and by no means in good taste."

"Why you are critical to−night, Clarence. I thought Melvina one of your favorites?"

"I must confess a little good will towards her, and perhaps that is the reason of my being somewhat particular in my observation of her style of dress. Certainly, she makes a most decided sensation here to−night; for every eye is upon her, and every tongue, that I have yet heard speak is teeming with words of admiration."

"That she does," responded the friend. "Every other girl in the room will be dying of envy or neglect before the evening is over."

"That would speak little for the gallantry of the men or the good sense of the young ladies," was the quiet reply.

Several times the eye of Henry Clarence wandered around the room in search of Caroline—but he did not see her in the gay assemblage.

"She told me she would be here," he mentally said, "and I should really like to mark the contrast between her and the brilliant Miss Fenton. Oh! there she is, as I live, leaning on the arm of her father, the very personification of innocence and beauty. But her face is too calm by half. I fear she is cold."

Truly was she as Henry Clarence had said, the personification of innocence and beauty. Her dress of snowy whiteness, made perfectly plain, and fitting well a figure that was rather delicate, but of exquisite symmetry, contrasted beautifully with the gay and flaunting attire of those around her. Her head could boast but a single ornament, besides her own tastefully arranged hair, and that was a sprig of buds and half−blown flowers as white as the dress she had chosen for the evening. Her calm sweet face looked sweeter and more innocent than ever, for the contrast of the whole scene relieved her peculiar beauty admirably.

"An angel?" ejaculated a young man by the side of Clarence, moving over towards the part of the room where Caroline stood, still leaning on the arm of her father.

"We wanted but you to make our tableau complete," he said, with a graceful bow. "Let me relieve you, Mr. Gay, of the care of this young lady," he added offering his arm to Caroline—and in the next minute he had joined the promenade with the sweetest creature in the room by his side.

The beautiful contrast that was evident to all, between Caroline, the plainest−dressed maiden in the room, and Melvina the gayest and most imposing, soon drew all eyes upon the former, and Melvina had the discrimination to perceive that she had a rival near the throne, in one whom she little dreamed of fearing; and whose innocent heart she knew too well to accuse of design.

Soon cotillion parties were formed, and among the first to offer his hand to Melvina, was a young man named Sheldon, the same alluded to as declaring that he would dance with her, as he always did with the belle of the ball room. Melvina knew his character well, and Henry Clarence was aware that she possessed this knowledge. His eye was upon her, and she knew it. But she did not know of the determination that he formed or else she would have hesitated.

"The most splendid man in the room, and the most graceful dancer," were the thoughts that glanced through her mind, as she smiled an assent to his invitation to become his partner. "I shall not yet lose my power."

And now all eyes were again upon the brilliant beauty threading the mazy circles, with glowing cheek and sparkling eye. And few thought of blaming her for dancing with Sheldon, whose character ought to have banished him from virtuous society. But there was one whose heart sickened as he looked on, and that one was Henry Clarence. He lingered near the group of dancers but a few minutes, and then wandered away to another room.

"Permit me to transfer my company, Mr. Clarence," said the young man who had thus far monopolized the society of Caroline Gay. "I will not be selfish; and besides, I fear I am becoming too dull for my fair friend here."

With a bow and a smile, Clarence received on his arm the fair girl. He felt for her a tenderer regard than had heretofore warmed his heart, as he strolled through the rooms and listened to her sweet, penetrating voice. And whenever he turned and looked her in the face, he saw that in the expression of her eyes which he had never marked before—something of tenderness that made his own heart beat with a quicker motion. As they drew near the dancers, they observed Sheldon with Melvina leaning on his arm, and two or three others, engaged in maikng up another cotillion.

"We want but one more couple, and here they are," said Sheldon, as Clarence and Caroline came up.

"Will you join this set?" asked Clarence, in a low tone.

"Not _this_ one," she replied.

"Miss Gay does not wish to dance now," her companion said, and they moved away.

But the cotillion was speedily formed without them, and the dance proceeded.

Half an hour after, while Henry Clarence and Caroline were sitting on a lounge, engaged in close conversation, Sheldon came up, and bowing in his most graceful manner, and, with his blandest smile, said,

"Can I have the pleasure of dancing with Miss Gay, this evening?"

"No, sir," was the quiet, firm reply of the maiden, while she looked him steadily in the face.

Sheldon turned hurriedly away, for he understood the rebuke, the first he had yet met with in the refined, fashionable, virtuous society of one of the largest of the Atlantic cities.

The heart of Henry Clarence blessed the maiden by his side.

"You are not averse to dancing, Caroline?" he said.

"O no. But I do not dance with _every_ one."

"In that you are right, and I honor your decision and independence of character."

During the remainder of the evening, she danced several times, more frequently with Henry than with any other, but never in a cotillion of which Sheldon was one of the partners. Much to the pain and alarm of Melvina, Clarence did not offer to dance with her once; and long before the gay assemblage broke up, her appearance had failed to produce any sensation. The eye tired of viewing her gaudy trapping, and turned away unsatisfied. But let Caroline go where she would, she was admired by all. None wearied of her chaste, simple and beautiful attire; none looked upon her mild, innocent face, without an expression, tacit or aloud, of admiration. Even the rebuked, and for a time angered, Sheldon, could not help ever and anon seeking her out amid the crowd, and gazing upon her with a feeling of respect that he tried in vain to subdue.

Melvina had sought to produce a "sensation" by gay and imposing attire, and after a brief and partial success, lost her power. But Caroline, with no wish to be noticed, much less to be the reigning belle of the evening, consulting her own pure taste, went in simple garments, and won the spontaneous admiration of all, and, what was more, the heart of Henry Clarence. He never, after that evening, could feel any thing of his former tenderness towards Melvina Felton. The veil had fallen from his eyes. He saw the difference between the desire of admiration, and a simple love of truth and honor, too plainly, to cause him to hesitate a moment longer in his choice between two so opposite in their characters. And yet, to the eye of an inattentive observer nothing occurred during the progress of Mrs. Walshingham's party more than ordinarily takes place on such occasions. All seemed pleased and happy, and Melvina the happiest of the whole. And yet she had signally failed in her well−laid scheme to take the heart of Henry Clarence—while Caroline, with no such design, and in simply following the promptings of a pure heart and a right taste, had won his affectionate regard.

