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THE PEACEMAKER,

AND

OTHER STORIES.



"I don't believe, Grandpa, you ever did see anything
so sweet."



THE PEACEMAKER,

AND

OTHER STORIES.

BY T. S. ARTHUR.

NEW YORK:
SHELDON & COMPANY, PUBLISHERS,
498 & 500 BROADWAY.

1869.

Entered, according to Act of Congress, in the year 1868,

BY SHELDON & CO.,

In the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States for the
Southern District of New York.

Stereotyped at the Boston Stereotype Foundry,
19 Spring Lane.

Boston

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THE PEACEMAKER,

AND OTHER STORIES.

I.

THE PEACEMAKER.

"REPEAT that again," said Mr. Folsom, his face losing color.

"His words were, 'He is no better than Judas.'"

"Meaning me?"

"Yes, you."

"Plain talk that, neighbor Willard!" Mr. Folsom's eyes had in them an angry gleam.

"I call it plain talking, sir. It strikes me that a man may search a good while before discovering a harder saying. To compare one with Judas, is going to the top notch of invective."

"He'll be sorry for it," said Mr. Folsom, in a threatening manner.

"If he had spoken of me after that fashion," replied Mr. Willard, "I rather think he would understand, before a great while, what is meant by the words, 'repenting in dust and ashes.' Why, just think of it! To say that a man is no better than Judas, is to say that he is capable of doing the most wicked things. Words have a meaning in them, neighbor Folsom; and words like these cannot fail to leave a strong impression against you, even in the minds of those who take them with many grains of allowance. Judas! Why, it's terrible! The more I think of it, the more indignant I feel. Judas, indeed! Judas!"

"And, I suppose he had something to say about thirty pieces of silver," remarked Mr. Folsom.

"O, of course. Men never betray one another, except to gain some advantage."

"Infamous!" exclaimed Mr. Folsom.

"You may well say infamous. And such things, neighbor Folsom, should not be lightly

passed over. Every man owes it to the community, as well as to himself, to punish such slanderers as they deserve. I trust that you will make thorough work in the present case."

"Trust me for that, neighbor. I have stood between trouble and William Clark more than once in my life, because I pitied the man, and thought him honest and well-meaning, though weak and hasty. But now I will be the trouble nearest to him. He needs a lesson, and I will be his teacher."

"And, pray, don't spare the rod or ferule."

"Not I," answered Mr. Folsom, in a cruel tone.

Here the neighbors parted. An hour or two afterwards, Mr. Folsom was talking with another friend and neighbor, whose name was Harding. They had met for the transaction of business. After matters were arranged to mutual satisfaction, Mr. Folsom said, —

"What would you do if a man were to say that you were no better than Judas, and would betray your best friend for thirty pieces of silver?"

"Make him take back his words, or punish him as he deserves."

"How punish him?" asked Mr. Folsom, with some betrayal of eagerness. The very thought of revenge was sweet to him.

"That would depend upon the man's character and standing. I might sue him for slander. But who has been assailed after this bad fashion?"

"I have been."

"You?"

"Yes." Mr. Folsom closed his lips firmly, knitted his brows, and looked the very picture of righteous indignation.

"By whom?"

"By a man I have often befriended — William Clark."

"Clark! Is it possible!"

"It is even so."

"What possessed him to talk in this way?"

"I was witness in a case where my evidence favored his adversary, and so damaged his cause that he lost it. I felt sorry for him, because I think he should have gained the suit, — right

being on his side. But I could only testify according to my knowledge in the case; and it so happened that nearly all the knowledge I possessed came to me from Mr. Clark himself."

"And so he called you a Judas?"

"Yes."

"A hard saying, Mr. Folsom."

"It is; and one calculated to do me harm."

"So I should think — much harm."

"He shall suffer for it. No man in the community has been a warmer friend to Clark than I. He is an indiscreet, hasty man, as you know, and never gets on long without meeting trouble in some shape. Whenever things have gone wrong with him, he has come to me, and I have taken great pains to help him into the right way again. And now to turn on me after this fashion is an unpardonable offence."

"It looks like it, certainly," responded Mr. Harding, speaking merely from his external thought; "and I think it will do him good to feel that outrages of this character must not go unpunished."

Mr. Harding separated from his indignant

friend, and thought but little of what had passed between them, until evening found him in a state of mind different from that which had ruled him through the day. As memory recalled one incident after another, he came to the brief conversation held with Mr. Folsom on the subject of Mr. Clark's alleged slanderous remark, and was turning the matter over in his mind, when these words suddenly came into his thoughts : —

“Blessed are the peacemakers.”

An instant change in his state followed. “Blessed are the peacemakers,” he repeated to himself, looking at the divine sentiment with a feeling of reverence.

“Did I pour the oil of peace on these troubled waters?” he said to himself, “or only meddle with strife, and fan the flames of discord?”

Mr. Harding was far from being satisfied in his mind. He had counselled punishment, and not forgiveness. Instead of trying to heal the breach, he had only made it wider.

“Blessed are the peacemakers.” He could not get away from the words. They seemed as if spoken especially to him.

Not far from the dwelling of Mr. Harding was the residence of Clark, whose free speech, as reported, had, with cause, excited the indignation of Mr. Folsom. Now Clark was a quick-tempered man, who often said things in the heat of passion that were repented of in cooler moments. Mr. Harding knew him well, and understood him thoroughly.

“I must see this hasty, indiscreet man to-night,” said Mr. Harding, after vainly trying to get the thought of him out of his mind. “There are two aspects in every case, and as I have permitted myself to express an opinion on this one from only a partial view, every consideration of justice requires me to look upon the other side. Instead of pushing men deeper into trouble with their fellow-men, it is our duty to withdraw them, if possible, from false positions. We must be peacemakers, not abettors of discord.”

So Mr. Harding, to ease an unquiet conscience, put on his hat and stepped round to the residence of his neighbor.

“What's the trouble between you and Mr.

Folsom?" he asked, after the few words of greeting were over.

"There is no trouble between us that I know of. Who said there was trouble?" Clark looked surprised.

"Didn't you affirm that he was no better than Judas, and would betray his friend for thirty pieces of silver?"

"Me?" There was unfeigned astonishment in the man's face.

"Yes, you."

"Preposterous! Why should I say that?"

"He was a witness in the case you lost."

Clark looked thoughtful, and a little serious.

"Yes, he was a witness; and it was through his testimony that I lost."

"And you were angry about it, and in the heat of passion called him a Judas."

"I was angry, but never called him a Judas. Who says that I did?"

"I cannot speak as to his informant; but somebody has repeated this offensive language as coming from you."

"That somebody has lied!" exclaimed Clark,

indignantly, all the fire of his quick nature burning suddenly in his face. "Mr. Folsom has been a kind friend, and I owe him gratitude for many services, which his late disservice does not cancel. For me to compare him with Judas would be infamous."

"Could he have testified differently in your case?" asked Mr. Harding.

"Perhaps not," was admitted.

"He was under oath."

"Yes."

"Did he say a word more than the responsible position of a witness required?"

Clark thought for a little while, and then answered, —

"No; I presume not."

"Then you cannot blame him."

"I do not blame him, Mr. Harding. When a man loses a case that he knows to be a just one, and through the evidence of a man from whom he expects good instead of evil, it is hard not to feel some disturbance — hard not even to feel incensed against him. I was blind with indignation for a little while, I will admit; and I

may have spoken with indiscreet freedom of Mr. Folsom. But I deny, in toto, that I compared him with Judas."

"To whom did you speak of him?" asked Harding.

"Let me see;" and Clark looked into his memory of the circumstance. "There's Mr. Willard; he came among the first, after the jury had given a verdict, to sympathize with me in my loss. 'It was the testimony of Folsom that ruined your case,' said he. My answer was, that I had believed him my friend; and I added something about saving me from my friends, and I would take care of my enemies — mere words such as we utter sometimes, when excited, without considering their meaning."

"And you are sure nothing was said about Judas?"

"Certain."

"Think again. Recall, if possible, everything that passed between you. We may get at the root of the matter here. What did Willard reply to your remark about saving you from your friends?"

"Let me see." Clark thought for some moments. "O, now I have it: 'We never expect betrayal at the hand of a friend.' That was his reply."

"And what did you say to this?" asked Mr. Harding.

"It is all clear now," said Clark. "My answer was, 'The Judas spirit is not dead yet.' But I never meant to apply the words to Mr. Folsom. It was a mere sentiment in response to Willard's remark."

"So I can understand. And, now that we are down to the bottom of this matter, suppose we go together and see Mr. Folsom, and put him right. The sun has gone down on his wrath; but it should not rise thereon."

"With all my heart!" answered Clark. "The quicker a false impression like this is done away, the better for all parties."

At the time this conversation was going on, Mr. Willard and Mr. Folsom were together, in the house of the latter. They were members of a benevolent society, and had met, as a committee, for the consideration of some business

submitted to them. After its discussion and settlement, the thoughts really uppermost in the mind of Mr. Folsom, came forth in words.

"I've scarcely thought of anything else to-day," he said, "but that infamous language of Clark's. I only wonder that you kept it from me so long. Slandering speeches of the kind do a person great injury. It isn't a trifle to say of a man that he would betray his friend for thirty pieces of silver."

This was giving to a mere inference the hard shape of a fact. Mr. Willard had weakly assented to the inference; and now it had taken the form of an allegation. It was on his lips to exonerate Mr. Clark from this part of the offence, but he lacked the manliness and honesty to do so.

"I've been his friend in a great many instances," Mr. Folsom went on in his blind anger. "But he will now find me on the other side. I inherit from my forefathers some decided traits of character — am warm as a friend, but bitter as an enemy. And so he will find me."

"He was excited in consequence of his loss,"

said Willard, throwing in a mollifying sentence.

"No excuse! No excuse! I testified only to the truth, as he knew, and would have perjured myself if I had made any other statement."

"Yes, yes. No blame can attach to you. Clark would have done the same if your positions had been reversed. It was an outrage in him."

"And shall find its punishment, or my name is not Folsom," was the revengeful answer.

"Two gentlemen wish to see you," said a servant, coming to the door of the room in which they were seated.

"Who are they?"

"One of them gave his name as Clark."

"I wouldn't see him," said Willard, his face flushing, and its expression changing.

"Why not?" Mr. Folsom looked at him sharply. A suspicion flashed through his mind.

"I wouldn't hold any intercourse, face to face, with a man who had slandered me after his fashion. Send him to your lawyer."

Mr. Folsom reflected for a little while, and then said to the servant, —

“Show the gentlemen up.”

“Hadn’t I better retire?” said Mr. Willard, rising.

“You? By no means! Of all living men, you are the one to be present at the interview. Sit down again.”

Willard sat down, looking anything but comfortable. Nothing more was said until the visitors, Clark and Harding, entered the room. The former was merely recognized by a distant nod, while the latter was warmly welcomed. Seats were offered and taken; after which came nearly a minute of silent embarrassment on all sides.

“We find Mr. Willard here very opportunely,” said Harding, speaking first.

“Why so?” asked the gentleman referred to, moving in his chair uneasily.

“Because I think that, through you, we may get at the real merit of this trouble between two men who, I am sure, have no real cause to be angry with one another. Mr. Folsom,” — and

the speaker turned to the gentleman now addressed, — “since talking with you to-day, I have felt sure there must be some mistake, and in order to satisfy myself, called an hour ago upon our friend Clark, who denies having used the language attributed to him.”

“He cannot deny it,” spoke out Mr. Willard, in a firm voice.

“What did I say?” asked Mr. Clark, repressing the excitement he felt, and looking calmly at Mr. Willard.

“Something about Judas,” was answered.

“What about Judas?”

Willard did not answer promptly, but showed considerable disturbance.

“You said Mr. Folsom, here, was no better than Judas, — didn’t you?” He stammered a little in his speech.

“No, sir!” was the emphatic answer. “But I will tell you what I did say, for I remember it with great distinctness. I was stung at losing my case, and did not, for the moment, feel very kind towards Mr. Folsom here, through whose testimony, fairly given I will admit, I lost my

suit. You came to me, and said, 'It was the testimony of Folsom that ruined your case.' You remember that?" And he looked at Mr. Willard.

"I can't say that I do," was gruffly answered.

"No matter. I remember it distinctly. To this I said something about saving me from my friends, and you answered, 'We never expect betrayal at the hand of a friend.'"

"You are certain of that?" Mr. Willard's memory was clear, as the warmth of his countenance showed.

"Positive!"

"And then what did you say?" asked Willard.

"I said, 'The Judas spirit is not dead yet.'"

"There, — that's just it! What more would you have?" And the speaker looked triumphantly at Mr. Folsom.

"Considerable more, to make out the case as it stood a little while ago," said the latter, calmly. "And now, what of the thirty pieces of silver?"

"As I live, Mr. Folsom," replied Clark, "no such words ever passed my lips! And if any

man so alleges, he is false! As to the Judas part, I merely gave a responsive sentiment, not for an instant meaning to apply it to you. That such an application might be made, I see; and no one regrets, more than I do, that it has been made. Show me how I can undo the wrong you have suffered, if any, and I will act promptly."

Mr. Folsom at once gave a hand to Clark, saying, —

"I comprehend it all. Your explanation covers the whole ground." Then, extending his other hand to Mr. Harding, he added, with feeling, —

"Blessed are the peacemakers!"

His eyes next turned, severely, upon the almost abject Mr. Willard:—

"And for him who stirreth up strife among his friends and neighbors, the contempt of good men!"

"Sir!" exclaimed Willard, rising, "you forget yourself."

Mr. Folsom only bowed with low formality, but kept his keen, rebuking eyes steadily fixed on the other's face.

"Good evening," said Willard, moving towards the door.

"Good evening, sir," was returned coldly, and the man retired.

"I wish," said Mr. Folsom, turning to Mr. Harding, and taking his hand, "that we had more peacemakers among us, — more men who love to see reconciliation better than strife. This setting of friend against friend is dreadful, and comes from an evil spirit. I could not help rebuking Willard harshly, for my indignation against him was strong. If I have made of him an enemy, so let it be. I would have been false to my appreciation of his conduct if I had said a word of lighter meaning."



A Cripple for Life.

II.

A CRIPPLE FOR LIFE.

"HAVE you noticed that poor little fellow on crutches at the white house in Marion Street?" said one of three ladies who were spending an afternoon together.

"Yes, and it was just in my thoughts to speak of him," was answered. "I noticed the child yesterday. What a sweet, patient face he has! He can't be more than ten years old."

"And a cripple for life!" said the third lady. Her two friends turned their eyes upon her with looks of inquiry.

"You know him?" remarked one of them.

"O, yes. His name is Albert Owings; son of Mr. Edward Owings, one of the best men in our town."

"Has he been long a cripple?"

"About a year."

"How did it happen? Had he a fall?"

"I will tell you about it if you care to listen. The story is a sad one, and, but for its lesson and warning, I would not revive it now."

The two ladies drew closer to the speaker, and she went on.

"Little Albert was a favorite with everybody who knew him. He had a sweet temper, and artless, winning ways, from the first. When but three years old, he was the pet of the neighborhood. But nothing seemed to spoil him. As he grew older, he did not become rude and boisterous like too many children; and yet he was full of life, and loved to romp and play as well as any.

"Year after year was added to his life. The birthdays came and went, until he was nine years old. The children's birthdays are always kept in Mr. Owings's house. I am intimate with the family, and was one of the few outside friends who were invited to drop in after tea. I promised myself a pleasant evening, for I knew the charmed circle into which I was going.

"It was early in autumn, and the days were

growing shorter. Darkness had fallen when I stood at Mr. Owings's door. I found the family in much distress and alarm. Albert had gone with a neighbor's son to visit a friend of his mother's, who lived half a mile from the city, and word had been received that he had fallen from a tree, and was too much hurt to walk home. Mr. Owings and his mother had just left in a carriage, taking the doctor with them.

"For over an hour we waited in painful anxiety. Then the father and mother returned, bringing the poor boy with them. A bed, on which he was lying, had been placed in the carriage. He was helpless, and in great suffering. It took us a long time to get him out of the carriage, and up stairs to his bed, for the slightest movement of his body made him cry out with pain. No bones were broken, but the doctor said there were serious internal injuries. From the hips down he was paralyzed. He could move his arms, but not his legs.

"O, that was a sad, sad night! Albert's suffering was so great, that anodynes had to be given before he could get ease or sleep."

"How did it happen?" asked one of the ladies.
"He fell from a tree, you said?"

"I will answer your question as nearly as I can in Albert's own words. One day, about a week after the accident, I was sitting with the poor boy, who lay helpless in bed, free from pain, I am glad to say, when I asked him to tell me just how it all happened. A slight color came into his pale face, and a look I could not understand into his eyes. His mother, who was sitting by, noticed this change in his countenance.

"Tell us all about it, my son," she said, as she leaned over him. "I don't know yet just how it was."

"He put his arms around her neck, and held her face close to his for over a minute. On releasing her, I saw that his eyes were wet, and had a look of doubt and trouble.

"You were not doing anything wrong, I hope, Albert," said his mother.

"No, ma'am," he answered quickly. "Nothing that I knew to be wrong. But maybe somebody else was."

"Who?"

"He did not reply, but looked from his mother's face to mine in an uncertain way.

"Who was doing wrong, dear?" asked his mother.

"Mrs. Kline, may be."

"How?"

"When she gave me that glass of currant wine."

"A glass of currant wine! You didn't tell me of that before!"

"No, ma'am."

"Why, Albert?"

"I don't know, mamma. It seemed as if I couldn't."

"I shall never forget the sadness of his large, bright eyes as they rested on his mother's face.

"Tell me all about it now, darling. Don't keep back anything."

"I won't keep back a word, mamma," he said. "It was just this way that it happened. We went out to Mrs. Kline's, Willy Lawson and I, as you said we might. And Mrs. Kline seemed so glad to see us. I told her it was my birth-

day, and then she seemed more pleased, and kissed me, and stroked my hair, and patted my cheeks, and said I must have something in honor of the day. I didn't know what she meant until she brought in a waiter with cakes and three glasses of wine. "It won't hurt you," she said. "It's only currant wine. I made it myself." So I took one glass and Willy another. "Here's to your good health, and many happy returns of the day," said Mrs. Kline, taking the other glass and drinking. We drank, too, and ate as much cake as we wanted. Then we went out to play.'

"Was it a full glass of wine?" asked Mrs. Owings, a choking in her voice.

"Brimful," answered the boy.

"And you drank it all?"

"Yes, ma'am, every drop."

"And what then?"