It was some three or four months after the party at Mrs. Walshingham's, that Melvina Fenton and Caroline Gay were alone in the chamber of the latter, in close and interested conversation.

"I have expected as much," the former said, in answer to some communication made to her by the latter.

"Then you are not surprised?"

"Not at all."

"And I hope not pained by the intelligence?"

"No, Caroline, not now," her friend said, smiling; "though two or three months ago it would have almost killed me. I, too, have been wooed and won."

"Indeed! That is news. And who is it, Melvina? I am eager to know."

"Martin Colburn."

"A gentleman, and every way worthy of your hand. But how in the world comes it that so quiet and modest a young man as Martin has now the dashing belle?"

"It has occurred quite naturally, Caroline. The dashing belle has gained a little more good sense than she had a few months ago. She has not forgotten the party at Mrs. Walsaingham's. And by the bye, Caroline, how completely you out−generalled me on that occasion. I had a great mind for a while never to forgive you."

"You are altogether mistaken, Melvina," Caroline said, with a serious air. "I did not act a part on that occasion. I went but in my true character, and exhibited no other."

"It was nature, then, eclipsing art; truth of character outshining the glitter of false assumption. But all that is

past, and I am wiser and better for it, I hope. You will be happy, I know, with Henry Clarence, for he is worthy of you, and can appreciate your real excellence; and I shall be happy, I trust, with the man of my choice."

"No doubt of it, Melvina. And by the way," Caroline said, laughing, "we shall make another 'sensation,' and then we must be content to retire into peaceful domestic obscurity. You will have a brilliant time, I suppose?"

"O yes. I must try my hand at creating one more sensation, the last and most imposing; and, as my wedding comes the first, you must be my bridesmaid. You will not refuse?"

"Not if we can agree as to how we are to dress. We ought to be alike in this, and yet I can never consent to appear in any thing but what is plain, and beautiful for its simplicity."

"You shall arrange all these. You beat me the last time in creating a sensation, and now I will give up to your better taste."

And rarely has a bride looked sweeter than did Melvina Fenton on her wedding−day. Still, she was eclipsed by Caroline, whose native grace accorded so well with her simple attire, that whoever looked upon her, looked again, and to admire. The "sensation" they created was not soon forgotten.

Caroline was married in a week after, and then the fair heroines of our story passed from the notice of the fashionable world, and were lost with the thousands who thus yearly desert the gay circles, and enter the quiet sphere and sweet obscurity of domestic life.

SOMETHING FOR A COLD.

"Henry," said Mr. Green to his little son Henry, a lad in his eighth year, "I want you to go to the store for me."

Mr. Green was a working−man, who lived in a comfortable cottage, which he had built from money earned from honest industry. He was, moreover, a sober, kind−hearted man, well liked by all his neighbors, and beloved by his own family.

"I'm ready, father," said Henry, who left his play, and went to look for his cap, the moment he was asked to go on an errand.

"Look in the cupboard, and get the pint flask. It's on the lower shelf."

Henry did as desired, and then asked—"What shall I get, father?"

"Tell Mr. Brady to send me a pint of good Irish whiskey."

The boy tripped lightly away, singing as he went. He was always pleased to do an errand for his father.

"This cold of mine gets worse," remarked Mr. Green to his wife, as Henry left the house. "I believe I'll try old Mr. Vandeusen's remedy—a bowl of hot whiskey−punch. He says it always cures him; it throws him into a free perspiration, and the next morning he feels as clear as a bell."

"It is not always good," remarked Mrs. Green, "to have the pores open. We are more liable to take cold."

"Very true. It is necessary to be careful how we expose ourselves afterwards."

"I think I can make you some herb−tea, that would do you as much good as the whiskey punch," said Mrs. Green.

"Perhaps you could," returned her husband, "but I don't like your bitter stuff. It never was to my fancy."

Mrs. Green smiled, and said no more.

"A few moments afterwards, the door opened, and Henry came in, looking pale and frightened.

"Oh, father!" he cried, panting, "Mr. Brooks is killing Margaret!"

"What!" Mr. Green started to his feet.

"Oh!" exclaimed the child, "he's killing her! he's killing her! I saw him strike her on the head with his fist." And tears rolled over the boy's cheeks.

Knowing Brooks to be a violent man when intoxicated, Mr. Green lost not a moment in hesitation or reflection, but left his house hurriedly, and ran to the dwelling of his neighbor, which was near at hand. On entering the house, a sad scene presented itself. The oldest daughter of Brooks, a girl in her seventeenth year, was lying upon a bed, insensible, while a large bruised and bloody spot on the side of her face showed where the iron fist of her brutal father had done its fearful if not fatal work. Her mother bent over her, weeping; while two little girls were shrinking with frightened looks into a corner of the room.

Mr. Green looked around for the wretched man, who, in the insanity of drunkenness, had done this dreadful deed; but he was not to be seen.

"Where is Mr. Brooks?" he asked.

"He has gone for the doctor," was replied.

And in a few minutes he came in with a physician. He was partially sobered, and his countenance had a troubled expression. His eyes shrunk beneath the steady, rebuking gaze of his neighbors.

"Did you say your daughter had fallen down stairs?" said the doctor, as he leaned over Margaret, and examined the dreadful bruise on her cheek.

"Yes—yes," stammered the guilty father, adding this falsehood to the evil act.

"Had the injury been a few inches farther up, she would ere this have breathed her last," said the doctor—looking steadily at Brooks, until the eyes of the latter sunk to the floor.

Just then there were signs of returning life in the poor girl, and the doctor turned towards her all his attention. In a little while, she began to moan, and moved her arms about, and soon opened her eyes.

After she was fully restored again to conscious life, Mr. Green returned to his home, where he was met with eager questions from his wife.—After describing all he had seen, he made this remark—

"There are few better men than Thomas Brooks when he it sober; but when he is drunk he acts like a demon."

"He must be a demon to strike with his hard fist, a delicate creature like his daughter Margaret. And she is so good a girl. Ah, me! to what dreadful consequences does this drinking lead!"

"It takes away a man's reason," said Mr. Green, "and when this is gone, he becomes the passive subject of evil influences. He is, in fact, no longer a man."

Mrs. Green sighed deeply.

"His poor wife!" she murmured; "how my heart aches for her, and his poor children! If the husband and father changes, from a guardian and provider for his family, into their brutal assailant, to whom can they look for protection? Oh, it is sad! sad!"