"O, it burnt all down inside of me like fire, and made my face red, and set my knees trembling. It got up into my head, too, and made it feel so large and strange! I was hot all over. So I went down to the spring-house and washed

my face in the cool water; and that made me feel better. We sat there, Willy and I, playing in the brook. We built a little dam, and sailed bits of wood and bark on the water. After a while Mrs. Kline came out, and said she was afraid we'd get our clothes wet, and muddy, and told us there was a chestnut tree in the woods back of the house, and she thought the burrs were beginning to open, and drop the nuts. So, off we ran to the woods, and found the tree. But, though we saw the great bunches of chestnut burrs hanging up on the limbs, not a single nut could we find on the ground. We threw stones and sticks, but didn't knock any down, they were so high. "If it wasn't such a big tree I'd climb it," said Willy. "I'm not afraid," said I, feeling just as brave and strong as if I'd been a man. So at the tree I went, Willy helping me, until I could get hold of the lowest limb and pull myself up. I don't know what made me do it, for I never tried to climb a big tree like that before in all my life. I've thought about it, since lying here, ever so much, and I think it must have been the wine that made me do it.

I heard papa say once that when wine was in the wit was out.. And I'm sure the wit was out of my head, or I'd never have gone up that chestnut tree. When I got on to the limb, which was almost as big as a tree itself, I felt as hot all over as when I drank the glass of currant wine. My arms and legs were trembling, and my head buzzing and turning round. I had to shut my eyes, and hold on to the limb to keep from falling.

"After a while I felt better, and then stood up on the limb and reached to one above, pulling and scrambling until I got to a higher place. Then the trembling and turning in my head came again, and I had to hug my arms about a limb to keep from dropping right down. I was way up now, ever so far from the ground, as high as a second-story window. Then it came over me, all at once, how I was to get down; and I felt so scared and weak, and my head went round so, that I couldn't hold on. One of my feet slipped, and I felt myself going. O, it was dreadful! I didn't know anything after that, until I found myself in bed at Mrs. Kline's, and

she crying and going on; and then it all came back to me.'

"We sat, Mrs. Owings and I, for a good while after the child had finished his story, not speaking a word, until he said, 'I'm sure it was the wine, mamma. I'd never thought of climbing the tree, if it hadn't been for the wine. Somehow I wasn't just myself after I drank it. But don't be angry with Mrs. Kline; she wanted to honor my birthday, and didn't think it would hurt me.'

"We looked at each other for a few moments. Mrs. Owings tried to speak, but her voice choked in the effort. Her boy, crippled for life, lay before her, and the hand that had struck him down was the hand of one who loved him. It had been lifted in kindness, — alas! what mistaken kindness!"

The lady ceased. Over the faces of her two friends there fell shadows of pain. Both of them sat, with eyes cast down, for a long while.

"That a cause so light should work so sad a disaster!" said one of them, at length, sighing deeply as she spoke.

"A cripple for life! And all from a single glass of currant wine, offered in honor of his birthday!" said the other, echoing the sigh of her friend. "Why!" she added, the color coming suddenly into her face, and then as suddenly fading out, "I did that very thing to a dear little nephew only a week ago! And now I remember, that he came near being run over by a horse on his way home; and that when I asked him about it, he said he couldn't just tell how it was, but he kind of forgot himself, and didn't think about taking care, as he always did when crossing a street. It never came to me until this moment, that the wine had confused his little brain."

"If it has power to confuse the brains of strong men," answered the lady who had told the story of Albert's fall from a chestnut tree, "how much more the weak and delicate brains of children!"

"What a warning!" exclaimed the other. "I will never give even the lightest wine to a child again."

"Men as well as children have been made

cripples for life through a glass of wine offered by a friendly hand," said the lady. "There is no safety when the brain is stimulated above its healthy action. No one can tell the moment when life or limb may depend on the cool head and steady hand; when the slightest confusion of mind may bring terrible disaster. Let us, then, who have so much influence over the customs of society, set our faces against this thing of offering wine to our friends. We can work a great reform if we will. Taking this poor crippled child as a text, we may preach temperance sermons to men, women, and children of such force that none can withstand us. What say you, friends?"

And they all joined hands, promising to set their faces against a custom so full of danger. And they kept their word. Many bottles of currant wine, and blackberry wine, and cherry-bounce, were emptied on the ground by these ladies, and also by others to whom they preached their temperance sermons. The text, whenever announced, was sure to gain attentive listeners, and rarely failed to work conviction.

III.

GOD HELP THE POOR.

"WHAT a terrible night!" exclaimed Mrs. Creighton, as she drew aside the heavy damask curtains, and looked out.

The snow had been falling for several hours, and the air was yet filled by myriads of flakes, that whirled in wild eddies through the narrow streets, or came in rattling gusts against the windows. Great drifts were piling up steadily against doorways, and on the lee of corner houses, and in all places where some barrier turned the strong wind aside in its onward march. From a high, piping treble, down to the lowest muttering base, the tempest-voice ran up and down the scale; now in tones and half tones; now in chords; and now in shuddering dissonance.

Mr. Creighton came and stood by the side of his wife, at the window of their luxurious home, and looked out upon the stormy night.

"I pity those who are compelled to go abroad," he said.

"And those who have no homes," added his wife.

"And the poor, who have no fire in their dwellings."

"No fire,—and on such a night as this!" Mrs. Creighton turned and looked into her husband's face with an expression of doubt, fear, and pity. "Surely, none are in this extremity!"

"Hundreds, I fear, even in our Christian city," replied her husband, as he moved from the window, and sat down in front of the grate. "Hundreds," he added in a thoughtful, concerned way. "With everything around us so warm, comfortable, and luxurious, it is difficult to realize the fact, that many, very many, are now cold and hungry. Poor, sick women, and tender children, crouching in fireless rooms, or by hearths on which the last red embers are dying."

"Don't, husband, don't!" exclaimed Mrs. Creighton, lifting her hands, and turning her face away. "I shudder at the bare imagination of such things."

"If we shudder at the imagination of such things, what must it be to suffer the reality?" said Mr. Creighton, not even making an effort to push the subject from his thoughts.

"God help the poor!" ejaculated his wife, in a tone of pity.

"Yes, God help them!" was the low, earnest response.

There followed a silence of some moments, when Mr. Creighton said, —

"When did you see Mrs. Bayle?"

"Not since last week."

"How was she then?"

"She looked pale and weak. I gave her some tea, and a loaf of fresh bread."

"And you haven't seen her since?"

"No."

"When was it we sent her that half ton of coal?"

"I can't remember. But, now I think of it, Hannah told me, day before yesterday, that Mrs. Bayle came round, when I was out, and asked for a bucket of coal."

"Did she get it?"

"Yes; Hannah gave it to her."

"That was two days ago?"

"Yes."

Mr. Creighton sighed, and sat looking into the grate for nearly a minute without speaking.

"I feel troubled about that woman, and her little children," he said, at last. "Just think, if they should be without food or fire on a night like this!"

"O, that can't be!" answered his wife.

"It is possible, Allie. Such things have been. Women and children have perished with cold, even in our city."

"Don't talk about it. You give me the heart-ache."

Mr. Creighton arose, and commenced walking the floor in a disturbed manner.

"I declare, Edward," said his wife, "you have destroyed all our home comfort for the evening by these dreadful images your fancy has created. Let us be thankful for the good we have, and show our thankfulness in its enjoyment."

Mr. Creighton did not answer, but kept on his movement, back and forward, across the room. He was thinking of poor Mrs. Bayle.

"We must finish 'A Tale of Two Cities' to-night," said his wife, taking up a volume. "Sit down, Edward, and I will read. We are at the storming of the Bastile."

But Mr. Creighton did not pause in his restless walk. The reading began, and was continued for ten or fifteen minutes.

"What a wild, fearful picture!" said Mrs. Creighton, letting the volume fall into her lap. "Such word-painting is wonderful."

She looked up at her husband, and saw, at a glance, that he had not been listening.

"I don't believe," she said, in a slightly annoyed tone, "that you have heard a single page that I have been reading."

"To tell the truth, Allie, I don't think I have," was frankly answered.

"Not very complimentary to me or the author."

"On the contrary, Allie, I acknowledge my interest in both. But just now I can think of nothing else but Mrs. Bayle and her children."

"We cannot help them to-night, Edward. The storm is too wild for any one to go abroad.

Leave them in the hands of God. He will take care of them."

"How will he take care of them?"

Mr. Creighton stood still, and looked steadily into his wife's face. Her eyes fell beneath his glance of earnest interrogation.

"How will God take care of them, Allie, if they are without fuel and food to-night?"

She did not answer, and he added, —

"Not by sending coal and bread through supernatural agencies, but by putting it into the heart of some human being to go to their succor. When you said, 'God help the poor!' the thought of Mrs. Bayle and her children came instantly into my mind, and I cannot put it away. I must see to them this night."

"O, no, no, Edward! You cannot go out in such a dreadful storm."

As if to give force to her words, the tempest shrieked wildly, and the fast-falling snow drove its fine crystals rattling against the windows. Mr. Creighton pushed aside the curtain and looked out. The whirling flakes filled the air like a cloud. He could hardly see across the street.

"You mustn't think of going out, Edward," said his wife, as she came to his side, and drew her arms around him.

"Alice, you said just now, 'God help the poor!' and spoke from genuine pity. He cannot help them, except by human hands. I feel so strongly that my hands are needed for help to-night, that I could not hold back were the storm twice as violent. I have warm garments to protect me from the cold. I have health, strength, and a stout heart in humanity's cause, I trust. Allie, I must go. No sleep could weigh down my eyelids to-night if I remained in uncertainty about this poor woman and her children."

And resolutely putting aside all remonstrances, Mr. Creighton prepared himself to go out. On passing into the street, the gust swept fiercely into his face, taking his breath for a moment, and causing him to stagger back several paces. But, recovering himself, he leaned a little forward, bracing to the wind, and plunged away through snow-drifts that half buried him at times. The small tenement in which Mrs. Bayle lived stood

several squares distant, in a narrow court. Thither he made his way, as rapidly as he could move through all the manifold obstructions that retarded his progress. He found the court almost blocked up with snow, which the wind had swept from the roofs above, and piled up in the narrow space between the houses. On gaining the one in which Mrs. Bayle lived, he saw no lights in the windows, though the shutters were open. He put his hand on the door, and pushed it open. All was silent within. He spoke, but no voice answered, and there came no sound to his ears. Then, going out quickly, he shut the door, and, crossing the court, knocked where a light gleamed out from a window.

"Who's there?" It was a woman's voice that called.

He knocked again.

"Come in," said the same voice.

Mr. Creighton pushed open the door, and entered a small room, in which a woman sat sewing. She was alone.

"Excuse my intrusion," he said, noticing that

his appearance surprised and startled her. "But I want to ask about a Mrs. Bayle who lives in this court. Have you seen her to-day?"

"No, sir; I don't think I've seen her around to-day," answered the woman.

"She lives nearly opposite?"

"Yes, sir."

"It's all dark there," said Mr. Creighton. "I opened the door and spoke, but no one answered."

"I hope she isn't sick or dead," remarked the woman, with some concern of manner. "I don't know what would become of her four little children."

"We must see after them," said Mr. Creighton, in a decided way. "Will you let me have a candle, and some matches?"

"Yes, sir." And the woman laid down her work.

"And go over with me?"

"Yes, sir." Then she went to the stairs, and called, "Jake, come down here! A gentleman's called to see about Mrs. Bayle, and I'm going over there with him."

The rough voice of a man answered to this summons, and some heavy feet were heard moving on the floor above. Before their owner made his appearance, however, Mr. Creighton and the woman were across the court.

On lighting a candle in the chilly room which they had entered, they saw only a table, two old chairs, and the black, fireless stove on the hearth.

"Mrs. Bayle!" called the woman, going to the stairs that led to the single room above. But no answer came.

"We must go up," said Mr. Creighton. And they passed to the chamber.

"Save us!" exclaimed his companion, as she held up the wavering candle. "They're all here!"

As she spoke, the light fell upon a woman's white, deathly face. She was lying on a bed with such scanty covering that the chill air could scarcely have failed to reach her vitals. The forms, but not the faces, of three children were seen also.

"Mrs. Bayle!" This time the sound reached

her dull senses, and she opened her eyes, that shone glassy in the light.

"Are you sick, Mrs. Bayle?"

"Yes," was the faint answer.

The children, half awake from cold, now pushed up their heads from beneath the covering, and one of them said, anxiously, —

"Ain't we going to have any supper to-night, mamma?"

A great sob came up at this from the suddenly touched heart of Mr. Creighton.

"Yes, you shall have your supper to-night," answered the woman. "Lie still, and keep warm for a little while."

"I can't keep warm," answered the child. "O dear! it's so cold!"

Setting down the candle, the woman said, —

"I'll run over and get a comfortable, and Jake shall bring a bucket of coal, and make a fire in the stove down stairs, that will soon warm the house." And she hurried away. In a few moments she was back again with thick covering for the bed, which she laid over the woman and her children, and as her briskly-moving hand

tucked in the warm comfortable all around, she said, —

"Now lie still until we get a fire made, and your supper ready."

"God help the poor!" said Mr. Creighton, with tear-filled eyes, as he went down stairs. The woman heard him, for, in his emotion, he had spoken aloud, and she answered, —

"A great many people say that, sir; and yet no help comes. It doesn't put bread into children's mouths. It doesn't feed the hungry and clothe the naked, sir."

"But God may inspire willingness in human hearts," replied Mr. Creighton, "as he has done to-night, and thus help them. And but for this willingness which he gives, no help would come. So, I say still, God help the poor!"

"He must have put it into your heart," said the woman; "for if you hadn't come, these poor souls might have perished before daylight."

"Perhaps," answered Mr. Creighton, as he took out his purse. Then adding, "Here is money for Mrs. Bayle. Will you see that she has everything needed to-night?"

"I will, sir, as if she were my own sister," replied the woman, with an earnestness of tone that left Mr. Creighton in no doubt.

"And so, God help the poor!" said he, as he passed out again into the stormy night, and took his way homeward.

"O, Edward!" exclaimed Mrs. Creighton, as, after more than half an hour of anxious suspense, her husband came in with a quick step, bright eye, and ruddy countenance. "I'm so glad you are home again! It has stormed harder than ever since you left. How did you find Mrs. Bayle?"

"Without food, fire, or light," he answered. "I think death would have found her and her children, mayhap, if God had not sent me to their relief. It is God who really helps the poor, Allie. We are only the instruments in his hands. May we always be willing!"

"As you have been to-night," said Mrs. Creighton, with a new impression of her husband's character in her heart. And she laid her hand in his, and looked lovingly into a face that was all alive with manly feeling.

IV.

AS YOU HAVE OPPORTUNITY.

MR. FRAZIER sat reading in his counting-room. He was in the midst of a piece of interesting news, when a lad came to the door and said, —

"Do you want a boy, sir?"

Without lifting his eyes from the paper, Mr. Frazier answered "No," to the application, and in rather a rough way.

Before the lad reached the street, conscience had compelled the merchant to listen to a rebuking sentence.

"You might have spoken kindly to the poor boy, at least," said Conscience. "This is an opportunity."

Mr. Frazier let the paper fall from before his eyes, and turned to look at the lad. He was small, — not twelve years old, to appearance, — poorly attired, but clean. The merchant tapped

against one of the windows in the counting-room, and the boy glanced back over his shoulder. A sign from the merchant caused him to return.

"What did you say just now?"

"Do you want a boy, sir?" The lad repeated the words he had spoken, hesitatingly, a few moments before.

Mr. Frazier looked at him with a suddenly awakened interest. He had a fair, girlish face; dark brown eyes and hair; and though slender and delicate in appearance, stood erect, and with a manliness of aspect that showed him to be already conscious of duty in the world. But there did not seem to be much of that stuff in him that is needed for the battle of life.

"Take a chair," said Mr. Frazier, an involuntary respect for the lad getting possession of his mind.

The boy sat down, with his large, clear eyes fixed on the merchant's face.

"How old are you?"

"I was twelve, sir, last month," replied the boy.

"What splendid eyes!" said the merchant to

himself. "And I've seen them before. Soft, dark, and lustrous as a woman's!"

Away back in the past the thoughts of Mr. Frazier went, borne on the light from those beautiful eyes, and for some moments he forgot the present in the past. But when he came back into the present again, he had a softer heart towards the stranger lad.

"You should go to school for a year or two longer," he said.

"I must help my mother," replied the lad.

"Is your mother very poor?"

"Yes, sir; and she's sick."

The lad's voice shook a little, and his soft, woman's eyes grew brighter in the tears that filled them.

Mr. Frazier had already forgotten the point of interest in the news after which his mind was searching when the boy interrupted him.

"I don't want any one," said Mr. Frazier, "but may be I might speak a good word for you, and that would help, you know. I think you would make an honest, useful lad. But you are not strong."

"O, yes, sir, I'm strong!" And the boy stood up in a brave spirit.

The merchant looked at him with a steadily increasing interest.

"What is your name?" he asked.

"Charles Leonard, sir."

There was an instant change in the merchant's manner, and he turned his face so far away that the boy's eyes could not see its expression. For a long time he sat still and silent, — so long that the boy wondered.

"Is your father living?" Mr. Frazier did not look at the boy, but still kept his face away. His voice was low, and not very even.

"No, sir. He died four years ago."

"Where?" The voice was quicker and firmer.

"In London, sir."

"How long since you came to America?"

"Two years."

"Have you been in this city ever since?"

"No, sir. We came here with my uncle a year ago. But he died a month after our arrival."

"What was your uncle's name?"

"Mr. Hoyle, sir."

There came another long silence, in which the lad was not able to see the merchant's countenance. But when he did look at him again there was such a new and kind expression in the eyes, which seemed almost to devour his face, that he felt an assurance in his heart that Mr. Frazier was a good man, and would be a friend to his mother.

"Sit there for a little while," said Mr. Frazier; and turning to his desk, he wrote a brief note, in which, without permitting the lad to see what he was doing, he enclosed two or three bank bills.

"Take this to your mother," he said, handing the note to the lad.

"You'll try and get me a place, sir — won't you?" The boy lifted to him an appealing look.

"O, yes. You shall have a good place. But stay; you haven't told me where you live."

"At No. — Melon Street, sir."

"Very well." Mr. Frazier wrote down the street and number. "And now take that note to your mother."

The merchant did not resume his newspaper after the lad departed. He had lost all interest in its contents. For a long time he sat, with his hand shading his face, so that no one saw its expression. If spoken to on any matter, he answered briefly, and with nothing of his usual interest in business. The change in him was so marked, that one of his partners asked if he were not well.

"I feel a little dull," was evasively answered.