"It is dreadful! dreadful!" said Mr. Green.—

"It is only a few years ago," he added, "since Brooks began to show that he was drinking too freely. He always liked his glass, but he knew how to control himself, and never drowned his reason in his cups. Of late, however, he seems to have lost all control over himself. I never saw a man abandon himself so suddenly."

"All effects of this kind can be traced back to very small beginnings," remarked Mrs. Green.

"Yes. A man does not become a drunkard in a day. The habit is one of very gradual formation."

"But when once formed," said Mrs. Green, "hardly any power seems strong enough to break it. It clings to a man as if it were a part of himself."

"And we might almost say that it was a part of himself," replied Mr. Green: "for whatever we do from a confirmed habit, fixes in the mind an inclination thereto, that carries us away as a vessel is borne upon the current of a river."

"How careful, then, should every one be, not to put himself in the way of forming so dangerous a habit. Well do I remember when Mr. Brooks was married. A more promising young man could not be found—nor one with a kinder heart. The last evil I feared for him and his gentle wife was that of drunkenness. Alas! that this calamity should have fallen upon their household.—What evil, short of crime, is greater than this?"

"It is so hopeless," remarked Mr. Green. "I have talked with Brooks a good many times, but it has done no good. He promises amendment, but does not keep his promise a day."

"Touch not, taste not, handle not. This is the only safe rule," said Mrs. Green.

"Yes, I believe it," returned her husband.—"The man who never drinks is in no danger of becoming a drunkard."

For some time, Mr. and Mrs. Green continued to converse about the sad incident which had just transpired in the family of their neighbor, while their little son, upon whose mind the fearful sight he had witnessed was still painfully vivid, sat and listened to all they were saying, with a clear comprehension of the meaning of the whole.

After awhile the subject was dropped. There had been a silence of some minutes, when the attention of Mr. Green was again called to certain unpleasant bodily sensations, and he said—

"I declare! this cold of mine is very bad. I must do something to break it before it gets worse. Henry, did you get that Irish whiskey I sent for?"

"No, sir," replied the child, "I was so frightened when I saw Mr. Brooks strike Margaret, that I ran back."

"Oh, well, I don't wonder! It was dreadful. Mr. Brooks was very wicked to do so. But take the flask and run over to the store. Tell Brady that I want a pint of good Irish whiskey."

Henry turned from his father, and went to the table on which he had placed the flask. He did not move with his usual alacrity.

"It was whiskey, wasn't it," said the child, as he took the bottle in his hand, "that made Mr. Brooks strike Margaret?" And he looked so earnestly into his father's face, and with so strange an expression, that the man felt disturbed, while he yet wondered at the manner of the lad.

"Yes," replied Mr. Green, "it was the whiskey. Mr. Brooks, if he had been sober, would not have hurt a hair of her head."

Henry looked at the bottle, then at his father, in so strange a way, that Mr. Green, who did not at first comprehend what was in the child's thoughts wondered still more. All was soon understood, for Harry, bursting into tears, laid down the flask, and, throwing his arms around his father's neck, said—

"Oh, father! don't get any whiskey!"

Mr. Green deeply touched by the incident, hugged his boy tightly to his bosom. He said—

"I only wanted it for medicine, dear. But, never mind. I won't let such dangerous stuff come into my house. Mother shall make me some of her herb−tea, and that will do as well."

Henry looked up, after a while, timidly.—"You're not angry with me, father?" came from his innocent lips.

"Oh, no, my child! Why should I be angry?" replied Mr. Green, kissing the cheek of his boy. Then the sunshine came back again to Henry's heart, and he was happy as before.

Mrs. Green made the herb−tea for her husband, and it proved quite as good for him as the whiskey−punch. A glass or two of cold water, on going to bed, would probably have been of more real advantage in the case, than either of these doubtful remedies.

THE PORTRAIT.

"BLESS the happy art!" ejaculated Mrs. Morton, wiping the moisture from her eyes. "Could anything be more perfect than that likeness of his sweet, innocent face? Dear little Willie! I fear I love him too much."

"It is indeed perfect," said Mr. Morton, after viewing the picture in many lights. "My favourite painter has surpassed himself. What could be more like life, than that gentle, half−pensive face looking so quiet and thoughtful, and yet so full of childhood's most innocent, happy expression?"

Mr. Morton, here introduced to the reader, was a wealthy merchant of Philadelphia, and a liberal patron of the arts. He had, already, obtained several pictures from Sully, who was, with him, as an artist, a great favourite. The last order had just been sent home. It was a portrait of his youngest, and favourite child—a sweet little boy, upon whose head three summers had not yet smiled.

"I would not take the world for it!" said Mrs. Morton after looking at it long and steadily for the hundredth time. "Dear little fellow! A year from now, and how changed he will be. And every year he will be changing and changing; but this cannot alter, and even from the period of manhood, we may look back and see our Willie's face when but a child."

"Every one who is able," remarked Mr. Morton, "should have the portraits of his children taken. What better legacy could a father leave to his child, than the image of his own innocent face! Surely, it were enough to drive away thoughts of evil, and call up old and innocent affections, for any man, even the man of crime, to look for but a moment upon the image of what he was in childhood."

"And yet there are some," added Mrs. Morton, "who call portraits, and indeed, all paintings, mere luxuries—meaning, thereby, something that is utterly useless."

"Yes, there are such, but even they, it seems to me, might perceive their use in preserving the innocent features of their children. The good impressions made in infancy and childhood, are rarely if ever lost; they come back upon every one at times, and are, frequently, all−powerful in the influence they exert against evil. How like a spell to call back those innocent thoughts and affections, would be the image of a man's face in childhood! No one, it seems to me, could resist its influence."

One, two, and three years passed away, and every one wrought some change upon "little Willie," but each change seemed to the fond parents an improvement,—yet, did they not look back to earlier years, as they glanced at his picture, with less of tender emotion, and heart−stirring delight. But now a sad change, the saddest of all changes that occur, took place. Disease fastened upon the child, and ere the parents, and fond sisters of a younger and only brother, were fully sensible of danger, the spirit of the child had fled. We will not linger to pain the reader with any minute description of the deep and abiding grief that fell, like a shadow from an evil wing overspreading them, upon the household of Mr. Morton, but pass on to scenes more exciting, if not less moving to the heart.