Before his usual time Mr. Frazier left the store and went home. As he opened the door of his dwelling, the distressed cries and sobbings of a child came with an unpleasant shock upon his ears. He went up stairs with two or three long strides, and entered the nursery, from which the cries came.

"What is the matter, darling?" he said, as he caught the weeper in his arms. "What ails my little Maggy?"

"O, papa! papa!" sobbed the child, clinging to his neck, and laying her wet face close to his.

"Jane," said Mr. Frazier, looking at the

nurse, and speaking with some sternness of manner, "why is Maggy crying in this manner?"

The girl looked excited, but pale.

"She's been naughty," was her answer.

"No, papa! I ain't been naughty," said the child, indignantly. "I didn't want to stay here all alone, and she pinched me and slapped me so hard. O, papa!" And the child's wail rang out again; and she clung to his neck, sobbing.

"Has she ever pinched and slapped you before?" asked the father.

"She does it 'most every day," answered the little girl.

"Why haven't you told me?"

"She said she'd throw me out of the window if I told! O, dear! O, dear! Don't let her do it, papa!"

"It's all a lie!" exclaimed the nurse, passionately.

"Just look at my poor leg, papa." The child said this in a hushed whisper, with her lips laid close to her father's ear.

Mr. Frazier sat down, and baring the child's leg to the hip, saw that it was covered with blue and greenish spots all above the knee; there were not less than a dozen of these disfiguring marks. He examined the other leg, and found it in the same condition.

Mr. Frazier loved that child with a deep tenderness. She was his all to love. Her mother, between whom and himself there had never been any true heart-sympathy, died two years before; and since that time his precious darling — the apple of his eye — had been left to the tender mercies of hired nurses, over whose conduct it was impossible for him to have any right observation. He had often feared that Maggy was neglected, — often troubled himself on her account, — but a suspicion of cruelty like this, never came into his imagination as possible.

Mr. Frazier was profoundly disturbed; but even in his passion he was calm.

"Jane," he said, sternly, "I wish you to leave the house immediately!"

"Mr. Frazier —"

"Silence!" He showed himself so stern and

angry, even in his suppressed utterance of the word, that Jane started, and left the room instantly.

Mr. Frazier rang the bell, and to the waiter who answered it said, —

"See that Jane leaves the house at once. I have discharged her. Send her trunk wherever she may wish it taken. Here is the money that is due. I must not see her again."

As the waiter left the room, Mr. Frazier hugged his child to his heart tightly again, and kissed her with an eagerness of manner that was unusual with him. He was usually fond, but quiet, in his caresses. Now, the sleeping impulses of a strong heart were all awake and active.

In a small, back chamber, sat a pale, sweet-faced, patient-looking woman, reading a letter which had just been left for her by the post-man.

"Thank God!" she said, as she finished reading it, and her soft, brown eyes were lifted upward. "It looked very dark," she murmured, "but the morning has broken again."

A light, quick step was on the stairs, and the door was pushed hastily open.

"Charles, dear!"

The boy entered with an excited countenance.

"I'm going to get a place, mother!" he cried to her, the moment his feet were inside the door.

The pale woman smiled, and held out her hand to her boy. He came quickly to her side.

"There is no necessity for your getting a place now, Charles. We shall go back to England."

"O, mother!" The boy's face was all aglow with sunbeams.

"Here is a letter from a gentleman in New York, who says that he is directed by your uncle Wilton to pay our passages to England, if we will return. God is good, my son. Let us be thankful!"

Charles now drew from his pocket the note which Mr. Frazier had given him, and handed it to his mother.

"What is this?" she asked.

"The gentleman who promised to get me a place told me to give it to you."

The woman broke the seal. There were three

bank bills, of ten dollars each, enclosed, and this brief sentence written on the sheet of paper:—

"God sent your son to a true friend. Take courage. Let him come to me to-morrow."

"Who gave you this?" she asked. Her pale face was growing warm with sudden excitement.

"A gentleman. But I don't know who he was. I went into a great many stores to ask if they didn't want a boy, and at last came to the one where the gentleman was who sent you this letter. He spoke roughly to me at first, and then called me back and asked me who I was, and about my mother. I told him your name, and how father had died, and you were sick. Then he sat a good while, and didn't say anything; and then he wrote the note, and told me he would get me a place. He was a kind-looking man, if he did speak roughly at first."

"Did you see what name was on the sign?"

"I never thought to look," replied the boy, "I was so glad when I came away. But I can go straight to the place."

"I will write the gentleman a note, thanking

him for his kindness, and you must take it to him in the morning. How light it makes my heart feel to know that we are going back to dear England! God is good to us, my son, and we must be obedient and thankful."

Just a little before the evening twilight fell, word came up to the woman that a gentleman had called and wished to see her.

"Go and see who it is, Charles," she said to her son.

"O, mother! It's the gentleman who sent you the note!" exclaimed Charles, in an undertone, coming back quickly. "And he wants to see you. Can he come up?"

There was the hasty glance of a woman's eyes around the room, to see if everything was in order, then a few slight changes in attire.

"Ask him to come up, my son," she said, and Charles went down stairs again.

A man's firm tread approached the door. It was opened, and the boy's mother and the boy's new-found friend looked into each other's faces.

"O, Edward!" fell from her lips, in a quick, surprised voice; and she started from her chair,

and stood, strongly agitated, before him. He advanced, not speaking until he had taken her hand.

"Florence! I never thought to see you thus!" He said it in a calm, kind, evenly modulated voice, but her ears were finely enough chorded to perceive the deep emotion that lay beneath. He said it, looking down into the dark, soft, tender brown eyes. "But I think there is a providence in our meeting," he added.

They sat down and talked long together, — talked of the times gone by, and of the causes that separated them, while their hearts beat only for each other — of the weary years that had passed for both of them since then — of the actual present in their lives.

"I have a motherless child," he said at last — "a tender little thing that I love, and to-day I find her body purple with bruises from the cruel hand of a servant! Florence, will you be a mother to that child? You have a noble boy, who is fatherless; let me be to him a father. O, Florence! there has been a great void in our lives. A dark and impassable river has flowed

between us for years. But we stand, at last, together, and if the old love fills your heart as it fills mine, there are golden days for us in the future."

And so it proved. The lady and her son did not go back to England, but passed to the merchant's stately residence, she becoming its mistress, and he finding a home there, and a truer father than the one he had, in former years, called by the name.

"Do good as you have opportunity." Only a week before the lad's application to the merchant had this injunction been urged, in his hearing, by an eloquent preacher, and the words, coming to his thought, led him to call back the boy after his cold, almost unkind, repulse.

Many times he thought of the incident afterwards, and of the small event on which such life-long issue hung, almost trembling in view of what he might have lost had that slight opportunity for doing good been neglected.

V.

COMPENSATION.

THE case was hopeless for the sick girl. Health had departed, never to return again. Life opened in her blossomy spring-time with a fair, sweet promise. The sun was bright, the air soft and balmy, the earth smiling with flowers. But the morning soon became overcast. At first, the sun was hidden; then the rain began to fall "into her life," and then from the sky, once so lucid and serene, fell a storm that desolated the land.

At fifteen, Celeste Williams—to whom ravishing glimpses of the world, out into which her feet were gathering up strength to carry her, came through flower-hung vistas—drooped suddenly. The tint of roses left her cheeks; the beautiful roundness of form and features departed; the light of a glad spirit went out of her eyes. To the smile, that made rainbows over

her face, pain's rigid aspects succeeded. Ah, yes! the case, as we have said, was hopeless for the sick girl. Health had departed, never to return again.

"There is one compensation in all this," was the remark of some who stood on the outside — of some who were not very deeply versed in life's true philosophies. "Her parents have wealth. They can surround her with all things to divert and interest her mind. How much worse it might be! Ah, happy for the young sufferer is it that her friends are not poor!"

So it would seem. There are very few persons who would not have assented to this view. And yet nothing that wealth could bring the pale sufferer reached the seat of bodily or mental pain with anything but the most temporary relief. After the first year of sharp assault, during which the citadel of health was taken, and its walls thrown down so that they might never be rebuilt again, the crippled life, which had lain in still prostration for a time, began to gather up its few remaining powers, to battle with a slowly-renewing vitality, and to

live again — but in what an imperfect condition compared with the former one!

It was thought a great gain when Celeste could bear to be lifted from the bed, and sit for half an hour, propped up with cushions, in a great easy-chair. How hopeful were the faces that gathered around her! After a while, improvement went on so far that she could sit up for the greater part of each day. But there the better progress stopped. Weeks and months beyond this gave but little change for the better. Almost every day the doctor came, but his skill was at fault. He could not dislodge the enemy, which had gained too secure a possession.

And now came that readjustment of things, external to the life of Celeste Williams, which was to try her most severely. Not able to keep up with her compeers, she must be left behind; and left, for all the wealth of her parents, in a dreary, soul-fretting, impatient, rebellious isolation. Her sisters' lives soon grew out of sympathy with her life; and the distance between them so rapidly increased, that they became little better than strangers to each other. Only

the mother of Celeste kept near to her in patient love. But she was not a wise woman. Her life was in the sensuous plane. She could not get below the surface of things so as to comprehend the mental states and mental needs of her child. All her ministrations, therefore, never reached beyond things palliative, and of course temporary. She sought to amuse, divert, to interest in books, music, and the like. But these had power over the pale-faced sufferer only for a little while; nay, they often made the sense of deprivation more acute, and hurt instead of helping.

And so, in time, poor Celeste became a weary burden to herself and every one. Nothing having been denied to her that money could procure, she had reached out, under the excitement of a restless dissatisfaction, grasping at this object and that, until almost everything within her reach had been tried, and thrown aside — her poor heart growing sadder and more dissatisfied at the failure of each new experiment.

Moody, fretful, ill-natured, and self-tormenting, at eighteen Celeste Williams had alienated

nearly all but the mother's heart; and on that heart she lay as a heavy burden.

One day Mrs. Williams was talking with a friend about her invalid daughter, and mourning over her unhappy state.

"If she were only patient," she said, "only made an effort to be cheerful sometimes. But I am weary with complaint. She suffers pain, I know, and pain is hard to bear. She is shut out from all pleasure, and the young heart lives on pleasure. Her sisters go and come at will; but she cannot move even from the bed, or her chair, without a hand to lean upon. Her imagination is constantly excited with descriptions of all those enjoyments upon which young life enters with such a zest, but the taste of them even is denied to her. I pity the poor child in my heart, but cannot find any way to help her."

"What does she do through all her weary days?" asked the friend.

"Do?" There was surprise in the questioning voice of Mrs. Williams. "Why, nothing!"

"Don't she read?"

"Not much. A novel amuses her now and

then, or, I might say, excites her with its representation of active life-scenes into which she can never enter, and leaves her in a more uncomfortable state of mind than when she opened its pages."

"Then, for most of her time, she sits idly in her chair, or lies, wasteful of all time, upon her bed?"

"She sits or lies through all the days and nights of her life. She can neither stand nor walk, so there is no alternative. But idleness or time-wasting can hardly be predicated of one in her condition," said Mrs. Williams, both tone and manner repelling the intimation that appeared in the lady's question.

It came, then, into the lady's mind that she understood Celeste's case better than her mother, and that she might help the miserable girl to acquire some better and happier state. So she said, —

"I must go up and see your daughter. A new face and a new voice may interest her for a little while, and that will be so much gained."

"It is kind in you," replied Mrs. Williams,

gratefully, for not often did her visitors express any desire to see the sick girl who was hidden away in one of the chambers above. "She doesn't see many new faces."

They went up stairs. The visitor, whose name was Mrs. Baldwin, was struck, on entering the room where Celeste sat with her hands lying idly in her lap, by the weary sadness which overlaid all other expressions in her almost colorless face. It affected her with a most tender pity. In the large, dark, beautiful eyes, that fixed themselves in a kind of mute appeal upon her face, she read something more than selfish fretfulness, — something that made her heart yearn towards the helpless, almost hopeless, sufferer, who found no compensation in all the elegance, and ease, and external means of comfort by which she was surrounded.

To ask her about her bodily condition and sensations was the natural introduction of conversation; but Mrs. Baldwin dwelt upon them as lightly as possible, at the same time that she appeared to feel much sympathy with the invalid. While talking with her in a cheerful

way, as soon as she could pass to some cheerful subject, Mrs. Baldwin drew from her pocket a small bit of worsted knitting which had been commenced in a leisure moment, and, without remarking upon it, began, while yet talking, to loop, dexterously, the pink zephyr over the needle points. She saw the eyes of Celeste go to her hand and dwell there, and she saw, in a little while, a kindling look of interest. Then, in a familiar way, she leaned towards her, and held the knitting so that she could examine it.

"How sweetly it is done!" said the girl, in a tone of interest, as she examined the evenly-drawn threads, and noted the graceful form that the work was taking. "For what is it designed?"

"For a light scarf. I saw one the other day that pleased me, and mean to have one just like it."

Celeste looked up into her face with something of wonder. There was a new spirit in this. If her mother or one of her sisters had seen an article of dress that pleased them, money might have procured it, but skilful hands never.

The busy fingers of Mrs. Baldwin went on again, and Celeste watched them, while a gleam of interest brightened in her wan face.

"How fast you do it!" she said.

Mrs. Baldwin knitted more slowly, that Celeste might see the particular manner of looping the threads.

"Is it hard to learn?" asked Celeste.

"O, no. I think it very easy. See here;" and she leaned again towards the sick girl, speaking very kindly. "You loop this thread of worsted over the needle, just so, and then slip the other needle through the loop, and draw the thread so. Now I will do it again. You see how regularly the work is laid down, loop by loop, in that simple manner, and what a light, graceful thing is produced."

"Why, it isn't difficult!" exclaimed Celeste, her face actually brightening.

"It's the easiest thing in the world," replied Mrs. Baldwin. "Take the work into your own hand, and try to make the stitches."

"O, no," interposed the uncomprehending mother. "Don't let her spoil your work, out of sheer good nature."

Celeste, who was sensitive, drew back, and the light went out of her face.

"No danger of spoiling it," answered Mrs. Baldwin. "Come, dear, I want to see you try. I like to have people interested in what I am doing. There, take the needles, so;" and she put the work into Celeste's hands. "Now loop the thread over the right hand needle—yes, that's the motion—and now take off the loop with the other needle, and draw it up close to the body of the work. Right! I couldn't have done it better myself. Now make another loop—yes—now take it off—so. Right again! Didn't I tell you it was easy?"

There was an actual glow in the sick girl's pale face, as her mind, following eagerly her fingers, quickened her pulses, and sent the feeble blood in fuller currents to the surface.

"You will tire yourself," said Mrs. Williams, not yet understanding the meaning and use of what was before her eyes. But Mrs. Baldwin said,—

"Keep on, my dear. That stitch is as well laid down as I could do it myself. And so is

that—and that. Why, how true your hand is! You must have done this kind of work before."

But Celeste said no—and said it with a pleased smile. The compliment to her skill was gratifying.

"I think this kind of work would interest you," said Mrs. Baldwin.

"I'm sure it would," answered Celeste. "Won't you get me some needles and zephyr, mother?"

"Nonsense, child!" answered Mrs. Williams. "That's only a fancy. You'd tire of it in half an hour."

"Don't believe anything of the sort," said Mrs. Baldwin. "It's fascinating kind of work. Are you really in earnest, dear?" looking with kind encouragement at Celeste.

"I'm sure I should like it," replied Celeste.

Mrs. Baldwin sat for a moment or two, as if thinking about something.

"Suppose I leave this piece that I've just commenced," she then said. "It's very simple, and you have already learned the stitch."

"You are so kind!" Celeste looked with an

expression that was almost grateful into the lady's face; and then, turning her eyes down upon the worsted in her hands, plied the long needles with the earnestness of a child who had found some new amusement.

"Shall I come in to-morrow and see how you are getting along?" asked Mrs. Baldwin, as she arose to leave.

"Do; I shall be so pleased!" In what a cheerful tone the invalid spoke—a tone so new to the mother's ears that she turned her eyes, wonderingly, on her face.

For more than an hour after Mrs. Baldwin left her, Celeste knitted on, feeling so much interest in what she was doing that she forgot all pain, discomfort, or weariness. Then, tired by the exertion, she let her hands fall in her lap, and, closing her eyes, leaned her head on the cushions that lined her chair, feeling a deep interior peace and satisfaction of mind that she had not known for months—perhaps years. After resting for a while, she resumed her knitting again; and so, with intervals of rest, kept on through most of the day. As she saw the

scarf growing under her hands, she experienced a pleasure that was altogether new.

"How is your daughter?" asked Mrs. Baldwin, on the next day.

"I can hardly answer that question," replied Mrs. Williams. "Better, I should think, if change of temper is any index. But, I'm afraid she'll wear herself down with that worsted knitting."

"Ah! then she hasn't tired of that?"

"O, dear, no! She's completely carried away with it! I never saw the like!"

Poor, hungry, starving invalid! Her mind had been consuming itself for lack of that nutrition which is only to be found in some kind of useful employment; and now, that food was given, she sat long at the repast, though the fare was humble. There was real enjoyment to her in seeing the delicate fabric growing under her dexterous fingers, and already she was anticipating the pleasure that would crown her work when she could throw the finished scarf over her mother's shoulders.

A smile played around the lips of Celeste, and

light beamed from her eyes, when she saw Mrs. Baldwin.

"Haven't I been industrious?" she exclaimed, as she held up the long piece of work which she had accomplished.

"Is it possible? Why, this is marvellous!" said Mrs. Baldwin. "And how well it is done! Really, better than my part! You must have enjoyed your work, dear."

"Enjoyment is the right word," returned Celeste. "Yes, I really enjoyed it; and I must thank you for having furnished me with a new pleasure."

"You have the matter all in your own hands now," said Mrs. Baldwin, after she had retired with Mrs. Williams from the sick girl's room. "It was something to do, through the day's weary hours, that Celeste wanted. Something for her thought to rest on with interest."

"But she'll soon grow tired of this," returned the mother. "It's only the novelty of the thing that interests her now."

"Not the novelty alone, be assured, my friend," said Mrs. Baldwin. "The pleasure she

finds in this work has a deeper source. In obedience to will and thought, her fingers are creating a form of beauty. She sees it growing into the perfect whole her fancy has already pictured, and the desire for completeness is so earnest that she loses the old sense of misery that so long burdened her young life. Don't, let me beg of you, discourage her in the least. Praise her work, and, when it is finished, encourage her to do something more. I will call to see her every few days, and show her new articles and new stitches. There is no end to the variety of things which may be produced by netting and crochet needles."