For many weeks, Mrs. Morton could not trust herself to look up to the picture that still hung in its place, the picture of her lost one. But after time had, in some degree, mellowed the grief that weighed down her spirits, she found a melancholy delight in gazing intently upon the beautiful face that was still fresh and unchanged—that still looked the impersonation of innocence.

"He was too pure and too lovely for the earth," she said, one day, to her husband, about two months after his death, leaning her head upon his shoulder—"and so the angels took him."

"Then do not grieve for him," Mr. Morton replied in a soothing tone. "We know that he is with the angels, and where they are, is neither evil, nor sorrow, nor pain. Much as I loved him, much as I grieved for his loss, I would not recall him if I could. But, our picture cannot die. And though it is mute and inanimate, yet it is something to awaken remembrances, that, even though sad, we delight to cherish. It is something to remind us, that we have a child in heaven."

But the loss of their child seemed but the beginning of sorrows to Mr. Morton and his family. An unexpected series of failures in business so fatally involved him, that extrication became impossible. He was an honest man,

and therefore, this sudden disastrous aspect of affairs was doubly painful, for he knew no other course but the honourable giving up of everything. On learning the whole truth in relation to his business, he came home, and after opening the sad news to his wife, he called his family around him.

"My dear children," he said, "I have painful news to break to you; but you cannot know it too soon. Owing to a succession of heavy failures, my business has become embarrassed beyond hope. I must give up all,—even our comfortable and elegant home must be changed for one less expensive, and less comfortable. Can you, my children, bear with cheerfulness and contentment such a changed condition?"

The heart of each one had already been subdued and chastened by the affliction that removed the little playmate of all so suddenly away, and now the news of a painful and unlooked−for reverse came with a shock that, for a few moments, bewildered and alarmed.

"Are not my children willing to share the good and evil of life with their father?" Mr. Morton resumed after the gush of tears that followed the announcement of his changed fortunes had in a degree subsided.

"Yes, dear father! be they what they may," Constance, the eldest, a young lady in her seventeenth year, said, looking up affectionately through her tears.

Mary, next in years, pressed up to her father's side, and twining an arm around his neck, kissed his forehead tenderly. She did not speak; for her heart was too full; but it needed no words to assure him that her love was as true as the needle to the pole.

Eliza, but twelve, and like an unfolding bud half revealing the loveliness and beauty within, could not fully comprehend the whole matter. But enough she did understand, to know that her father was in trouble, and this brought her also to his side.

"Do not think of us, dear father!" Constance said, after the pause of a few oppressive moments. "Let the change be what it may, it cannot take from us our father's love, and our father's honourable principles. Nor can it change the true affection of his children. I feel as if I could say, With my father I could go unto prison or to death."

The father was much moved. "That trial, my dear children, I trust you may never be called upon to meet. The whole extent of the painful one into which you are about to enter, you cannot now possibly realize, and I earnestly hope that your hearts may not fail you while passing through the deep waters. But one thought may strengthen; think that by your patience and cheerfulness, your father's burdens will be lightened. He cannot see you pained without suffering a double pang himself."

"Trust us, father," was the calm, earnest, affectionate reply of Constance; and it was plain, by the deep resolution expressed in the faces of her sisters, that she spoke for them as well as herself.

And now, the shadow that was obscuring their earthly prospects, began to fall thicker upon them. At the meeting of his creditors which was called, he gave a full statement of his affairs.

"And now," he said, "I am here to assign everything. In consequence of heavy, and you all must see, unavoidable, losses, this assignment will include all my property, and still leave a small deficiency. Beyond that, I can only hope for success in my future exertions, and pledge that success in anticipation. Can I do more?"

"We could not ask for more certainly," was the cold response of a single individual, made in a tone of voice implying no sympathy with the debtor's misfortunes, but rather indicating disappointment that the whole amount of his claim could not be made out of the assets.

Some degree of sympathy, some kind consideration for his painful condition Mr. Morton naturally looked for, but nearly every kind emotion for him was stifled by the sordid disappointment which each one of his former business friends felt in losing what they valued, as their feelings indicated, above everything else—their money.

"When will the assignment be made?" was the next remark.

"Appoint your trustees, and I am ready at any moment."

Trustees were accordingly appointed, and these had a private conference with, and received their instructions from the creditors. In a week they commenced their work of appraisement. After a thorough and careful examination into accounts, deeds, mortgages, and documents of various kinds, and becoming satisfied that every thing was as Mr. Morton had stated it, it was found that the property represented by these would cover ninety cents in the dollar.

"Your furniture and plate comes next," said one of the trustees.

Mr. Morton bowed and said, while his heart sunk in his bosom—

"To−morrow I will be ready for that."

"But why not to−day?" inquired one of the trustees. "We are anxious to get through with this unpleasant business."

"I said to−morrow," Mr. Morton replied, while a red spot burned upon his cheek.

The trustees looked at each other, and hesitated.

"Surely," said the debtor, "you cannot hesitate to let me have a single day in which to prepare my family for so painful a duty as that which is required of me."

"We should suppose," remarked one of the trustees, in reply, "that your family were already prepared for that."

The debtor looked the last speaker searchingly in the face for some moments, and then said, as if satisfied with the examination—

"Then you are afraid that I will make way, in the mean time, with some of my plate!"

"I did not say so, Mr. Morton. But, you know we are under oath to protect the interest of the creditors."

An indignant reply trembled on the lips of Morton, but he curbed his feelings with a strong effort.

"I am ready now," he said, after a few moments of hurried self−communion. "The sooner it is over the better."

Half an hour after he entered his house with the trustees, and sworn appraiser. He left them in the parlour below, while he held a brief but painful interview with his family.

"Do not distress yourself, dear father!" Constance said, laying her hand upon his shoulder. We expected this, and have fully nerved ourselves for the trial."

"May he who watches over, and regards us all, bless you, my children!" the father said with emotion, and hurriedly left them.

A careful inventory of the costly furniture that adorned the parlours was first taken. The plate was then displayed, rich and beautiful, and valued; and then the trustees lifted their eyes to the wall—they were connoisseurs in the fine arts; at least one of them was, but a taste for the arts had, in his case, failed to soften his feelings. He looked at a picture much as a dealer in precious stones looks at a diamond, to determine its money−value.

"That is from Guido," he said, looking admiringly at a sweet picture, which had always been a favourite of Mr. Morton's, "and it is worth a hundred dollars."

"Shall I put it down at that?" asked the appraiser, who had little experience in valuing pictures.

"Yes; put it down at one hundred. It will bring that under the hammer, any day," replied the connoisseur. "Ah, what have we here? A copy from Murillo's 'Good Shepherd.' Isn't that a lovely picture? Worth a hundred and fifty, every cent. And here is 'Our Saviour,' from Da Vinci's celebrated picture of the Last Supper; and a 'Magdalen' from Correggio. You are a judge of pictures, I see, Mr. Morton! But what is this?" he said, eyeing closely a large engraving, richly framed.

"A proof, as I live! from the only plate worth looking at of Raphael's Madonna of St. Sixtus. I'll give fifty dollars for that, myself."

The pictures named were all entered up by the appraiser, and then the group continued their examination.

"Here is a Sully," remarked the trustee above alluded to, pausing before Willie's portrait.

"But that is a portrait," Mr. Morton said, advancing, while his heart leaped with a new and sudden fear.

"If it is, Mr. Morton, it is a valuable picture, worth every cent of two hundred dollars. We cannot pass that, Sir."

"What!" exclaimed Mr. Morton, "take my Willie's portrait? O no, you cannot do that!"

"It is no doubt a hard case, Mr. Morton," said one of the trustees. "But we must do our duty, however painful. That picture is a most beautiful one, and by a favourite artist, and will bring at least two hundred dollars. It is not a necessary article of household furniture, and is not covered by the law. We should be censured, and justly too, if we were to pass it."

For a few moments, Mr. Morton's thoughts were so bewildered and his feelings so benumbed by the sudden and unexpected shock, that he could not rally his mind enough to decide what to say or how to act. To have the unfeeling hands of creditors, under the sanction of the law, seize upon his lost Willie's portrait, was to him so unexpected and sacrilegious a thing, that he could scarcely realize it, and he stood wrapt in painful, dreamy abstraction, until roused by the direction,

"Put it down at a hundred and fifty," given to the appraiser, by one of the trustees.

"Are your hearts made of iron?" he asked bitterly, roused at once into a distinct consciousness of what was transpiring.

"Be composed, Mr. Morton," was the cold, quiet reply.

"And thus might the executioner say to the victim he was torturing—_Be composed_. But surely, when I tell you that that picture is the likeness of my youngest child, now no more, you will not take it from us. To lose that, would break his mother's heart. Take all the rest, and I will not murmur. But in the name of humanity spare me the portrait of my angel boy."

There was a brief, cold, silent pause, and the trustees continued their investigations. Sick at heart, Mr. Morton turned from them and sought his family. The distressed, almost agonized expression of his countenance was noticed, as he came into the chamber where they had retired.

"Is it all over?" asked Mrs. Morton.

"Not yet," was the sad answer.

The mother and daughter knew how much their father prized his choice collection of pictures, and supposed that giving an inventory of them had produced the pain that he seemed to feel. Of the truth, they had not the most distant idea. For a few minutes he sat with them, and then, recovering in some degree, his self−possession, he returned and kept with the trustees, until everything in the house that could be taken, was valued. He closed the door after them, when they left, and again returned to his family.

"Have they gone?" asked Constance, in a low, almost whispering voice.

"Yes, my child, they have gone at last."

"And what have they left us?" inquired Mrs. Morton somewhat anxiously.

"Nothing but the barest necessaries for housekeeping."

"They did not take our carpets and—"

"Yes, Mary," said Mr. Morton interrupting her, "every article in the parlors has been set down as unnecessary."

"O, father!" exclaimed the eldest daughter, "can it be possible?"

"Yes, my child, it is possible. We are left poor, indeed. But for all that I would not care, if they had only left us Willie's portrait!"

Instantly the mother and daughters rose to their feet, with blanched cheeks, and eyes staring wildly into the father's face.

"O no, not Willie's portrait, surely!" the mother at length said, mournfully. "We cannot give that up. It is of no comparative value to others, and is all in all to us."

"I plead with them to spare us that. But it was no use," Mr. Morton replied. "The tenderest ties in nature were nothing to them in comparison with a hundred and fifty dollars."

"But surely," urged Constance, "the law will protect us in the possession of the picture. Who ever heard of a portrait being seized upon by a creditor?"

"It is a cruel omission; but nevertheless, Constance, there is no law to protect us in keeping it."

"But they shall _not_ have it!" Mary said indignantly. "I will take it away this very night, where they can never find it."

"That would be doing wrong my child," Mr. Morton replied. "I owe these men, and this picture, they say, will bring a hundred and fifty dollars. If they claim it, then, I cannot honestly withhold it. Let us, then, my dear children, resolve to keep our consciences clear of wrong, and endeavor patiently to bear with our afflictions. They can only result in good to us so far as we humbly acquiesce in them. Nothing happens by chance. Every event affecting us, I have often told you, is ordered or permitted by Divine Providence, and is intended to make us better and wiser. This severest trial of all, if patiently borne, will, I am sure, result in good."

But, even while he tried to encourage and bear up the drooping spirits of his family, his own heart sunk within him at the thought of losing the portrait of his child.

One week sufficed to transfer his property into the hands of the individuals appointed to receive it. He sought to make no unnecessary delay, and, therefore, it was quickly done. At the end of that time, he removed his family into a small house at the northern extremity of the city, and furnished it with the scanty furniture that, as an insolvent debtor the law allowed him to claim. Ere he left his beautiful mansion with his wife and children, they all assembled in the parlour where still hung Willie's sweet portrait. The calm, innocent face of the child had for

their eyes a melancholy beauty, such as it had never worn before; and they gazed upon it until every cheek was wet, and every heart oppressed. A sale of the furniture had been advertised for that day, and already the house had been thrown open. Several strangers had come in to make examinations before the hour of sale, and among them was a young man, who on observing the family in the parlour, instinctively withdrew; not, however before he had glanced at the picture they were all looking at so earnestly. Aware that strangers were gathering, Mr. Morton and his family soon withdrew, each taking a last, lingering, tearful glance at the dear face looking so sweet, so calm, so innocent.

Their new home presented a painful and dreary contrast to the one from which they had just parted. In the parlours, the floors of which were all uncarpeted there were a dozen chairs, and a table, and that was all! Bedding barely enough for the family, with but scanty furniture, sufficed for the chambers; and the same exacting hands had narrowed down to a stinted remnant the appendages of the kitchen.