"I wish I could feel as hopeful as you do," said the mother, who was too much of a worldling and excitement lover to comprehend the value of useful work to one imprisoned like her child. "But she can't knit and crochet all the time."

"If half or one third of her time," replied Mrs. Baldwin, "is thus employed, just see what she gains. Forgetfulness of pain and life-weariness for the time; and a new zest for books, or

some light amusement within her reach, during other portions of the day. My dear friend, it is useful employment that the mind hungers for, and, without such employment, there can be no mental repose, no true sense of pleasure, no interior satisfaction. People in health, and with means at command, try to substitute recreations, excitements, changes of scene, and all that, for work, and succeed in getting along after a fashion; but life proves even to them a weariness and disappointment. They are not happy, nay, not even cheerful. If this be so with men and women in health, who can 'enjoy life,' as idle pleasure-seeking is usually called, how wretched must the idle, aimless, useless invalid be, whose world is limited by the walls of her chamber! If, then, my friend, you love your child, seek to interest her in doing something useful with her hands. Help her to turn her self-tormenting thought outwards upon real things in which interest may be taken. In this way, you may lead her out of her old self, and make her, instead of the wretched girl she has been in times past, the happiest member of your household."

The sceptical mother could hardly keep back a smile at the friend's enthusiasm. But time made the prediction true. Mrs. Baldwin was too wise and good a woman at heart to let the work of blessing a human soul rest in so fair a beginning. Every few days she called to see Celeste, and always showed such an interest in what she was doing, that her visits were seasons of real enjoyment.

By the time Celeste finished one article, she had her mind reaching out with a desire to take up some fascinating novelty in the same direction; and so the days and weeks and months went by, and the invalid, instead of wearying, grew more absorbed in the work of creating forms of use and beauty. And now she could read with a new and healthier interest, and listen to descriptions of what was passing in the gay world without envy, or restless longings after the unattainable. The sisters, who had shunned the fretful, ill-natured girl, now began to feel drawn towards her, and to find in her sweeter spirit an attraction that drew out their tender love. How often, now, did she look upon

them in tear-glistening pleasure, as she saw the airy zephyr-work she had made floating like rainbow tissues around them, and feel glad in their grace and beauty!

And so, day after day, the invalid's chamber grew brighter in the sunshine of a cheerful, loving spirit. It had not been in the power of wealth, nor of all the advantages that wealth could bring, to send a ray of light through the darkness that veiled the sick girl's heart. Her needs were on a level with the needs of all God's children, rich or poor, and help could only come to her through the same door that it comes to all—the door of useful occupation. This is the great panacea for the mind diseased.

VI.

HE LOST HIS REWARD.

"THERE'S a lady in the parlor, sir."

Mr. Conway looked up from the table at which he sat, with the pages of an account-book open before him, and, knitting his brows slightly, like one who felt annoyed at being disturbed, said, —

"Did she send a card, or give her name?"

"No, sir," replied the servant.

"Why didn't you ask her name, then?" Mr. Conway's brows fell into deep lines.

"I did, sir. But she said she was a stranger."

"What kind of a looking woman is she?"

"She's dressed in mourning, and has a veil over her face. Looks as if she were poor, sir."

"Poor!" muttered Mr. Conway to himself. "Some widow with ten children, no doubt, come to offer me the privilege of supporting them and her into the bargain."

"Shall I say that you will see her, sir?"

"No; tell her I'm engaged."

The servant turned to leave the room. Before he had reached the door, Mr. Conway said, —

"Stop a moment, Edward."

The man came back a few steps.

"I shall have to see her, I suppose. I wonder who she can be, and what she wants?"

"Shall I go down and ask again for her name, sir?"

"No use in that, if she's a stranger," replied Mr. Conway. "Say that I will be down."

"Dear me!" grumbled Mr. Conway to himself, "I am pestered to death with beggars of all classes, genteel and ungenteel. This is another, without doubt. A strange woman, dressed in shabby mourning. Of course she belongs to the tribe."

In this spirit Mr. Conway went down to the parlor to meet his visitor. His aspect was wintry enough when he entered — wintry enough to kill any young hope-blossoms that might be half-expanded in the mind of this stranger. She

arose as he entered, and, drawing aside her veil, showed the pale, wasted countenance of a woman not past thirty years of age. All her features were delicately cut, and there was a depth and beauty in her large hazel eyes that struck even the hard man who stood half-scowling before her.

"I am a stranger to you, sir," she said, in a hesitating voice, "and must apologize for this intrusion; but it sometimes happens that we are placed in circumstances which leave us no alternative but to do what at other times would be almost impossible. It is so with me now; and this must be my only excuse for calling."

"As I suspected," said Mr. Conway to himself, as, with cold politeness, he desired the lady to resume her seat.

"I am a stranger to you," she added, after both were seated. "But my husband was one of your early friends. His name was Glasgow."

"Glasgow? Glasgow?" Mr. Conway repeated the name in a tone of inquiry.

"You were college friends," said the lady.

"O, ah, yes. I remember Fred Glasgow."

There was a partial lighting up of Mr. Conway's face.

"He was my husband; and I often heard him speak of you, — so often and so kindly, that I naturally came to feel towards you as a friend. He died a year ago." The lady's voice faltered, and she turned her face away to hide the waves of feeling that were passing over it.

"And Glasgow is dead! Poor fellow!" said Mr. Conway, with a rude familiarity of speech, and in a tone of half pity, that wounded the gentle, loving heart in which the image of a dead husband was enshrined as a sacred thing.

"Fred Glasgow." "Poor fellow." This was the way in which that old friend, of whom she had heard so often, spoke of her honored husband, now invested in her mind, by death, with saintly attributes.

"Where did he die? — in this city?" asked Mr. Conway.

"No, sir. He died in L——."

"This state?"

"Yes, sir. He was a physician."

"Ah? I was not aware of that. The truth is,

when men get fairly immersed in business, they lose sight of school-boy days and school-boy friends."

Mr. Conway spoke coldly. Love of gain had long ago burned out all the pleasant memories of early time and early friendships; and he heard of Frederick Glasgow's death with scarcely an emotion of regret, except for the fact that his widow had come to annoy him.

"Forgive me, then," said the visitor, rising with a cold dignity of manner, and drawing her veil over her face. "Your memory was so green and fragrant in the heart of my husband, that I thought it must be the same with you."

Then, bowing, she was moving towards the door, when Mr. Conway, rebuked by her words and manner, stepped forward quickly, and said, —

"I beg pardon, madam. Nothing was farther from my thoughts than to wound you."

And he laid his hand on her arm, and led her back to the seat from which she had arisen. Mr. Conway felt ashamed of himself. He had been rude, almost brutal, to this woman, all the

circumstances of the case considered. He had looked upon her as a mere speculator on his purse, who came with the argument of a dead husband, formerly his friend, to enforce her demand. But he felt that he had not only been mistaken, but had betrayed himself before a lady who had risen, by her reaction upon his conduct, into a position that extorted a deferential respect.

"I beg pardon, madam," he repeated. "We get rough ways, sometimes, in our hard contact with men and things in this world. But it is only on the outside. I remember your husband now, as if we had met but yesterday. We were close friends at college. But our ways in life took different courses, and we never met again after leaving our Alma Mater. And so he has been living as a physician in L——?"

"Yes, sir." The widow did not withdraw her veil.

"I wonder he never wrote to me." That was a mere hypocritical pretence, Mr. Conway.

"He often spoke of doing so; but thought you might be deeply absorbed in business, and,

therefore, in no mood to return to the pleasant days and companions that were so warmly remembered by him," was answered.

"Nothing would have given me more pleasure." Not true, Mr. Conway, and you know it. Is the widow deceived? No; she is too clear-seeing a woman for that. She understands these sentences to be mere words. She has read you by a few clear indices, Mr. Conway, and knows you, as to quality, if not as to your varied aspects of character, as well as if she had been reading you for years.

There followed a time of silence. Of course, in calling upon this old friend of her husband's the widow had a purpose. Mr. Conway sat in expectation. But the purpose was not declared, nor even glanced at remotely. Mr. Conway now asked a few leading questions. But they brought only direct answers. Then the lady arose again, and said, in natural embarrassment, — for her position was far from being easy or agreeable, —

"I have already intruded on you too long, and must again ask to be forgiven for a liberty that I should not have taken."

"Not yet, Mrs. Glasgow, not yet. Be seated again, I pray you." And Mr. Conway would not let her retire. How could he, under the circumstances? "You have not yet stated the object of your visit. Can I serve you in anything?"

Mrs. Glasgow sat down again, but didn't reply until the question, "Can I serve you in anything?" was repeated.

"You can serve me, if you will." Yet even in the tones that conveyed this sentence to the ears of Mr. Conway was apparent an internal rejection of all service from him.

"In what way, madam?" Mr. Conway tried to seem interested, and willing to serve. But his selfish heart relucted, and his voice betrayed his reluctance.

"I will state my case plainly, Mr. Conway," said the widow, now fully self-possessed. "But you must not feel in any way constrained to serve me, after you know how it stands. Thus it is with me. My husband died just as he was beginning to secure a good practice, and left me with five little children to care for. I had noth-

ing but our household furniture, and a few bills for medical services due my husband. Only one way of support offered, and that was by giving musical instruction. This resource has barely sufficed for our humblest wants, and my health is slowly but surely giving way under exposure and excessive fatigue. It is plain to myself and to my friends that I cannot keep up much longer.

"At this crisis, a new avenue to useful and more adequately remunerative employment has opened before me; but certain difficulties are in the way of entrance that I cannot remove without help from a stronger hand than mine. There is a well-patronized seminary for young ladies in L——, which the present owner, in consequence of ill health, is about to transfer to a successor. All my friends are desirous that I should take the institution, and the principal is willing to pass it over into my hands if I can accede to the terms. But—"

She stopped.

"What are the terms?" asked Mr. Conway.

"Twelve hundred dollars for the furniture and

good will. Five hundred paid down, and the balance in one, two, and three years."

"Debt, debt! Bad, Mrs. Glasgow, bad!" said Mr. Conway.

"Not so bad as starvation, sir, or the breaking up of my family, and the scattering of my children among strangers. The profits of the school are good; and I feel myself competent for the place."

"And the five hundred dollars are in the way, madam?"

"Yes, sir."

"Haven't you friends in L—— who can raise the amount for you?"

"No, sir."

"Hum — m — m!" Mr. Conway looked down at the floor. "Five hundred dollars is a good deal of money, ma'am." He didn't say, "To throw away;" but the words were in his thoughts, and Mrs. Glasgow knew it, from his tone and manner. It seemed like a desecration of her husband's memory, to bring it in between herself and this man as an incentive for him to give the help of which she stood so much in need.

"I know it is, sir," she answered, rising again, and, this time, passing quickly across the room, and escaping through the door ere he had time to intercept her.

"Has the woman really gone?" said Mr. Conway, in a fretful, annoyed manner, as he stood alone in the parlor. "I hardly expected to get rid of her so easily as this. Five hundred dollars! It's lucky for me that I hadn't many college friends, if all their wives are to come down on me after this fashion. Glasgow was clever enough in his way; and I liked him. Dead! Poor fellow! I wish he'd been more thrifty. Left five children in a state of destitution. Pity they hadn't died with him. As for his widow, she seems pretty high-strung. But I'm rid of her, thank fortune!"

Not so well rid of her as he supposed. Mr. Conway was a man of large fortune, and five hundred dollars added or subtracted from his bank account could in no way affect his happiness, except as it touched his love of money, which was strong; but five hundred dollars to the widow was a matter of almost infinite im-

portance. In spite of his efforts to push the thought of her, and the five little children of his old friend, from his mind, it kept constantly returning to him; and with the thought came the pressure of considerations connected with the case, that made it almost impossible for Mr. Conway to pass it by. So, on the next day, he wrote a letter to a friend in L——, making inquiries in a confidential way about Mrs. Glasgow. The answer confirmed all she had said, and closed by saying, that if he could help her in any way, it would be a real charity.

Now if this letter had spoken lightly of her, or conveyed an unfavorable impression, Mr. Conway would have felt pleasure in the fact, as releasing him from the pressure of an obligation in the case, which impelled him to do a thing that went entirely across the grain.

"Confound the woman!" ejaculated Mr. Conway, a few days after the receipt of this letter, as he sat thinking over Mrs. Glasgow's visit, and the information she had then given him in regard to her situation. "Confound the woman! What possessed her to come to me? I shall have to

lend her—or, in other words, give—the five hundred dollars, and the thing might as well be done at once."

So Mr. Conway drew a check for the sum that has been mentioned, and enclosed it to Mrs. Glasgow, with this brief note:—

"DEAR MADAM: I enclose you a check for five hundred dollars, the amount required to secure the school of which you spoke to me. I trust it is in good time.

"Yours, respectfully,

"THOMPSON CONWAY."

"There," he said, as he sealed and directed this note; "I've done my part. She's a high-strung lady; perhaps she will return the check. Let her. I rather hope she will."

The cold, unsympathizing letter was penned with this covert wish in his heart. He meant that it should be as a gulf between them, making impossible all future approaches from the widow. He helped her in her great need, but laid upon her, at the same time, purposely, an oppressive sense of obligation.

The check was not returned. In this Mr. Conway was disappointed. On the third day after sending it came an acknowledgment of its receipt, in these words:—

“THOMPSON CONWAY, ESQ.

“DEAR SIR: I have your favor enclosing a check for five hundred dollars. My first impulse was to return it, for I know that you send it under constraint; and had not the dear faces of my fatherless children looked into mine at the moment, admonishing me not to push aside the help that God had placed in my way, I should have acted on that impulse. I thank you for the timely aid, and will restore the sum at the earliest possible moment, which lies not, I trust, very far away in the future. I wish, sir, for your sake and for mine, that you had laid me under this great obligation in a different spirit, so that my heart could have blessed you as a generous benefactor, and the old memory of you rested pleasantly side by side with the memory of my beloved husband. Ah, sir, it has been well said that the manner of conferring an

obligation often takes away the sense of obligation. It is so, to a great extent, in the present case. I take the money as from God,—not really from you,—and give to him my tearful thanks.

“Yours, &c.,

“ADALINE GLASGOW.”

“Insult!” exclaimed Mr. Conway, throwing the letter from him into the fire. “A base insult! I thought myself a weak fool when I sent the money, and now I know it.” He did not get over his anger for that day, nor for many days; and always, afterwards, the thought of Mrs. Glasgow, and the benefit he had conferred upon her, produced unpleasant feelings.

The timely receipt of five hundred dollars enabled Mrs. Glasgow to secure the proprietorship of the seminary, which she conducted with so much intelligence, judgment, and skill, that its reputation advanced under her administration, and, by the end of two years, she was in a condition to cancel the debt to Mr. Conway. That gentleman had been kept advised, from time to time, by the friend in L—— to whom

he had written, making inquiries about Mrs. Glasgow, of the widow's success.

"You never did a truer act of charity in your life than when you helped this excellent lady," wrote his friend on one occasion. Then, such remarks as these were contained in his letters: "Her orphaned children will have cause to bless you, as their benefactor, so long as they live." — "It was a generous thing in you, Mr. Conway." — "The memory of such deeds is, in the mind, a perennial spring of satisfaction." — "Good acts are heaven-invested treasure." — "You will have your reward, not only in this world, but in the world to come."

But all these sentences were as gall to the heart of Mr. Conway. He felt them as mockery, and rejected them with impatience. He had not helped the widow from kindness of feeling, but from the pressure of constraint. Circumstances had so shaped themselves that he could not well avoid doing what he had done; and, instead of pleasure in the deed, he felt only bitterness and anger. A little over two years from the time he had so ungraciously

helped the widow of his old friend, came a letter from her enclosing the sum he had loaned her, interest added. She wrote thus: —

"DEAR SIR: At last, under the blessing of One who is the widow's and the orphan's friend, I am able to return you the money loaned me over two years ago. It has been of great service — more than I shall ever be able to express in words. I thank you for the timely aid. God has made you the instrument of good beyond what you will ever know, and I pray that he may reward you with sweet remembrances.

"Gratefully,

"ADALINE GLASGOW."

"Stuff! cant!" said Mr. Conway, tossing the letter from him with an impatient manner. Then, crushing the draft which it had contained, with the grasp of a man who felt that he had something real in possession, he added, "I never expected to see this again."

Did he feel comfortable? How was that possible? He had his money back, yet the blessing

of a good deed came not as his reward. Interest had been added. But what were sixty dollars to the imperishable memories that might have been his — memories like living springs of pleasure to his soul? God had made him the unwilling instrument of good; and his unwillingness had robbed him of his reward.

Mr. Conway's case is only an illustration. We are all made instruments of good to others in some degree. Alas, for us, if, like him, we lose our reward!

VII.

GRANDPA AND HIS DARLING.

"I DON'T believe, grandpa, you ever did see anything so sweet. It's got blue eyes, and they open and shut; and its hair is real, and curls all over its head. O, it's lovely!"

"I'm not so sure of that," said grandpa. "I've seen a great many sweet and lovely things in my time."

"O, but nothing so sweet as Fanny's doll, grandpa! Nobody ever did see anything sweeter than that."

"I did once, I know," answered grandpa, speaking so confidently that little Florry looked up into his face, and said, —

"Tell me about it, won't you?"

"It's just four years since I first saw it."

"O, that's a great while ago, grandpa. As long as four Christmases."

"Four times as long as from one Christmas to another, you mean."

"I s'pose so; you know how to say it best, grandpa."

"You think it a long time from one Christmas to another?"

"O, dear, yes! It's a dreadful long time! 'Twon't never come again, seems to me."

"Just as surely as my little girl lives, will Christmas be along by and by; so she must wait patiently. There is something good for her in every day; something to make her happy; and if she enjoys every day's good things as she receives them, she will be the happier at Christmas when it comes."

"And now tell me what you saw four years ago," said Florry, laying her head down against her grandfather, to listen.

"Well, you shall hear all about it. It had blue eyes, and they opened and shut, and its hair was real, and curled all over its head; and it was just a hundred times sweeter than Fanny's doll."

"O, grandpa! It must have been a real live baby!" cried Florry, starting up.

"So it was; a real live baby. Its blue eyes

were so clear and bright, that you could see your own face in them; its cheeks were softer than any velvet, and the bloom on them purer than the bloom on apple blossoms; and its mouth — O, its mouth was so sweet, that we troubled the darling with our many kisses! And such dear little hands! One said they were like crumpled rose leaves, and another called them pink shells; but they were something more than rose leaves or pink shells to me when they clasped themselves around my fingers, and I felt the warm love in them running away to my heart."