It was an hour after the closing in of evening, and the family greatly depressed in spirits, were gathered in one of the chambers, sad, gloomy, and silent, when the servant which they had retained came in and said that Mr. Wilkinson was below and wished to see Miss Constance.

"Indeed, indeed, mother, I cannot see him!" Constance said bursting into tears. "It is cruel for him to come here so soon," she added, after she had a little regained her self−possession.

"You can do no less than see him Constance," her mother said. "Do not lose that consciousness of internal truth of character which alone can sustain you in your new relations. You are not changed, even if outward circumstances are no longer as they were. And if Mr. Wilkinson does not regard these do not you. Meet him my child, as you have ever met him."

"We have only met as friends," Constance replied, while her voice trembled in spite of her efforts to be calm.

"Then meet now as friends, and equals. Remember, that, all that is of real worth in you remains. Adversity cannot rob you of your true character."

"Your mother has spoken well and wisely," Mr. Morton said. "If Mr. Wilkinson, whom I know to be a man of most sterling integrity of character, still wishes your society, or ours, it must not, from any foolish pride or weakness on our part, be denied."

"Then I will see him, and try to meet him as I should, though I feel that the task will be a hard one," Constance replied. And her pale cheek and swimming eye, told but too well, that it would need all her efforts to maintain her self−possession.

In a few minutes she descended and met Mr. Wilkinson in the parlour.

"Pardon me," he said advancing and taking her hand as she entered, "for so soon intruding upon you after the sad change in your condition. But I should have been untrue to the kind feelings I bear yourself and family, had I, from a principle of false delicacy, staid away. I trust I shall be none the less welcome now than before."

"We must all esteem the kindness that prompted your visit," Constance replied with a strong effort to subdue the troubled emotions within, and which were but too plainly indicated, by her now flushed cheek and trembling lips.

"No other feeling induced me to call, except indeed, one stronger than that possibly could be—" Mr. Wilkinson said, still holding her hand, and looking intently in her face—" the feeling of profound regard, nay, I must call it, affection, which I have long entertained for you."

A declaration so unexpected, under the circumstances, entirely destroyed all further efforts on the part of Constance, to control her feelings. She burst into tears, but did not attempt to withdraw her hand.

"Can I hope for a return of like sentiment, Constance?" he at length said, tenderly.

A few moments' silence ensued, when the weeping girl lifted her head, and looked him in the face with eyes, though filled with tears, full of love's tenderest expression.

"I still confide in my father, Mr. Wilkinson," was her answer.

"Then I would see your father to−night."

Instantly Constance glided from the room, and in a few minutes her father came down into the parlour. A long conference ensued; and then the mother was sent for, and finally Constance again. Mr. Wilkinson made offers of marriage, which, being accepted, he urged an immediate consummation. Delay was asked, but he was so earnest, that all parties agreed that the wedding should take place in three days.

In three days the rite was said, and Wilkinson, one of the most prosperous young merchants of Philadelphia,

left for New York with his happy bride. A week soon glided away, at the end of which time they returned.

"Where are we going?" Constance asked, as they entered a carriage on landing from the steamboat.

"To our own house, of course!" was her husband's reply.

"You didn't tell me that you had taken a house, and furnished it."

"Didn't I? Well, that is something of an oversight. But you hardly thought that I was so simple as to catch a bird without having a cage first provided for it."

"You had but little time to get the cage," thought Constance, but she did not utter the thought.

In a few minutes the carriage stopped before a noble dwelling, the first glance of which bewildered the senses of the young bride, and caused her to lean silent and trembling upon her husband's arm, as she ascended the broad marble steps leading to the entrance. Thence she was ushered hurriedly into the parlours.

There stood her father, mother, and sisters, ready to receive her. There was every article of furniture in its place, as she had left it but a little over a week before. The pictures, so much admired by her father, still hung on the wall; and there, in the old spot, was Willie s dear portrait, as sweet, as innocent, as tranquil as ever! One glance took in all this. In the next moment she fell weeping upon her mother's bosom.

A few words will explain all. Mr. Wilkinson, who was comparatively wealthy, was just on the eve of making proposals for the hand of Constance Morton, when the sudden reverse overtook her father, and prostrated the hopes of the whole family. But his regard was a true one, and not to be marred or effaced by external changes. When he saw the sale of the house and furniture announced, he determined to buy all in at any price. And he did so. On the day of the sale, he bid over every competitor.

On the night of his interview with Constance and her father, he proposed a partnership with the latter.

"But I have nothing, you know, Mr. Wilkinson," he replied.

"You have established business habits, and extensive knowledge of the operations of trade, and a large business acquaintance. And besides these, habits of discrimination obtained by long experience, which I need. With your co−operation in my business, I can double my profits. Will you join me?"

"It were folly, Mr. Wilkinson, to say nay," Mr. Morton replied. "Then I will announce the co−partnership at once," he said.

And it was announced before the day of marriage, but Constance did not see it.

A happy elevation succeeded of course, the sudden, painful, but brief depression of their fortunes. Nor was any of that tried family less happy than before. And one was far happier. Still, neither Mr. Morton, nor the rest could ever look at Willie's portrait without remembering how near they had once been to losing it, nor without a momentary fear, that some change in life's coming mutations might rob them of the precious treasure, now doubly dear to them.

VERY POOR.

"WHAT has become of the Wightmans?" I asked of my old friend Payson. I had returned to my native place after an absence of several years. Payson looked grave.

"Nothing wrong with them, I hope. Wightman was a clever man, and he had a pleasant family."

My friend shook his head ominously.

"He was doing very well when I left," said I.

"All broken up now," was answered. "He failed several years ago."

"Ah! I'm sorry to hear this. What has become of him?"

"I see him now and then, but I don't know what he is doing."

"And his family?"

"They live somewhere in Old Town. I havn't met any of them for a long time. Some one told me that they were very poor."

This intelligence caused a feeling of sadness to pervade my mind. The tone and manner of Payson, as he used the words "very poor," gave to them more than ordinary meaning. I saw, in imagination, my old friend reduced from comfort and respectability, to a condition of extreme poverty, with all its sufferings and humiliations. While my mind was occupied with these unpleasant thoughts, my friend said,

"You must dine with me to−morrow. Mrs. Payson will be glad to see you, and I want to have a long talk about old times. We dine at three."