And when grandpa said this, he could not help putting his arms around Florry, and hugging her ever so tightly.

"Had it any name?" asked Florry.

"O, yes. We gave it a name. We called it —"

"What, grandpa?"

"Florry."

"O, dear! It was me, then! I was the baby!"

"Yes, darling. Four years ago the good Lord gave you to us as a little helpless baby, but so sweet and pure that just to look at you

was to have our hearts filled with love. Now, do you know why he let you be born into the world?"

"That I might be good, and go to heaven? Is that it, grandpa?"

"Yes. But what is heaven?"

"It's away up where God lives with the angels, isn't it?"

"God is everywhere," said grandpa. "He is right near to us now, though we can't see him. And so are his angels."

A look of wonder came into Florry's face; then it grew serious. Her eyes wandered out of the window, and over the fields and water and hills beyond, and then came back to her grandpa. It wasn't all clear to her. She had heard many times of God, and heaven, and the angels; but had always thought of them as afar off, or up very high.

"Is heaven all around us, grandpa?" she asked, almost holding her breath.

"God is everywhere present, and his angels dwell with him, and round about him."

Still the child looked puzzled. It was more than she could take in.

"You are too little to understand about this," grandpa said. "When you are older it will be all plain. Only think of God as always near you; and think of him as a kind and loving Father, who wants you to be good, so that you can be happy; for only the good are happy."

Florry again leaned her head back upon her grandpa's bosom, and he laid his hand in among the curls of sunny hair; and so they sat by the open window, in through which the soft June airs came, both thinking of heaven and the angels, and both so near to them that a deep peace, passing all understanding, rested on their souls.

VIII.

UNFORGOTTEN WRONG.

It is remarkable how few persons, in regulating their conduct towards others, take memory into account — memory, that fixes states of mind into permanent conditions. Intensity of feeling may be said to be the measure of impressions which remain; and few feelings are more intense than those created by the infliction of wrong.

Upon young persons, and those in humble stations, these wounds, that rankle in the memory, are oftenest inflicted. It rarely seems to occur to those who give them, that the young attain maturity in a few years, and take their places in society as men and women, often prosperous and powerful. Nor does it occur to them that the memory of wrong will not die.

"I can't understand it," said Marcus Williams, a gentleman past middle life, who sat sober and

thoughtful at his desk, on which, among other papers and letters, was a note from his lawyer. "Why should he be so bitter against me? Why should he set his heel upon me, and in so vindictive a spirit? What wrong have I done to the man?"

He opened the note, and read it a second time.

"I regret to say," it ran, "that Mr. Konig proves to be wholly impracticable. Nothing whatever can be done with him. He will sign nothing — concede nothing — talks only of the pound of flesh. Unfortunately, he holds a considerable amount of your paper, which, in some cases, as I happen to be informed, he has bought within a week from parties to whom you gave it, at from sixty to seventy cents on the dollar. The whole of this he is determined to press to judgment. If the claims held by him were small, the other creditors, all of whom are friendly and reasonable, would consent to his being bought off, or secured, so that your business could be saved. But, as matters now stand, I don't see anything short of a general assignment."

Mr. Williams drooped his head, and sat for some time in a half-paralyzed state of mind. He was in the toils of a cruel man, and saw no way of escape. But why should Mr. Konig thus seek his ruin? Only a faint remembrance of him, as a young man in the store of a merchant with whom he had dealings many years before, remained with Mr. Williams. A shade of something unpleasant dimmed this remembrance; but the recollection of any circumstance that could throw a shade it was impossible to recall. His next observation of him was as commission merchant on the wharf, in copartnership with the son of his former employer. After this he was thrown into contact with him occasionally; but Konig always maintained a distant air, never smiled when it became necessary to hold brief personal intercourse in the way of business, and had a coldness of manner that invariably repelled. All this had affected Mr. Williams unpleasantly; but he set it down to the score of temperament, not personal feeling.

Now it flashed upon him that enmity lay beneath all this. Why, else, should the man seek

to get him into his power, in order to destroy him? Mr. Williams dwelt on this new phase which his trouble had assumed, looking at it from all sides, and trying to comprehend its meaning. Carefully did he search through his memory for some incident that might have been misconstrued; but on no leaf in his book could he find the record of such an incident; and he closed it in doubt and perplexity.

"I will see him," was the first conclusion to which Mr. Williams came. Pride, and a native sense of independence, held him a long time back from this determination. But Mr. Williams was a man in whom reason was the controlling power; a man of self-discipline, and great moral vigor. Whatever he saw to be right, that he compelled himself to do, in the face of pleading weakness or writhing pain.

"If I have, at any time, unwittingly injured or wronged him, and his present course is stimulated by revenge, it is best for both of us that I should know it, and offer such atonement as may be in my power. If a spirit of vindictiveness lie at the bottom of his action now, that

spirit will hurt him more vitally than any external injury he may work upon me; and so there rests on me a double responsibility. If I can save him from acts inspired by an evil will, and myself and others from the consequences of those acts, every just and humane consideration impels me to make the effort, and I will do it."

And so, forcing back all the specious reasonings of pride, Mr. Williams took an early opportunity to see Mr. Konig. He found him alone in the parlor of his own house. It was evening. He had chosen the place and the time, because he hoped thus to secure a more favorable state of mind than would be possible during a business hour, and with business surroundings. To his question, "Is Mr. Konig at home?" the servant had answered in the affirmative, and shown him into one of the parlors, where he found the man who had assumed towards him the attitude of an enemy.

The surprised "Good evening, sir!" of Mr. Konig was almost savage in its repellent coldness. From an instinct of good breeding, Mr. Williams extended his hand; but it was not taken.

"Well, sir?" The voice of Mr. Konig was sharply imperative.

"I have called to ask a few questions," said Mr. Williams. His voice, weak on the first two or three words, was calm and firm, yet courteous, in completing the sentence.

"Sit down, sir," growled Mr. Konig, pushing a chair towards his visitor.

The chair was taken, and the two men sat down, facing each other.

"Have I ever wronged or offended you in anything, Mr. Konig?"

"Yes, sir!" was the sternly spoken answer. Revenge flashed from the man's eyes.

"When?"

"When! Have *you* forgotten?"

Mr. Williams dropped his eyes, and searched back through his memory.

"If I had ever meditated wrong against you, Mr. Konig, I could not have forgotten. As it is, I remember nothing. Speak out plainly."

"You are twenty years my senior," said Mr. Konig.

"Probably."

"Twenty years ago I was a poor young man, and you a man of property. I was obscure and humble; you on the top wave of prosperity. And you treated me with arrogance and contempt—pushed me aside with a sneering superciliousness, the humiliation of which has never for an hour been forgotten or forgiven. I said that, sooner or later in life, my time would come; and I have waited and looked for it through many years. Even boys can feel, sir. And the stung spirit of a proud and sensitive boy never loses consciousness of the smart. I have meant to pay you back, sir; to punish a wanton outrage; to teach you a lesson that would last."

A cruel triumph sat on the face of Mr. Konig.

"Will you give the occasion? I am wholly at fault."

Mr. Williams was self-possessed, mild, and firm.

"Twenty years ago, you passed an evening at the house of Mr. Baldwin. Is that occasion remembered?"

After thinking back for some moments, Mr. Williams said "Yes."

"I was there," said Mr. Konig.

"I do not remember."

"But I do; and that was the occasion on which I received an insult from your hands which stung me almost to madness. It went down to the quick, sir—hurt deeply—festered; and has never healed over."

"I am pained to hear this," replied Mr. Williams; "and do solemnly affirm, that I never entertained an unkind feeling towards you, and cannot now recall the circumstance to which you refer. Your feelings, at the time, must certainly have magnified an unintentional offence, and given it too dark a color."

"No, sir. The insult was designed, and I took it as it was meant."

"Will you repeat what then occurred?"

"Yes, sir. You and I, Mr. Baldwin, and the President of the Union Bank, were conversing on the subject of finance. Mr. Baldwin favored a National Bank as the only means through which we would ever get a stable currency and uniform exchange. You and Bourdon, who

was then President of the Union Bank, took the other side of the question, and against a government bank. Now, though quite a young man, I had read and thought a great deal on this subject, and was better posted than most men of twice my years. And so it was natural, and perfectly proper, that I should give my opinion, which I did, with some of that ardor natural to young men. As I pushed aside, with facts and figures, one of your feeble assumptions, you turned short upon me with these cutting sentences—I remember every word, and the depreciating contempt of your manner, as you waved towards me an impatient hand: ‘Too deep water for you, my young friend! Take my advice, and study Gouge, Gallatin, and Raguét for six months or a year. By that time, you will be less self-asserting and opinionated.’ And with these words, you turned off with a superior air, went on talking with the other two gentlemen, and manifested as little regard for me as if I had not been present. I tell you, sir, the arrow went deep, and the barb has not been extracted!”

“May I extract it now?” said Mr. Williams, in a subdued voice, as he arose from his chair, and looked down upon a face that was dark with anger, and quivering from remembered pain.

“You cannot!” was sternly answered.

“Say not so. I may extract the barb, though I fail to heal the wound; and that will be something in the line of reparation. I do not remember to have used the language just repeated; but I will not question the exactness of your report. Twenty years ago I was less considerate of others—less careful of their feelings—than I have since learned to be. If excited by opposition, I was apt to speak with little choice of words. Time has taught me better, and brought many sober hours in reviewing the past. We are all weak at some point, Mr. König; each of us, like St. Paul, has an easily besetting sin; and when, from wrong acts, all that is left to us is confession and repentance, shall we grant less to each other than we hope to receive from God?”

The two men looked at each other in silence

for nearly a minute. Konig was hard, proud, and revengeful. For years he had nursed the hope of one day getting Williams in his power, and requiting him tenfold for what he had suffered, and he was loath, now, to give up the sweet morsel that was rolling under his tongue.

"Let me leave you with this thought," said Mr. Williams, seeing that no reply was meditated. "If we punish vindictively a wrong done to us under the blind impulse of sudden feeling, do we not go below, instead of rising in true manliness above, our adversary? Is not loss to ourselves, instead of gain, involved?"

Still there was no answer. Mr. Williams moved towards the door. Konig sat with his hard eyes now withdrawn from the other's face, and cast upon the floor. The calm dignity shown by Mr. Williams, even in the acknowledgment of wrong, was having its effect. He stood before his enemy in a new light, and showed a quality of soul that rebuked him.

"You have me in your power, Mr. Konig," said Mr. Williams, as he stood with the partly

opened door in his hand. "For myself, I do not ask your mercy. But others must be involved in the ruin you meditate. No man stands alone in this world, and no man can be stricken down without many staggering under the blow that prostrates him. Worse than all will be the hurt to your own life, if, under the motive of revenge, you pursue the course adopted. And so, I pray you, forbear!"

Mr. Konig sat alone. His visitor had departed. The interview had not left him in a calmer state. Instead of this, a strange tumult had taken possession of his mind. There was war in his members. Right impulses were struggling with evil passions; a long meditated triumph was finding obstruction in the very hour of sweet fruition. Even as he lifted his hand to pluck and taste the tempting fruit, which, in ripening, had so pleased his eyes and filled him with anticipated joy, a voice of warning came to his ear, and the word "Forbear!" held him, half surprised, half fearful, back from the pulpy clusters.

All through the remainder of that evening,

all through the nearly sleepless night that succeeded, the strife went on. In the stillness of later hours, ere daylight broke, his perturbed soul found rest, and, when awakened by the kiss of morning, a spirit of forgiveness was in his heart; and not only a spirit of forgiveness, but a sense of shame — shame for the cruel wrong he had sought to inflict out of revenge for an insult given twenty years before, in a moment of excited feeling.

“Mr. Konig has withdrawn all opposition to the arrangement, and will come in with the other creditors.”

Mr. Williams read these lines in a note from his lawyer twice, to make sure of their meaning. What a sense of relief followed! He had been for hours in the face of great peril, with no means of escape in view. In a moment of time, unheralded, relief came, and he stood in safety.

“Wrong, wrong,” — so he talked with himself, — “how inevitable are thy retributions! Acts, whether good or evil, become living powers,

which, moving by inherent laws in a circle, return to bless or curse the actors. If, in our entrance upon life we comprehended this, what pains and repentances, what losses, and sufferings, might be saved!”

IX.

AS WE FORGIVE OUR DEBTORS.

WHEN a mere lad, we were struck with the remark of an eminent physician, and have thought of it hundreds of times since. His collector, in making returns, reported as valueless an account against a gentleman who had recently failed in business.

"The bill is good for nothing," said the collector. M—— has sunk everything, and is now with his family on the world, penniless."

The physician took the bill, quietly tore it in pieces, and then, turning to the unfortunate debtor's account, wrote across it, "Settled."

"Rather a losing business that," remarked the collector.

"I hope to be able to say the Lord's Prayer as long as I live," was the physician's calm reply. "'Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.' When we say that prayer, my friend, it

behooves us to look into our hearts, and ask ourselves *how* we forgive our debtors. 'With what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again.'"

Yes, hundreds of times since then, in our world-experience and contact with men, have we thought of that physician's remark. But very few have we met, who, like him, could say the Lord's Prayer without asking for a curse instead of a blessing; for, if the Lord forgave *their* debts as they forgive their debtors, their chances of eternal salvation would not be worth the fraction of a mite.

This defect of forgiveness is not confined to the non-professor—to him whose lips repeat not daily the holy words of that holy petition. So far as our experience and observation go, they who profess to have "had much forgiven, because they had sinned much," are as rigid in their exaction of the uttermost farthing, as the men who assume no sanctity of life or conversation. We speak here in general terms. There are noble exceptions in both classes; but not, we are inclined to believe, in one more than in

the other. With an individual of the former class we have now to deal. We do not intend to be hard with him; we shall not exaggerate his defects; for his purposes are good, and, when he sees what is evil, he honestly strives to overcome it. But self-love and self-interest blind us all. They blinded Mr. Harvey Green, notwithstanding he had passed from "death unto life," and had the evidence of the change in the fact that he "loved the brethren."

Harvey Green was a shrewd man of business — honest in all his dealings, yet ever exacting his own. He took no advantage of others, and was very careful not to let others take advantage of him. While acting on the precept, "Owe no man anything," he never lost sight of a debtor, nor rested while the obligation remained in force. A very natural result was, that Harvey Green prospered in the things of this world, — not that he became very rich, but so well off as to leave no reasonable want unsupplied.

It so happened, a few years ago, that a man named Wilkins, after an unsuccessful struggle with fortune, continued through six or seven

years, failed in business. Few men had toiled harder, or suffered more; and when, at last, he yielded to the pressure of iron circumstances, he sunk down, for a season, prostrate in mind and body. Everything that he had was given up to creditors, — the property paid but a small percentage on their claims, — and then he went forth into the world, all his business relations broken up, and, under the heavy disadvantage of his situation, bravely sought to gain for his large dependent family, things needful to their sustenance and growth in mind and body.

Among his creditors was Green. Now, Wilkins belonged to the same church that numbered Green among its members. When the latter heard of the failure he was much disturbed, although the sum owed him was not above four hundred dollars. On reflection, he grew more composed.

"Wilkins is an honest man," said he to himself. "He'll pay me, sooner or later."

It did not take long to sell off, at a ruinous sacrifice, the stock of goods remaining in the hands of the debtor, for he threw no impediment

in the way of those who sought to obtain their due.

"Ah, my friend," said the latter, on meeting with Green a few days after the closing up of his insolvent estate, "this is a sad business! But, if God gives me strength, I will pay off every dollar of this debt before I die. An honest man can never sleep soundly while he owes his neighbor a farthing."

"The right spirit, brother Wilkins!" answered Green; "the right spirit! Hold fast to that declaration, and all will come out straight in the end. Though I can't very well lie out of my money, yet I will be patient until you are able to pay me. I always said you were an honest man; and I am sure you will make good my words."

"God helping me, I will," said the debtor. His voice trembled and his eyes grew moist. O, how dark all looked in the future! What a cloud was on his path! What a weight of grief, mortification, and despondency on his heart!

The two men parted, and each took his home-

ward way—the debtor and the creditor. The one with countenance erect, self-complacent feelings, and elastic step; the other sad and depressed.

That night Mr. Green prayed "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." Yet scarcely had the words died on his lips, ere he was musing on the chances in favor of his ever receiving from the penniless Wilkins the few hundred dollars owed him by that unhappy individual. There was no sympathy for him in his heart; no thought of his terrible prostration of spirit; nothing of pity and forgiveness. A selfish regard for his own interest completely absorbed all humane considerations.

Time passed on. Mr. Wilkins was no drone. An earnest, active man, he soon found employment—not very remunerative at first, but still sufficiently so to enable him to secure many comforts for his family, and to provide for their education.

One, two, three years glided by. With the growth of his children his expenses increased, and kept so close a tread upon his income that

he had not been able to pay off any of the old obligations; although he never lost sight of them, and never ceased to feel troubled on account of their existence.

"O, debt, debt, debt!" he would often sigh to himself. "What would I not give to be able to say, 'I owe no man anything!' But with my large family and limited income, what hope is there?"

This was his depressed state of mind one day when Mr. Green called in to see him. Many times before this the unhappy man had been reminded of his debt.

"How are you getting on?" inquired the creditor, fixing his eyes steadily upon poor Mr. Wilkins, who felt a sense of suffocation, and slightly quailing before his tyrant.

"I have much to be thankful for," meekly answered the debtor. "My health has been good, and I have had steady employment."

"You are living very comfortably."

"And we are grateful to a kind Providence for our blessings."

"Your salary is one thousand dollars?"

"It is; and I have six children to support."

"You ought to save something. I've been easy with you a long time; it's three years now, and you haven't offered me one cent. If you'd paid me five or ten dollars at a time, the debt would have been lessened. I wish you would begin to make some arrangement. You ought to save at least two hundred dollars from your salary. I know plenty of men who get only eight hundred dollars a year, and have as large families as yours."

The eye of Mr. Wilkins dropped wearily to the floor; he felt as if a heavy weight had been laid upon his bosom. He made no reply, for what could he say?

"I have always upheld you as an honest man," remarked Green, in a tone of voice that implied an awakening doubt as to whether this view of the debtor's character were really correct.

"That is between God and my own conscience," said Wilkins, lifting his eyes from the floor, and looking with some sternness into the face of his persecuting creditor.

"For your own sake, I trust you will keep

a clear conscience," returned Green. "As for the present matter between us, all I wish to know is, whether you mean to pay my debt; and if so, when I may expect to receive something."

"How much is the debt?" asked Wilkins.

"It was three hundred and seventy dollars at the time of your failure. Interest added, it now amounts to four hundred and fifty," said Green.