I promised to be with them, in agreement with the invitation; and then we parted. It was during business hours, and as my friend's manner was somewhat occupied and hurried, I did not think it right to trespass on his time. What I had learned of the Wightmans troubled my thoughts. I could not get them out of my mind. They were estimable people. I had prized them above ordinary acquaintances; and it did seem peculiarly hard that they should have suffered misfortune. "Very poor"—I could not get the words out of my ears. The way in which they were spoken involved more than the words themselves expressed, or rather, gave a broad latitude to their meaning. "VERY poor! Ah me!" The sigh was deep and involuntary.

I inquired of several old acquaintances whom I met during the day for the Wightmans; but all the satisfaction I received was, that Wightman had failed in business several years before, and was now living somewhere in Old Town in a very poor way. "They are miserably poor," said one. "I see Wightman occasionally," said another—"he looks seedy enough." "His girls take in sewing, I have heard," said a third, who spoke with a slight air of contempt, as if there were something disgraceful attached to needle−work, when pursued as a means of livelihood. I would have called during the day, upon Wightman, but failed to ascertain his place of residence.

"Glad to see you!" Payson extended his hand with a show of cordiality, as I entered his store between two and three o'clock on the next day.

"Sit down and look over the papers for a little while," he added. "I'll be with you in a moment. Just finishing up my bank business."

"Business first," was my answer, as I took the proffered newspaper. "Stand upon no ceremony with me."

As Payson turned partly from me, and bent his head to the desk at which he was sitting, I could not but remark the suddenness with which the smile my appearance had awakened faded from his countenance. Before him was a pile of bank bills, several checks, and quite a formidable array of bank notices. He counted the bills and checks, and after recording the amount upon a slip of paper glanced uneasily at his watch, sighed, and then looked anxiously towards the door. At this moment a clerk entered hastily, and made some communication in an undertone, which brought from my friend a disappointed and impatient expression.

"Go to Wilson," said he hurriedly, "and tell him to send me a check for five hundred without fail. Say that I am so much short in my bank payments, and that it is now too late to get the money any where else. Don't linger a moment; it is twenty five minutes to three now."

The clerk departed. He was gone full ten minutes, during which period Payson remained at his desk, silent,

but showing many signs of uneasiness. On returning, he brought the desired check, and was then dispatched to lift the notes for which this late provision was made.

"What a life for a man to lead," said my friend, turning to me with a contracted brow and a sober face. "I sometimes wish myself on an island in mid ocean. You remember C——?"

"Very well."

"He quit business a year ago, and bought a farm. I saw him the other day. 'Payson,' said he, with an air of satisfaction, 'I haven't seen a bank notice this twelvemonth.' He's a happy man! This note paying is the curse of my life. I'm forever on the street financiering—_Financiering_. How I hate the word! But come—they'll be waiting dinner for us. Mrs. Payson is delighted at the thought of seeing you. How long is it since you were here? About ten years, if I'm not mistaken. You'll find my daughters quite grown up. Clara is in her twentieth year. You, of course, recollect her only as a school girl. Ah me! how time does fly!"

I found my friend living in a handsome house in Franklin street. It was showily, not tastefully, furnished, and the same might be said of his wife and daughters. When I last dined with them—it was many years before—they were living in a modest, but very comfortable way, and the whole air of their dwelling was that of cheerfulness and comfort. Now, though their ample parlors were gay with rich Brussels, crimson damask, and brocatelle, there was no genuine home feeling there. Mrs. Payson, the last time I saw her, wore a mousseline de lain, of subdued colors, a neat lace collar around her neck, fastened with a small diamond pin, the marriage gift of her father. Her hair, which curled naturally, was drawn behind her ears in a few gracefully falling ringlets. She needed no other ornament. Anything beyond would have taken from her the chiefest of her attractions, her bright, animated countenance, in which her friends ever read a heart−welcome.

How changed from this was the rather stately woman, whose real pleasure at seeing an old friend was hardly warm enough to melt through the ice of an imposed formality. How changed from this the pale, cold, worn face, where selfishness and false pride had been doing a sad, sad work. Ah! the rich Honiton lace cap and costly cape; the profusion of gay ribbons, and glitter of jewelry; the ample folds of glossy satin; how poor a compensation were they for the true woman I had parted with a few years ago, and now sought beneath these showy adornments in vain!

Two grown−up daughters, dressed almost as flauntingly as their mother, were now presented. In the artificial countenance of the oldest, I failed to discover any trace of my former friend Clara.

A little while we talked formally, and with some constraint all round; then, as the dinner had been waiting us, and was now served, we proceeded to the dining−room. I did not feel honored by the really sumptuous meal the Paysons had provided for their old friend; because it was clearly to be seen that no honor was intended. The honor was all for themselves. The ladies had not adorned their persons, nor provided their dinner, to give me welcome and pleasure, but to exhibit to the eyes of their guest, their wealth, luxury, and social importance. If I had failed to perceive this, the conversation of the Paysons would have made it plain, for it was of style and elegance in house−keeping and dress—of the ornamental in all its varieties; and in no case of the truly domestic and useful. Once or twice I referred to the Wightmans; but the ladies knew nothing of them, and seemed almost to have forgotten that such persons ever lived.

It did not take long to discover that, with all the luxury by which my friends were surrounded, they were far from being happy. Mrs. Payson and her daughters, had, I could see, become envious as well as proud. They wanted a larger house, and more costly furniture in order to make as imposing an appearance as some others whom they did not consider half as good as themselves. To all they said on this subject, I noticed that Payson himself maintained, for the most part, a half−moody silence. It was, clearly enough, unpleasant to him.

"My wife and daughters think I am made of money," said he, once, half laughing. "But if they knew how hard it was to get hold of, sometimes, they would be less free in spending. I tell them I am a poor man, comparatively speaking; but I might as well talk to the wind."

"Just as well," replied his wife, forcing an incredulous laugh; "why will you use such language? A poor man!"

"He that wants what he is not able to buy, is a poor man, if I understand the meaning of the term," said Payson, with some feeling. "And he who lives beyond his income, as a good many of our acquaintances do to my certain knowledge, is poorer still."

"Now don't get to riding that hobby, Mr. Payson," broke in my friend's wife, deprecatingly—"don't, if you please. In the first place, it's hardly polite, and, in the second place, it is by no means agreeable. Don't mind

him"—and the lady turned to me gaily—"he gets in these moods sometimes."

I was not surprised at this after what I had witnessed, about his house. Put the scenes and circumstances together, and how could it well be otherwise? My friend, thus re−acted upon, ventured no further remark on a subject that was so disagreeable to his family. But while they talked of style and fashion, he sat silent, and to my mind oppressed with no very pleasant thoughts. After the ladies had retired, he said, with considerable feeling—

"All this looks and sounds very well, perhaps; but there are two aspects to almost everything. My wife and daughters get one view of life, and I another. They see the romance, I the hard reality. It is impossible for me to get money as fast as they wish to spend it. It was my fault in the beginning, I suppose. Ah! how difficult it is to correct an error when once made. I tell them that I am a poor man, but they smile in my face, and ask me for a hundred dollars to shop with in the next breath. I remonstrate, but it avails not, for they don't credit what I say. AND I AM POOR—poorer, I sometimes think, than the humblest of my clerks, who manages, out of his salary of four hundred a year, to lay up fifty dollars. He is never in want of a dollar, while I go searching about, anxious and troubled, for my thousands daily. He and his patient, cheerful, industrious little wife find peace and contentment in the single room their limited means enables them to procure, while my family turn dissatisfied from the costly adornments of our spacious home, and sigh for richer furniture, and a larger and more showy mansion. If I were a millionaire, their ambition might be satisfied. Now, their ample wishes may not be filled. I must deny them, or meet inevitable ruin. As it is, I am living far beyond a prudent limit—not half so far, however, as many around me, whose fatal example is ever tempting the weak ambition of their neighbors."

This and much more of similar import, was said by Payson. When I returned from his elegant home, there was no envy in my heart. He was called a rich and prosperous man by all whom I heard speak of him, but in my eyes, he was very poor.

A day or two afterwards, I saw Wightman in the street. He was so changed in appearance that I should hardly have known him, had he not first spoken. He looked in my eyes, twenty years older than when we last met. His clothes were poor, though scrupulously clean; and, on observing him more closely, I perceived an air of neatness and order, that indicates nothing of that disregard about external appearance which so often accompanies poverty.

He grasped my hand cordially, and inquired, with a genuine interest, after my health and welfare. I answered briefly, and then said:

"I am sorry to hear that it is not so well with you in worldly matters as when I left the city."

A slight shadow flitted over his countenance, but it grew quickly cheerful again.

"One of the secrets of happiness in this life," said he, "is contentment with our lot. We rarely learn this in prosperity. It is not one of the lessons taught in that school."

"And you have learned it?" said I.

"I have been trying to learn it," he answered, smiling. "But I find it one of the most difficult of lessons. I do not hope to acquire it perfectly."

A cordial invitation to visit his family and take tea with them followed, and was accepted. I must own, that I prepared to go to the Wightmans with some misgivings as to the pleasure I should receive. Almost every one of their old acquaintances, to whom I had addressed inquiries on the subject, spoke of them with commiseration, as "very poor." If Wightman could bear the change with philosophy, I hardly expected to find the same Christian resignation in his wife, whom I remembered as a gay, lively woman, fond of social pleasures.

Such were my thoughts when I knocked at the door of a small house, that stood a little back from the street. It was quickly opened by a tall, neatly−dressed girl, whose pleasant face lighted into a smile of welcome as she pronounced my name.

"This is not Mary?" I said as I took her proffered hand.

"Yes, this is your little Mary," she answered. "Father told me you were coming."

Mrs. Wightman came forward as I entered the room into which the front door opened, and gave me a most cordial welcome. Least of all had time and reverses changed her. Though a little subdued, and rather paler and thinner, her face had the old heart−warmth in it—the eyes were bright from the same cheerful spirit.

"How glad I am to see you again!" said Mrs. Wightman. And she was glad. Every play of feature, every modulation of tone, showed this.

Soon her husband came in, and then she excused herself with a smile, and went out, as I very well understood, to see after tea. In a little while supper was ready, and I sat down with the family in their small breakfast room, to

one of the pleasantest meals I have ever enjoyed. A second daughter, who was learning a trade, came in just as we were taking our places at the table, and was introduced. What a beautiful glow was upon her young countenance! She was the very image of health and cheerfulness.

When I met Wightman in the street, I thought his countenance wore something of a troubled aspect—this was the first impression made upon me. Now, as I looked into his face, and listened to his cheerful, animated conversation, so full of life's true philosophy, I could not but feel an emotion of wonder. "Very poor!" How little did old friends, who covered their neglect of this family with these commiserating words, know of their real state. How little did they dream that sweet peace folded her wings in that humble dwelling nightly; and that morning brought to each a cheerful, resolute spirit, which bore them bravely through all their daily toil.

"How are you getting along now Wightman?" I asked, as, after bidding good evening to his pleasant family, I stood with him at the gate opening from the street to his modest dwelling.

"Very well," was his cheerful reply. "It was up hill work for several years, when I only received five hundred dollars salary as clerk, and all my children were young. But now, two of them are earning something, and I receive eight hundred dollars instead of five. We have managed to save enough to buy this snug little house. The last payment was made a month since. I am beginning to feel rich."

And he laughed a pleasant laugh.

"Very poor," I said to myself, musingly, as I walked away from the humble abode of the Wightmans. "Very poor. The words have had a wrong application."

On the next day I met Payson.

"I spent last evening with the Wightmans," said I.

"Indeed! How did you find them? Very poor, of course."

"I have not met a more cheerful family for years. No, Mr. Payson they are not '_very poor_,' for they take what the great Father sends, and use it with thankfulness. _Those who ever want more than they possess are the very poor._ But such are not the Wightmans."

Payson looked at me a moment or two curiously, and then let his eyes fall to the ground. A little while he mused. Light was breaking in upon him.

"Contented and thankful!" said he, lifting his eyes from the ground. "Ah! my friend, if I and mine were only contented and thankful!"

"You have cause to be," I remarked. "The great Father hath covered your table with blessings."

"And yet we are poor—VERY POOR," said he, "for we are neither contented nor thankful. We ask for more than we possess, and, because it is not given, we are fretful and impatient. Yes, yes—we, not the Wightmans, are poor—very poor."

And with these words on his lips, my old friend turned from me, and walked slowly away, his head bent in musing attitude to the ground. Not long afterwards, I heard that he had failed.

"Ah!" thought I, when this news reached me, "now you are poor, VERY poor, indeed!" And it was so.