"There were other debts besides yours."

"Of course there were; but I have nothing to do with them."

"The whole amount of my indebtedness was twenty thousand dollars. The yearly interest on this debt is more than my whole income. I cannot pay even the interest, much less the principal."

"But you can pay my small claim if you will; you could have paid it before this time if the disposition had existed. You talk of conscience; but I'm afraid, brother Wilkins, in your case there is a very narrow foundation of honesty for conscience to rest upon. I don't put much faith

in the professions of men who live after the fashion you live, and yet refuse to pay their debts. I'm a plain-spoken individual, and you now have my mind freely."

The tone and manner of the creditor were harsh in the extreme.

"Perhaps," said Wilkins, with forced calmness, "there may be less of dishonesty in my withholding than in your demanding."

"Dishonesty! Do you dare?" The creditor's face flushed, and his lips quivered with indignation.

"There are ten creditors in all," said Wilkins, with regained composure. "Let me put to you a question. I owe John Martin six hundred dollars. Suppose I had six hundred dollars, and little prospect of ever getting any more, and were to pay the whole of it over to John Martin, instead of dividing it equally between you and all the creditors, would you deem the act right on my part? Or, would you think Martin really honest, if he were to crowd and chafe me, until, in very desperation, as it were, I gave him the whole of what mainly belonged

to others? Would you not say that he had possessed himself of your property? I know you would. And let me say to you plainly, that I do not think your present effort to get me to pay off your claim entire, regardless of others equally as much entitled to be paid as yourself, at all indicative of unselfishness, or a spirit of genuine honesty. If I have any money to pay, it belongs equally to all my creditors—not to any one of them exclusively.”

To be turned upon thus by a man who was in debt to him—to be charged with a dishonest spirit by the poor creature whose relations to society he regarded as essentially dishonest—this was too much for the self-complacency of Mr. Green. He rose up quickly, saying, in a threatening tone,—

“You will repent of this insult, sir! I have forborne for years, believing that you were really honest; but for this forbearance I now meet with outrage. I shall forbear no longer. You are able enough to pay me, and I will find a way to compel you to do so.”

Left alone with his troubled thoughts, poor

Mr. Wilkins felt not only humiliated and wretched, but alarmed for the integrity of his household. There was no way in which his creditor could extort the sum due him, except by seizing upon his household furniture. That Green would do this, he had but too good reason to fear, for he had done it in other cases. His fears proved not altogether groundless. On the very next day, a sheriff's writ was served on him at the suit of Harvey Green.

“What do you propose doing?” asked Wilkins, on meeting with his creditor a few days afterwards.

“Get my money!” was answered, sternly.

“But I have nothing.”

“We will soon see about that! Good morning.”

Mr. Green imagined that the indignation felt towards Wilkins was directed against his dishonest spirit; was, in fact, a righteous indignation, when its spring was in cupidity and wounded pride.

It was the day before the trial of his cause against Wilkins, when he expected to get judg-

ment by default, as no answer had been made by the defendant in the case. And it was his purpose, as it had been from the beginning, to order an execution so soon as the matter was through the court, and seize upon any property that could be found.

Evening came, and Mr. Green sat, with his children around him, in his pleasant home. A sweet little boy knelt before him, his pure hands clasped in prayer, while from his lips came, musically, the words taught by the Lord to his disciples, "Forgive us our debts; as we forgive our debtors."

There seemed a deeper meaning in the words, murmured by innocent childhood, than had ever before reached his perceptions. His thoughts were stirred; new emotions awakened. The prayer was said, the little one arose from his knees, and lifted his rosy lips for the good-night kiss.

"Father," said he, turning back, after going across the room, "I'm not going to let Harry Williams pay me for that sled. It got broke all to pieces the next day after I let him have it."

"He bought it from you," said Mr. Green.

"I know he did; but Harry's mother is poor, and he only gets a penny now and then. It will take him a long, long time to save a dollar; and then the sled is broken, and no good to him. I have a great many more nice things than he has, and why should I want his pennies when he gets so few?"

"What made you think of this?" asked the father, who was touched by the words of his child.

"It came into my mind just now when I was saying my prayer. I prayed, 'Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.' Now, Harry Williams is my debtor, is he not?"

"Yes, my son."

"Well, if I don't forgive him his debt, how can I expect God to forgive me my debt? If I pray to him to forgive me as I forgive Harry, and I *don't* forgive Harry at all, don't I ask God *not* to forgive me, father?"

The child spoke earnestly, and stood with his large, deep, calm eyes fixed intently on his father's face. Almost involuntarily Mr. Green repeated the words,—

“‘If ye forgive not men their trespasses,’ said our Saviour, ‘neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.’”

“I’ll forgive Harry the debt, father. I’m sure he isn’t able to pay for the sled; and I have a great many more nice things than he has. If I don’t do it, how can I ever pray that prayer again?”

“O, yes, yes! Forgive him the debt, by all means!” replied the father, kissing his boy.

That evening was spent by Mr. Green in closer self-communion than he had known for many years. The words of his child had come to him like rebuking precepts from heaven, and he bowed his head, humiliated and repentant, resolving to forgive in the future as he would be forgiven.

On the morning that followed, as Mr. Wilkins, from whose mind the cloud had not lifted itself, — who was yet trembling for the home of his children, — was passing from his door, a lad placed a letter in his hand. He knew the face of the boy from its likeness to that of Mr. Green.

“More trouble,” he sighed to himself, as he thrust the note into his pocket.

An hour afterwards he opened it, and, to his bewilderment and surprise, found within his account fully drawn out, and receipted with the signature of Harvey Green. Below the receipt was written, “I stand rebuked. I must forgive, if I hope to be forgiven.”

It was with difficulty that Wilkins could restrain a gush of tears, so great was his instant revulsion of feeling. Ah, if Harvey Green could have seen his heart at that moment, his debt would have been paid fourfold. No amount of money poured into his coffers could have produced such a feeling of heavenly delight.

X.

GIVING TO THE POOR.

"DIDN'T Brown give anything?" said Mr. Ward.

"Not a dime," was answered.

"What excuse did he make?"

"O, he said something about the harm that is done by indiscriminate almsgiving. I hardly kept patient enough to hear him to the end."

"All stuff!" said Mr. Ward. "A mere excuse for parsimony."

"So I felt. Well, well! Some men's hearts are made of iron."

"You told him how destitute poor Mrs. Folger was?"

"O, yes!"

"And he didn't put his hand in his pocket?"

"No."

"Very well. Let Mr. Brown pass. We can do without him. God's poor are all around us, and if we neglect our duty, he will not forget."

"I couldn't help looking around the room," was answered to this, "and noticing its comfortable arrangements. Cushioned easy-chairs, lounges, soft carpets, and warm curtains. Mr. Brown, in wrapper and slippers, sitting by the glowing grate, was the picture of selfish enjoyment. Poor Mrs. Folger! I thought of her, shivering with her half-clothed children by a few coals. Well, well! Some have their good things here, and some their evil things. But there will be a reversion of this order in the time to come. Money seems to harden some people's hearts. The more they get, the less human they become. What is a dollar or two to Brown? Nothing! It would not have been missed from his purse, nor abridged a single comfort. But, to Mrs. Folger and her poor children, the sum would have brought food and warmth. The difference is striking and significant. I am sorry for Mr. Brown. He has lost an opportunity of laying up treasure in heaven."

And so they talked, sitting in judgment on Mr. Brown. Of his comfortable surroundings, we have had a passing glimpse. Let us see how

it really is with Mrs. Folger, who lives not far away, in a narrow court, amidst the children of poverty. We enter a small room, almost unfurnished. There is an old pine table, with one leaf broken off; three chairs, and a wooden bench, and a small, cracked stove, in which carpenters' refuse is burning. Sundry garments hang against the walls, or lie in the corners. Cracked or broken dishes, unwashed, cover the table and mantel-piece. It is a scene of disorder and filth. And in the midst, sitting with idle hands, is Mrs. Folger. Her attitude expresses a nerveless state of mind; her face is troubled. Three children hover about the stove. One of them is a stout, sensual-looking boy, over fourteen years of age. The other two are girls—their ages eight and ten.

"You'll have to go back, John," says the mother, in a tone of pitiful remonstrance. "I'm sorry, but there's no help for it."

John's face darkens.

"If you had to get up and go off in the cold, as I do, every morning—"

"I know it's hard, my son. I pity you,"

breaks in the weak, irresolute mother. "But what are we to do? Starve? You must go back, John."

"I can never stand it, mother. My back aches from the time I go into the shop until I come out again. And Mr. Grind is a Turk. He knocks the boys about, and drives them to death. They say he killed a boy last winter. I'm so 'fraid of him, that I tremble all over whenever he comes near me. Yesterday he caught me by the hair and pulled me half across the room. O, dear! I can't stand it mother, and I won't!"

The mother began wringing her hands in a distressed way. Just then came a knock at her door, which, not moving, she answered by a loud "Come in!" A woman entered. Mrs. Folger arose instantly, with a slightly confused manner, for the visitor's attire was that of a person quite above her social condition.

"Is your name Folger?"

"Yes, ma'am." The tone was faint and piteous, and the face in keeping with the voice. "Won't you sit down?" And Mrs. Folger

brushed a chair, that stood in the middle of the room, with her dirty apron, — it needed the operation, — and handed it to the lady, whose quick eyes were taking in everything almost at a glance.

"Are you sick?" was inquired, in a calm, searching voice.

"No, ma'am, not just sick; but I never feel very well."

"Is this the way in which you live all the while?" The visitor glanced around the room again.

"Yes, ma'am. Poor people can't have things like the rich."

"They can be clean and neat, and make the most of what they have. Water costs nothing, and an hour a day expended on a room like this would keep it sweet and in order. Are these your children?"

"Yes, ma'am." Still plaintive, almost whining.

"How old is the boy?"

"Fourteen."

"Why isn't he at work?"

"He's had a place, ma'am, but he left it yesterday."

"Why?"

"They worked him so hard, and treated him so dreadfully, that he couldn't stand it. They treat poor boys worse than dumb beasts, sometimes."

The lady eyed the boy for a few moments, and then said, —

"He doesn't look as if he'd been very badly used. What's your name, sir?"

"John," answered the boy.

"Where have you been at work?"

"In a hat factory."

"How much did they pay you?"

"Two dollars and a half, ma'am."

"Why did you leave?"

The boy stammered a lame excuse.

"That won't do," said the lady. "You must go back to your place again. A boy that's afraid of work will never make a man worth anything. Send him back to his place, Mrs. Folger, and be thankful that he has something to do this hard winter. There are hundreds around you, men and boys, who haven't a stroke of work. And now, let me ask what

you are doing in the way of supporting yourself and children?"

The woman's manner began to grow uneasy. She didn't feel comfortable in the presence of this unsympathizing visitor.

"I haven't any work just now," she answered.

"How comes that? What kind of work have you been doing?"

"I took in washing and ironing, but I'm a weakly woman, and it was so dreadful hard on me that I had to give it up."

"Can't you sew?"

"Yes, ma'am, but bending over that kind of work gives me a pain in my breast."

"And so you sit down in idleness and disorder, and encourage the same vices in your children;" this was said in an undertone, so that the woman alone might hear the rebuke. "This won't answer, Mrs. Folger. Send your boy back to his place, and let him have the benefits and protection of useful employment. Go to work yourself. Put your rooms in order, and keep them so. Try and live like a decent woman. This is shocking! What do you ex-

pect your children to become, if raised in idleness, disorder, and dirt? Teach your little girls to be tidy and industrious; and this, by example. Let them see their mother always busy, and always making the best of everything. Old and young are happiest when usefully employed. Work is no hardship, but a blessing. Send John back to his place, that he may grow up a useful, industrious boy, and help you at the same time. He's stout and strong, and can bear a little rough usage, if it must come. But don't encourage him to complain. Let him understand that he's got to hold on to his place. It will be best for him — it will make a man of him. So arouse yourself, Mrs. Folger! You and John are able to work, and take good care of yourselves. And these little girls can help in a great many ways, if you show them how. All you need is a willing spirit."

And the visitor arose and departed, without offering the smallest aid beyond the reproof and injunctions we have recorded.

"You'll have to go back, John; there's no help for it," said Mrs. Folger. Her voice had

in it a firmer quality. She had arisen under the force of a new spirit which had been awakened, and was moving about the room, putting things in order, and preparing to wash up the dishes, which had not been touched since their last meal. "We've nothing but your wages to depend on; and, anyhow, idleness is bad for boys. I don't want you on the street again. I've had trouble enough with you already. So go right away back to the shop before some one else gets your place—go right away!"

John demurred, feebly, but made preparations for obeying. He was putting on his overcoat, when another rap was heard on the door. Mr. Ward came in. The destitute condition of this family had been made known to him by some one who saw only the surface of things, and the relation had drawn largely on his sympathies. So, acting under a blindly benevolent impulse, he had collected some twenty dollars, and now came on his mission of blessing to the poor. Mr. Brown, from whom, through the medium of a friend, he had anticipated a liberal donation to his fund, gave nothing, as we have seen,

and was harshly judged for withholding. Expressions of surprise and pity fell from the lips of Mr. Ward, as he glanced around the room.

"This is a hard way to live!" he said, in a tone of commiseration, speaking half to himself and half to the woman.

"Indeed it is hard!" Mrs. Folger's dirty apron went to her eyes. Her voice was choked by feeling; tears came readily to view. John instinctively put off his overcoat, and laid aside his cap.

"Have you no coal?" asked Mr. Ward, as he glanced to the stove and saw the carpenters' shavings strewn around.

"No, sir," whined the woman.

"Bless me! that is hard!" And Mr. Ward drew out his pocket-book. "Is this your boy?" looking towards John.

"Yes, sir."

"Well, here my lad. Take this five-dollar bill, go to one of the coal-yards on Broad Street, and order a ton of coal for your mother."

John's overcoat went on quickly, and, taking the bank-note, he started on his errand.

"Hi! Where you going?" A boy, older than John, hailed him as he turned the first corner.

"Down to the coal-yard. Come — go 'long."

The boy joined him. "Going to buy coal?"

"Yes."

"How much?"

"A ton."

"Whew! Got the money?"

"Yes, indeed! See!" And John displayed the five-dollar bill. They walked a little way in silence, the companion plotting evil. He was farther away from the right path than John.

"A whole ton, did you say?" he asked.

"Yes, a whole ton."

"I'll tell you what I did once."

"What?"

"They sent me for a ton of coal, and I bought only three quarters. So I had a dollar and a 'levy all to myself."

"And didn't they find it out?" John's eyes grew larger, and his voice was excited.

"No. The three quarters went for a ton, and nobody was any the wiser."

The tempter prevailed, and John shared with him the price of a quarter of a ton of coal!

Mr. Ward made a few general inquiries of Mrs. Folger, after sending John away; and taking all that she said for granted, handed her over fifteen dollars, the balance of his collections and contribution; and, telling her to make herself and children comfortable, retired, feeling that he had done a most benevolent action. He passed the home of Mr. Brown on his way back from this errand of mercy, and, glancing up at the windows, said, in his thought, —

"It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven."

As he went by, the visitor who had called a little while before him at the widow's miserable home, sat talking with Mr. Brown.

"Any help there," she is saying, "will do harm rather than good. Mrs. Folger and her oldest boy are able to earn all that is really needful. But she is lazy and neglectful of her home and children, and he, like most boys, would rather play than work. If you help

them, she will fold her hands, and he will go upon the street. The spur of hunger and cold are needed there. Take it off, and the family will grow up idle and vicious."

Mr. Brown sighed. "Hunger and cold are hard drivers, Margaret."

"But not so hard as vice and crime. Work is no hardship, but a blessing. The bread that is earned is sweeter to the taste. Mrs. Folger will be happier at toil that goes even beyond her strength, than she now is, sitting in idleness. Don't give her a dollar."

"How is old Mrs. Lyon?" was inquired.

"Feeble, but always employed. Out of the dollar a week that you supply for worsted and crochet cotton, she produces three or four dollars' worth of work, which, so far, she has been able to sell. She lives right comfortably, and is cheerful and hopeful."

"And Mrs. Talbot — how is she getting along?"

"As well as could be expected, under the circumstances."

"Five little children are a heavy burden on a poor woman," said Mr. Brown.

"Heavier on some than on others. Mrs. Talbot lacks energy and forecast, and is easily discouraged. But she loves her children, and would die for them, if that were demanded. You pay her rent, and supply her with fuel. To go beyond that would, I think, injure rather than benefit her. She has to keep busy in order to get plain food, and plain food is better for them than luxuries."

Mr. Brown sighed, as he answered, "We think plain food all right for the children of poor people, but would we like to set our own children down to such fare?"

"Plain food would be better for them. It is weakness, not genuine kindness, that causes us to set unhealthy luxuries before our children. There is a great deal of wrong thinking on this subject of the poor," continued the lady. "We forget that true enjoyment is not from the external condition, but from the mind's state and quality; and that useful occupation alone puts a man in that orderly condition with society through which God can lead him into the ways of true happiness. Every one must do some

service. If it be of a low and material nature, ministering only to the body's grosser needs, it will be poorly paid. If more skilled, the return will be larger. But, in all cases, it is best that the individual should earn his bread, whether the loaf be brown or white. It will be sweeter for the toil. Faithful service — the always doing up to the ability — is sure to meet with increasing compensation. It is the grudging, reluctant, inadequate service that is such a hinderance to the poor; and our duty to them is not in almsgiving, but in teaching them how they can be more faithful and energetic in doing the work that is committed to their hands. In most cases our gratuities do more harm than good."

A week passed. Mr. Ward was at his door, key in hand, just about entering, when a little girl, thinly dressed, in soiled finery, ran up, and said, —

"O, sir! Mother sent me round to ask if you wouldn't come there." The child had a frightened look.

"Who's your mother?"

"Mrs. Folger," was answered.

"What's the matter?"

"O, sir, the policeman's carried our John off, and says he'll be sent to the House of Refuge!"

"What's John been doing?"

"I don't know. Mother wants you to come there."

Mr. Ward had felt very comfortable in mind about Mrs. Folger. His thoughts had turned to her very often, and with a feeling of self-complacency. The ton of coal, and fifteen dollars, were to transform the miserable apartment in which he saw her with her children into a kind of Paradise. Many times had he contrasted his own benevolent action in this case with the "heartless indifference" of Mr. Brown, his rich neighbor, and self-approval and self-complacency nestled in his heart. Now he was disturbed from his tranquillity. Here was a new aspect of affairs, not by any means agreeable. He hesitated a few moments, and then went with the child. As he walked along he observed her more carefully. She had on a soiled, but gay colored frock; and around her waist was a broad ribbon, with long ends at the side.

"Where did you get that dress?" inquired Mr. Ward.

"Mother bought it."

"When?"

"Next day after you were at our house."

"She did?"

"Yes, sir. Me and Susie were invited to a party at Mrs. Cooper's, next door; and mother said we should look as well as anybody's children — and so we did. Mother sat up all night to get 'em done."

"So you and Susie both had new party dresses and sashes?"

"Yes, sir; and new shoes," — glancing down at a pair of thin slippers.

Mr. Ward began to feel some risings of the natural man. He found Mrs. Folger in great distress, crying and wringing her hands. After a great deal of questioning, he got down to the simple truth in the case, not omitting the fact that John had supplied himself with spending money in the way already mentioned. One dishonest act leads to another. Idleness and the

companionship of vicious boys drew him into further temptation, and on that afternoon he had been arrested, with another lad older than himself, for the crime of robbing a till. On clearly understanding the case, and ascertaining, besides, that Mrs. Folger had already spent nearly the whole sum placed in her hands, compassion changed to indignation.

"Let him go to the House of Refuge! It's the best place for him. He may come out an honest, industrious boy; but, under your management, only a miracle can save him from the State Prison or gallows."

And so saying, our impulsive philanthropist turned from the weak, miserable mother, and left her in her sorrow and despair. It was his hand that had drawn her from the safe way of self-dependence; his blind benevolence that had removed a pressing necessity for the boy's returning to his work, and, in the idle days that followed, crime wrought an irreparable disaster. There had been no wise discrimination in giving; and there was, now, no pity in his heart, as he

turned away, saying to himself, "I'll never do a kind act again as long as I live!"

So act, usually, your selfish philanthropists, who give from weak impulse, instead of a true benevolence.

XI.

HIS OWN ENEMY.

"You have enemies, and they are seeking your destruction."

"No man knows that better than I do. They have dogged my steps for years. There's Mason, — he never lets an opportunity for thrusting at me pass. He's done me a world of harm."

"I think you are in error in regard to Mr. Mason. He is your friend, not your enemy."

The minister said this with a deliberateness of utterance that marked his view of the case.

"My friend!" There was bitter contempt in the speaker's voice. "Heaven save me from a troop of such friends! They would soon consign me to the depths of perdition."

"Wrong, all wrong, Mr. Slade. The spirit that prompted your words just now is far more your enemy than Mr. Mason, or any other living mortal."

"You speak in an unknown tongue," was answered.

"If this be so, let me suggest that your happiness and safety in life depend greatly on your becoming acquainted with its significance. You have enemies; so have all men. But, they are within. A man's worst foes are in his own household."

"They are not in my family!" The rejection of this idea was emphatic.

"But they are in your heart, Mr. Slade; that is the household to which I refer. And the enemies that gain admittance there, are your worst enemies—the only ones, in fact, who can do you serious or permanent injury. Reflect calmly for a little while. Look away from individuals and circumstances, and draw your thoughts inward. Personify, if you can, the states of mind by which you are most strongly influenced, and see if they do not hurt you more than anything that has ever come from the outside? Are you not a self-tormentor, and a *real* enemy in heart, towards those whom you *imagine* in league against you? A *real* enemy,

because you retaliate and try to do harm? I have met, a few times in my life, with men who were haunted, as you are, with the singular notion that they had hosts of enemies in the world, when the trouble was within and not without. People who desired to be their friends, were misapprehended and thrown off, or assailed vindictively, under an entirely false judgment; and you must not be hurt with me for saying that I fear you are in a similar hallucination."

"O, no! O, no, Mr. Howard! I am under no such hallucination." The imputation was rejected with some warmth, but not in a way to show that he was offended at the clergyman's plainness of speech.

"Pardon me for still thinking that you are," was answered. "Take the case of Mr. Mason, for instance. You call him an enemy."

"I do—and know him to be one. He's injured me in numberless ways."

"Mention one instance."

Mr. Slade did not answer promptly. For almost a minute he stood casting about in his mind, and then said, in a dogged kind of manner, —

"He's injured me in my business and my reputation, by exciting prejudices against me. I know him better than you do."

"A single fact is worth a dozen inferences, Mr. Slade. Come down to a single fact. Put your hand upon the wrong that he has done. Let us convict him by his acts: these are substantial witnesses."

"He set Carter against me — Carter, who was one of my best customers. I'll never forgive him for that, if I live a thousand years."

It so happened that the very individual spoken of came that instant in sight. Howard stepped to the door, and, as he approached, held out his hand, and said, —

"Come in a moment. I want to say a word?"

From Carter's manner, it was plain that he would have preferred passing on, but the minister drew firmly on his hand, and he entered the store of Mr. Slade. The two men looked rather shyly at each other, and nodded a cold recognition. There was no offer of the hand from either side.

"You know friend Mason?" said the minister.

"As well as the next man," replied Carter, in an off-hand way.

"See him frequently?"

"Yes; almost every day."

"He talks rather hard against our neighbor Slade."

"Mason?" There was a tone of surprise in Mr. Carter's voice.

"Yes, Mason."

"Never in my hearing," was Carter's unhesitating reply.

"Did you never hear him speak of me?" Slade's manner was excited, and his tone sharp.

"Yes."

"Of course you have; and it wasn't anything good that he had to say."

"On the contrary," answered Mr. Carter, "I've heard him speak kindly, and say, in defending you from just censure, that you were more an enemy to yourself than any one else."

"Didn't he prejudice your mind against me?" demanded Slade, still under much excitement.

"No."

"Who did then?"

"Yourself, and no one else. When you attempted a wanton injury, I was both hurt and offended."

"I never attempted to injure you."

"Stop, sir. Facts are stubborn things. I am a school director."

The minister noticed a change in the countenance of Slade. Carter went on:—

"And was elected over you and two others in our ward, who were nominated for the same office. At once I saw a change in your manner. You could not tolerate the man chosen by your fellow-citizens as better qualified than you were to fill a post of honor and responsibility, and from that hour considered him as your enemy. You sneered at the choice, and depreciated me right and left; and not content with this, assailed my official conduct, which was honest, if I know myself, in the newspapers."

"Who says that I did?" Slade's face was crimson with tell-tale blood.

"I called on the editor, through whose sheet the assault on me was made public, and learned from him that you were the author of that as-

sault. I explained to him that you had been a candidate for the same office, and gave him such irrefutable evidence as to the wrong done me, that he made my defence himself. What then? You wrote another communication, more bitter and exaggerated than the first, which was sent to me, and which I burned. No real harm came to *me*; but you damaged *yourself* seriously. You were more your own enemy than mine. A man who is right with his conscience, Mr. Slade, need be in no trouble about enemies, for he is triple armed against them. Now you know why you lost my custom, and why I have held myself at a distance. As for Mason, he is about the best friend you have, and is always suggesting excuses for your ill-natured conduct. Your hand seems to be against every man; and I only wonder that every man's hand isn't against you—and such will be the case before long, if you don't mend your ways. Get right inside, and all will go well enough on the outside. Look on other men kindly, and you will then begin to understand how others can bear you as kindly a regard. Be forbearing and apologetic in respect

to others, and you will comprehend the possibility of a like spirit in return. Take off your distorting spectacles, and look upon your fellows with a clear and manly vision. You will be happier, and more prosperous, my word for it. Good morning. I have spoken plainly, and may it do you good!"

Carter bowed to Slade and the clergyman, and retired. The latter gazed at each other in silence for a few moments. The anger had gone out of Slade's face; and he looked cowed, and discontented.

"Your own worst enemy, I see." Mr. Howard spoke soothingly, yet in a tone of admonition. "The foes you have most to dread are, as I before remarked, of your own household. Overcome and cast them out, and all will be well. Let them remain, and they will destroy inward peace and outward prosperity. But why have you cherished the thought that Mason, in particular, is an enemy, ever on the alert to do you harm? Have you done or said anything to excite his enmity? Men are not usually our enemies from an instinct of antagonism. Most of them desire amity and good will."

Slade was silent.

"I fear, as was intimated in the beginning of our conversation, that your own heart is not right towards your fellow-men, my brother." Mr. Howard was kind but earnest, so as not to give offence, yet penetrate, if possible, to the region of conviction.

"I have talked out pretty freely against Mason, and it is but natural to infer that some kind friend has repeated my words."

"Why did you talk against him?"

"Because I disliked him, and believed him doing all in his power to injure me."

"Yet you have the testimony of Mr. Carter, that he speaks well and not ill of you."

"I couldn't have believed it," said Slade, an intimation of doubt in his voice.

"My friend," — the clergyman spoke with great seriousness, — "accept the lesson you have just received, and profit by it. You have enemies, bitter and deadly ones, who, sleeping not night nor day, are bent on accomplishing your ruin."

A shadow of concern fell over the countenance

of Slade. His thought went back instinctively to the idea of outward enemies, — flesh and blood enemies, — against whom he had always stood armed for battle. But his friendly monitor swept that illusion aside.

“These enemies,” was continued, “are evil spirits, flowing into and exciting evil affections. They have already destroyed your peace, and will, unless you cast them out, destroy your soul. Constantly they direct your thoughts to other and imagined enemies, while they work on you their will, and rob you of that precious love of the brethren, without which there can be no love of God, or salvation in heaven. I speak of God, of salvation, and of heaven, because my high calling as a minister gives me the care of immortal souls, and my duty is to help men fight against subtle, malignant, deceiving spirits, who are ever seeking their destruction. Cultivate feelings of good-will towards your neighbors; desire prosperity for them as well as for yourself; acquiesce in all public sentiments that discriminate against you in favor of another, believing that nothing invidious to yourself lies

in the discrimination, but only the recognition of more suitable qualities in another. We are not alike fitted for particular places in life, and our selfish desire to gain a position may lead us to an over-estimate of our fitness in comparison with others. The decision made against us will not be, in these cases, an expression of enmity or ill-will, but a simple election on the ground of superior fitness. I am very sure that if I had been a voter in your ward for school director, I would have given my ballot for Carter; but, in doing so, I would have expressed no dislike for, or opposition to you as an individual. It would simply have been a choice founded on my estimate of respective fitness; and for you to have regarded me as governed by personal dislike, or any feeling of hostility, would have been doing me a great wrong.”

“Perhaps I am over-sensitive,” remarked Slade. “But if you knew how much I have been persecuted —”

“Don’t let your thought go in that direction at all, my friend,” said Mr. Howard, interrupting him. “Don’t think of persecution, or enmity,

or ill-will. Be right with yourself, and just to all men, and outside enemies will soon vanish like the morning cloud and the early dew. Cultivate feelings of kindness and good-will for others; seek to help rather than to hinder them; to excuse instead of magnifying their faults; and you will soon find that you have troops of friends where you now see only persecuting enemies. Above all, look inward for your real foes; for the true disturbers of your peace, and sworn destroyers of your life. Unless you put all the powers of your soul in battle array, and fight against them, as the children of Israel were commanded to fight against the Canaanites, — even to their utter extermination and banishment from the land, — they will make life here bitter and burdensome, and drag you down to everlasting perdition in the world to come. These are the only enemies to be feared, and I pray you, my friend, to cast them out!”

XII.

ONLY WORDS.

Two women, a mother and her daughter, sat together in a small room, meagrely furnished. They had on mourning garments; but the gloom of their habiliments was not deeper than the gloom of their faces.

“What are we to do, Alice?” said the mother, breaking in upon a long silence.

“If we were only back again in dear Westbrook!” fell longingly from the daughter’s lips.

“Yes, if — But Westbrook lies more than a thousand miles distant. It was a sad day for us, my child, when we left there. We have had nothing since but trouble and sorrow.”

Tears flowed silently over the mother’s face.

“If I could only get something to do,” said Alice, “how willingly would I work! But no one wants the service here that I can give.”

“We shall starve, at this rate!” spoke out the

mother, in a wild kind of way, as if fear had grown suddenly desperate.

Alice did not reply, but sat very still, in an abstracted way, like one whose thoughts have grown weary in some fruitless effort.

"I dreamed last night," she said, looking up after a while, "that we were back in Westbrook, and in our old home. That dear old home! How plainly I saw everything! I sat at the window, looking out upon the little garden in front, from which the air came in filled with the odor of flowers; and, as I sat there, Mr. Fleetwood came by, just as it used to be; and he stopped, and said, 'Good morning, Alice,' in that kind way with which he always spoke to me. I cried, when I awoke, to find it was only a dream."

"Ah, if there was a Mr. Fleetwood here!" sighed the mother.

"Suppose you write to him," suggested Alice. "The thought comes this moment into my mind. I am sure he would help us. You know what an excellent man he is."

"I will do it this very day," replied the

mother, with hope and confidence in her voice. "Isn't it strange that he was not thought of before? Some good spirit gave you that dream, Alice."

And the letter was written. It ran as follows:—

"EDWARD FLEETWOOD, ESQ.

"MY DEAR SIR: I write to you under circumstances of great extremity. Since we left Westbrook for this distant region we have known only trouble. Sickness and losses met us on the very threshold of our new home; and death came at last to complete the work of sorrow and disaster. Six months ago my husband died, leaving me with three children, and in circumstances of great extremity. How we have managed to live since that time I can hardly tell. We have suffered many privations; but worse things are approaching. We have no friends here. None to help, advise, or care for us. Alice—you remember my daughter Alice—has tried to get something to do. She is willing to work at anything to which her

strength is equal. But, so far, she has been unsuccessful. What are we to do? It looks as if actual starvation were coming. I write to you—remembering your kindly nature, your warm and human heart. O, sir, can you not help us? It is the voice of the widow and fatherless that cries unto you. Alice dreamed of you last night, and we have taken it as a suggestion and an omen. Forgive me for this freedom; but, when imminent danger threatens, we reach out our hands for succor in any direction towards which hope points us. I shall wait in trembling eagerness your reply.

“Yours, in sorrow and hope,

— “ALICE MAYNARD.”

Let us follow this letter to Westbrook, and note the manner in which it is received. We find it in the hands of Mr. Fleetwood, who has read it through, and is sitting with a troubled look on his kind face.

“There is no help in me,” he says at length, folding up the letter and laying it aside. “Poor Mrs. Maynard! Is the day indeed so dark?

God knows how willingly I would help you if it were in my power. But misfortune has not come to you alone. It has passed my threshold also, and the threshold of thousands besides. Westbrook has seen some sad changes since you went away.

“Dreamed of me?” he goes on, after a pause; “and you have taken the dream as a suggestion and an omen? Alas, my friend! It is not a good omen. Some spirit has mocked you with a delusive dream. There is no help in me. None—none! For I am staggering under my own burdens: I am in fear all the day long lest the evil that threatens my home should fall upon it. May God help and comfort you! I cannot.”

Mr. Fleetwood took the letter from the table on which he had placed it, and laid it in a drawer. “Poor Alice Maynard!” he sighed, as he shut the drawer and turned away. All day long the thought of that letter troubled him. How could he answer it? What could he say? It was an eager, expectant cry for help; but he had no help to give. The widowed mother had

asked him for bread; and how could he offer her mere words in return — cold, disappointing words!

For two days that letter remained in the drawer where he had placed it.

"It is no use," he would say, as the thought of it now and again intruded. "I cannot bring myself to write an answer. Say what I will, and the language must seem to her but heartless sentences. She cannot understand how greatly things have changed with me since she went out from Westbrook. If she does not hear from me she may think her letter miscarried. She, like the rest of us, is in God's hands, and he will take care of her. We are of more value than the sparrows."

But this could not satisfy Mr. Fleetwood. He had a conscience, and it would not let him omit a plain duty without reproof.

"If you have no money to give, offer her kind and hopeful words," said the inward monitor. "Even the cup of cold water must not be withheld."

Unable to make peace with himself, Mr. Fleet-

wood at last sat down to answer the widow's letter. He wrote a brief, kind, suggestive note; but, after reading it over twice, tore it up, saying, as he did so, —

"It reads like mockery. She asked me for bread, and it seems like giving her a stone."

Then he tried it again, but not much more to his satisfaction. This answer he was also about destroying, but he checked himself with the words, —

"I might pen forty letters, and the last would read no better than the first. Let this one go."

And he folded, sealed, and directed it. The next mail that left Westbrook bore it away for its remote destination. Let us return to Mrs. Maynard.

"We should have had an answer from Mr. Fleetwood two days ago, Alice."

The daughter sighed, but did not answer.

"What time does the mail from the east come in, Alice?"

"At four o'clock."

"And it is five now?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Won't you put on your bonnet and step over to the post-office?"

Alice went, but returned, as on the two previous days, with nothing in her hand.

"No letter?" said Mrs. Maynard, as she came in.

"None," was the sadly-spoken reply.

"O, why has he not written? If help come not from Mr. Fleetwood, there is no help for us in this world."

Another day of waiting, in which that deferred hope which maketh the heart sick trembled like the light of a taper flickering in the wind, passed wearily away. At five o'clock Alice was at the post-office again. And now a letter was placed in her hand, directed to her mother, and on the envelope she read, with a heart-bound, the word "WESTBROOK." Not fleeter than her footsteps was the wind as she ran back home.

"A letter, and from Westbrook!" she cried out, eagerly, as she entered the room where her mother sat anxiously awaiting her.

The hands of Mrs. Maynard shook as she

opened and unfolded the long hoped-for answer. It was brief, and its contents fully understood in a few moments. Alice, whose eyes were fixed eagerly upon her mother while she read in silence, saw her countenance change, grow pale, and the look of hopeful expectation die out utterly. Then, as the letter dropped to the floor, her hands were held up against her face so as to hide it from view, and she sat with the stillness of one who had been paralyzed. Taking up the letter, Alice read, —

"MY DEAR MADAM: Your letter has troubled me deeply; and the more so, because it finds me wholly unable to give that help of which you stand so much in need. Since you left Westbrook things have greatly changed with me and many others. I have lost nearly all of my property, and find myself in straitened circumstances. It pains me to write this; not so much on my own account as on yours, for it will come to you with a chill of disappointment. But you and I and all of us are in the hands and under the care of One who knoweth our wants, and who hear-

eth even the young ravens when they cry. You have a Father in heaven, dear madam, and a Father who has not forgotten you. Look to him, and hope in him. He will not forsake you in this great extremity. The earth is his, and the fulness thereof. All hearts are his, and I am sure he will turn some hearts to you in kindness. There is no night without a succeeding day. The morning cometh as surely as the evening. Look up, and trust in God. He has something for all his children to do: something for you to do, and your hands will find the work. It may now be lying, all unseen, around you.

"It is in my heart to offer deeds instead of words; but I can only give of what I possess. May the widow's Husband and the orphan's Father succor you in the hour of peril!

"Your friend in heart,

"EDWARD FLEETWOOD."

"He writes kindly," said Alice, as she finished reading the letter; "and there is comfort even in words, when they come from the lips of a friend."

"Words do not feed the hungry nor clothe the naked," answered Mrs. Maynard, in some bitterness of tone.

She had scarcely said this, when the door of the room in which they were sitting was pushed open, and a boy about ten years old, barefooted and meagrely clad, came in with a pitcher in one hand and a small basket in the other.

"Mother sent these, Miss Maynard," he said, with a pleased smile on his face. The pitcher was filled with new milk, and there was a loaf of bread, hot from the oven, in the basket. "She says, please accept them."

"Your mother is very kind, Henry," replied Mrs. Maynard. "Tell her that I'm very much obliged to her."

"And she's very much obliged to you," said the boy.

"For what, Henry?"

"Don't you know?" And the boy looked at her in a pleased way.

Mrs. Maynard shook her head.

"Don't you remember, one day, when I was over here, that you asked me if I could read?"

"I've forgotten."

"We haven't, then, mother and I. You asked me if I could read, and I said no. Then you told me that I must learn right away; and you got a book and showed me my A B C's; making me go over them a good many times, until I knew them all by heart. Then you gave me the book. I have studied in it almost every day, and now I can spell in two syllables."

"And this is why your mother sent me such a nice loaf of bread and a pitcher of new milk?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"You can't read yet?"

"No, ma'am."

"Then you must bring your book over, and let me give you another lesson."

"O, will you?" A light like sunshine came into the boy's face.

"Yes, Henry, and with pleasure. You may come every day if you will."

"May I? O, that will be good! And, Mrs. Maynard—" Henry checked himself. He evidently wished to go a little farther.

"What is it, Henry?" said Mrs. Maynard, encouragingly.

"May I bring Katy along sometimes? She wants to learn so badly. She 'most knows her letters."

"Why, yes, Henry. Bring Katy by all means. Alice will teach her."

Henry glanced towards Alice, as if not fully satisfied in regard to her view of the case. But she gave him an assuring smile and word, and the boy ran home with light feet to tell the good news.

"What does this mean, Alice?" said Mrs. Maynard, looking at her daughter with a countenance through which a dim light seemed breaking.

"It may be true what Mr. Fleetwood says," replied Alice; "the work that God has for us to do may be now lying, all unseen, around us."

"This is no mere chance," remarked Mrs. Maynard, in a thoughtful way.

"Don't you remember," said Alice, "how often dear father used to say that there was no such thing as chance? that the hand of Providence was in every event? I felt, while reading Mr. Fleet-

wood's letter, as if it was father who was speaking to us."

Mrs. Maynard shut her eyes, and sat very still for many moments; then she opened the letter, which she held in her hand, and read it through slowly.

"It reads differently now. I am sorry for Mr. Fleetwood. It is hard, when years lay upon us their long accumulating burdens, to find earthly props suddenly removed. Poor man! It seems as if he ought to have been spared. What he had to give he has given freely, and I thank him with grateful feelings. Yes, I have a Father in heaven, and I will look up to him in these days of darkness. He will show us the way. Who knows but the path is now opening before us?"

"My own thought, mother. There are more than forty children in this town who are growing up in as much ignorance as Henry Auld and his sister. Their parents will not or cannot send them to school. These children have immortal souls, and almost infinite capacities, that will be developed for good or for evil. They are God's children. Let us care for them, and God will

care for us. Let us take this loaf of bread and this pitcher of milk as the sign of God's providence towards us. I feel, dear mother, that such trust will not be in vain. Mr. Fleetwood's letter has turned the channel of my thoughts in a new direction. May God reward him for all he has said to us in this our time of need, and said so kindly and so wisely!"

The daughter's hope and faith flowed into the mother's heart. They were not indolent, self-indulgent women. All they asked was to be shown their work; and now, in their eyes, it seemed to be lying all around them.

On the next day, Henry Auld came over with his sister Katy, and received the promised lessons.

"Do you know any other little boys and girls who wish to learn how to read?" asked Mrs. Maynard, as the children were going away.

"O, yes, I know a good many," replied Henry, and then stood waiting to hear what would come next.

"Bring them along when you come to-morrow," said Mrs. Maynard. "It will be as easy to teach half a dozen as two."

"Won't Tom Jones be glad, though!" she heard Henry say to his sister as they went out through the gate.

Three months went by, and yet Mr. Fleetwood received no response to the answer which he had given to Mrs. Maynard's imploring letter. He did not remember distinctly what he had written. He only knew that he had sent her mere words when she asked for deeds. He never thought of her without a troubled feeling.

"How cold and heartless that letter must have seemed!" he would say to himself sometimes. "Ah, if she really knew how it was with me! If she could see into my breast, poor woman! But she is in the hands of God, and he is the friend who sticketh closer than a brother."

At last there came a reply to his words of encouragement and hope, which, though flowing warm from his heart, seemed to grow so cold in the utterance. Mrs. Maynard wrote, —

"MY DEAR SIR: More than four months ago you wrote to me, 'You have a Father in heaven, dear madam, and a Father who has not forgotten

you. Look to him, and hope in him.' And you said also, 'He has something for all of his children to do; something for you to do, and your hands will find the work. It may now be lying, all unseen, around you.' My heart blesses you, sir, for those hopeful, suggestive words. Yes; God had work for me to do — and it was lying, even when I wrote to you in my fear and despair, all around me, though unseen by my dull eyes. Like apples of gold in pictures of silver were your fitly spoken words. I had taught a child his letters, and his poor but grateful mother sent me in return a loaf of bread, and a pitcher of milk for my children. Your letter and this offering, in God's providence, came together. I had the text and illustration side by side. There were many ignorant children in our town, said Alice and I, one to the other, and they are God's children. Let us teach more of them, as we taught this child, taking that loaf of bread and offering of milk as a sign that God will provide for us in the work. We did not hesitate, but acted on the suggestion at once. And now we have over thirty poor little children

under our care, and we have not wanted for bread. Some of the parents pay us in money, some in provisions, and some do nothing in return. But we take all children who come. Yesterday we had notice from the Town Council that an appropriation of one hundred dollars a year had been made out of the public funds for the support of our school! Does not the hand of a wise and good Providence appear in all this? O, sir, I cannot too warmly thank you for the wise words of that timely letter. God bless you for having spoken them!

"Gratefully yours,

"ALICE MAYNARD."

"Only words!" said Mr. Fleetwood, as he folded the letter, with moist eyes. "Only words! They seemed such a cold and heartless return for good deeds, asked pleadingly and in tears, that I had to compel myself to write them. Yet see their good fruit! If we cannot do, let us speak kindly and hopefully at least. I will not forget the lesson."

XIII.

WHAT DID HE LEAVE?

"THAT's a large funeral. I counted thirty-two carriages."

"Yes, sir. It's the funeral of Mr. Ellis. He died very rich."

"How much did he leave?"

"A large amount of money, sir; I don't know how much. Some say half a million of dollars!"

"His death is considered a great loss to the community, I presume."

"Loss, sir?" The man to whom I was speaking looked up into my face with the air of one whose mind was not exactly clear as to my meaning.

"Yes. A man of his wealth must have been a very useful man."

"Useful? I don't know that he was particularly useful. He was rich, and didn't care much for anybody but himself."

"Still, with his ample means," said I, "even though caring only for himself, he must have been the promoter of large industrial enterprises, through which many were benefited."

The man shook his head doubtfully.

"What did he do with his money?"

"I never heard of his doing anything with it particularly," was the unsatisfactory answer.

"Money must be used in order to make it productive. Was he in no business?"

"No, sir."

"What, then, did he do with himself?"

"O, he was always about after bits of property that had to be sold. He was sharp for bargains in real estate."

"Ah, I see how it was. Then he did find use for his money?"

"In that way he did. But when a piece of property came into his hands, there was an end to its improvement. He let other people improve all around him, and thus increase the value of what he owned; so that he grew richer and richer every day, without putting his hand to anything, or benefiting anybody."

"This was your million man? And so all he has left are these property accumulations?"

"All."

"Then his death is not regarded as a public calamity?"

"No, indeed, sir! It is considered a public benefit."

"How so?"

"He has a couple of sons, and a couple of sons-in-law, who will scatter much faster than he saved. The moment they come into possession of his estate, it will be divided, and lots of ground, which ought to have been improved years ago, will be sold, and covered with handsome buildings, thus giving trade and industry a new impulse. Why, sir, he has been a dead weight on our town for years; growing richer and richer through other people's enterprise, and yet not adding a building himself, or in any way serving the common good."

"I thought," said I, "from the long array of carriages, that death had taken, in this instance, a valued, and now lamented citizen."

"Mere ostentation, sir. But nobody is de-

ceived. There are plenty of idle people, who are pleased to ride in funeral carriages. Old Ellis will be put away with a grand flourish; but that will be the last of him. The black makes all the mourning, sir."

"But, surely," said I, "his children are not without natural affection? You do not mean to say that theirs is only the semblance of sorrow?"

"It is my opinion, sir, that they are glad in their hearts. Why not? He stood, hard and unyielding as iron, between them and the wealth they desired to possess. He was cold, sour-tempered, and repulsive; crushing out, by his manner and conduct, all natural affection. They had too much policy to quarrel with him of late, though the time was when hot words were said to pass between them."

"There are no gleams of light in your picture," said I.

"I copy from nature, and can only give what I see," he answered. "There are deep valleys where the sunlight never comes, as well as golden-tinted landscapes."

"I see another funeral," said I, looking towards

a distant part of the cemetery. "There are but two carriages; yet I see a long line of mourners on foot. Do you know who they are burying?"

"Yes."

"Not a rich man?"

"No."

"There is no need of asking what *he* has left. It is the burial of a poor man."

"Yes, of a man poor in this world's goods; but, so far as his means went, he was princely in his munificence. His death, sir, is a public loss." The man's face brightened as he spoke.

"You knew him?"

"Yes, sir; knew him well. He was a rope-maker, working his ten hours every day, and earning just nine dollars a week. But those nine dollars seemed an inexhaustible fund for good. He had no wife and children of his own to love and care for. They went, years ago, to the blessed land where he is now following them. So, after supplying his own humble needs, the rope-maker had five dollars every week left over for investment. He did not put this in the Savings Bank, nor buy tumble-down houses for the

poor to live in at a rent of fifty per cent. on their cost, nor take up barren lots to hold for an advance in price, consequent on neighboring improvements. No; his investments were made in a different spirit, as you shall see.

"First, he paid regularly, every week, to a poor woman in his neighborhood, who had two children to support, and who could not leave them to go out to work in families, the sum of three dollars, as teacher of little boys and girls whose parents were unable to send them to school. Two hours in the morning, and two in the afternoon, these poor children received instruction. He was their benefactor, and hers also; for it was one of his sayings, that we must make the right hand help the left hand. His means of doing good were small, and so he made them go as far as possible."

"He was a noble fellow!" said I, in admiration of this poor rope-maker.

"Tom Peters — yes, there was fine stuff in his composition, if his hands were dark and bony, and if his clothes did smell of pitch and rosin."

"He has left tender and fragrant memories."

"He has, sir. That long line of funeral attendants are all true mourners. There is no sham there!"

"And what else did he do with his money?" I asked, growing interested in the rope-maker. "He had two dollars a week, still, for dispensation."

"Yes. Let me see. For one thing, he paid a boy half a dollar a week to read two hours every evening to a poor blind woman; and in order that this reading might not be given to a single pair of ears alone, he took care to have the fact known, that as many as chose might come and listen. The consequence was, that more than a dozen persons met, every evening, in the blind woman's room, to hear what was read. This suggested to Tom the way in which another half dollar might be usefully invested. The men in the rope-walk were mostly in the habit of spending their evenings in taverns. Tom found another lad who was a tolerably good reader, and paid him half a dollar weekly to read aloud two hours, each evening, for such of his fellow-workmen as he could induce to assemble

for the purpose. He began with three; soon increased to ten; and when I last heard of the matter, over twenty men met nightly to hear the boy read."

"Admirable!" said I, with enthusiasm. "Admirable! I never heard of a wiser investment. And he had one dollar left?"

"Yes."

"How was that disposed of?"

"In ways innumerable. I cannot recount them. The good Tom Peters managed to do with that dollar is almost fabulous; not, of course, as to magnitude, but as to variety. It seemed to duplicate itself, like the widow's oil and meal, whenever drawn upon. You were always hearing of some good acts in which a dispensation of money was involved; — of a poor woman helped in making up her rent; of a dainty sent to a sick neighbor; of a pair of shoes to a barefoot boy in winter; or of a book to a child. Why, sir, Tom Peters has left behind him enough good deeds to endow a whole calendar of saints!"

"So I should think, after what you have said of him."

"And yet, sir, remember, he only earned nine dollars a week!"

"I remember that very distinctly," I answered. "Yes, sir, his death is indeed a public calamity. It is no figure of speech to say that his grave will be watered by tears."

"None, sir, none. He will be sorrowed for by hundreds, and his memory will be greener and more fragrant as the years pass by. He built his own monument before he left us — of good deeds."

I parted from the stranger; and as I walked from the cemetery, I said to another man who stood by my side while I looked at a fine piece of emblematic statuary, —

"They have been burying a rich man?"

"Yes," was coldly responded.

"What did he leave?"

"Nothing but money."

"They have been burying a poor man, also?"

"Tom Peters." A light broke over the man's face.

"But he had not even money to leave," said I.

"But something far better," answered the man, in a tone of rebuke.

"What?"

"Good acts, which, like good seed, will reproduce themselves a thousand fold. Tom Peters earned just nine dollars a week; Edward Ellis, Esq." — there was a cutting contempt in his tones — "was worth, it is said, a million of dollars; yet the humble rope-maker did, while living, a hundred times the most good with his money, and leaves an estate that shall go on increasing in value through countless years. But the estate of old Ellis will not pass to the third generation. Tom Peters had the true riches, sir, that are imperishable. People ask, when a man like Ellis dies, 'What property has he left behind him?' But when one like our good rope-maker passes away, the angels ask, 'What good deeds has he sent before him?' That is the difference, sir, the immeasurable difference, between the two men. One, in giving, made himself rich; the other, in withholding, became miserably poor; so poor, that his memory is green in no man's heart."

I turned from the cemetery with some new impressions stirring in my mind, and the question, "What kind of a legacy will you leave?" pressing itself home to my thoughts.

"Let it be good deeds rather than money!" I said, half aloud, in the glow of earnest feeling, and went back again into the living, busy, stirring world, to take up the laboring oar which I had laid down, in weariness, for a brief season, and bend to my work with a serener spirit, and, I trust, a nobler life-purpose.

XIV.

THE MOTHERLESS BOY.

ONE day the door of my sitting-room was thrown suddenly open, and the confident voice of my little son Harvey thus introduced a stranger :—

“Here’s Jim Peters, mother !”

I looked up, not a little surprised at the sight of a ragged, barefoot child, with whose face, neck, and hands, clean water had for some time been a stranger. Before I had time to say anything, Harvey went on :—

“He lives round in Blake’s Court, and hasn’t any mother ; and I want you to give him a pair of my shoes, and my gray cap, and some of my clothes. I’ve got plenty, you know.”

My eyes rested on the child’s face while my boy said this. It was a very sad little face, thin and colorless ; not bold and vicious, but timid, and having a look of patient suffering.



“Here’s Jim Peters, Mother !”

Harvey held him firmly by the hand, with the air of one who bravely protects the weak.

"No mother!" said I, in tones of pity.

"No, ma'am, he hasn't any mother. Have you, Jim?"

"No," answered the child.

"She's been dead ever so long; hasn't she, Jim?"

"Yes, ever since last winter," he said, as he fixed his eyes, into which I saw the tears coming, upon my face. My heart moved towards him, repulsive as he was because of his rags and dirt.

"One of God's little lambs, straying on the cold and barren hills of life," said a voice in my heart. And then I felt a tender compassion for the strange, unlovely child.

"Where do you live?" I asked.

"Round in Blake's Court," he replied.

"Who with?"

"Old Mrs. Flint; but she doesn't want me."

"Why not?"

"O, because I'm nothing to her, she says; and she doesn't want the trouble of me." He

tried to say this in a brave, don't care sort of way, but his voice faltered, and he dropped his eyes to the floor. How pitiful he looked!

"Poor child!" I could not help saying aloud.

Light flashed over his pale face. It was something new to him, this interest and compassion.

"One of God's little lambs." I heard the voice in my heart saying this again. Nobody to love him; nobody to care for him. Poor little boy! The hand of my own child, my son who is so very dear to me, had led him in through our door, and claimed for him the love and care so long a stranger to his heart. Could I send him out, and shut the door upon him, when I knew that he had no mother and no home? If I heeded not the cry of this little one, precious in God's sight, might I not be thought unworthy to be the guardian of another lamb of his fold, whom I loved as my own life?

"I've got heaps of clothes, mother; a great many more than I want. And my bed is wide. There's room enough in the house; and we've plenty to eat," said Harvey, pleading for the

child. I could not withstand all these appeals. Rising, I told the little stranger to follow me. When we came back to the sitting-room, half an hour afterwards, Jim Peters would hardly have been known by his old acquaintances, if any of them had been there. A bath and clean clothes had made a wonderful change in him.

I watched the poor little boy, as he and Harvey played during the afternoon, with no little concern of mind. What was I to do with him? Clean and neatly dressed, there was a look of refinement about the child, which had nearly all been hidden by rags and dirt. He played gently, and his voice had in it a sweetness of tone, as it fell every now and then upon my ears, that was really winning. Send him back to Mrs. Flint's, in Blake's Court? The change I had wrought upon him made this impossible. No, he could not be sent back to Mrs. Flint's, who didn't want the trouble of him. What then?

Do the kind hearts of my little readers repeat the question, "What then?" Do they want very much to know what has become of little Jim Peters?

It is just a year since my boy led him in from the street, and Jim is still in our house. No one came for him. No one inquired about him. No one cared for him. I must take that last sentence back. God cared for him, and by the hand of my tender-hearted son brought him into my comfortable home, and said to me, "Here is one of my lambs, estray, hungry, and cold. He was born into the world that he might become an angel in heaven, but is in danger of being lost. I give him into your care. Let me find him when I call my sheep by their names."

Not by a voice, dear children, speaking through my outward ears did he say this. But these thoughts came into my mind, and I knew that he sent them. And so I drew the shivering estray into the warm fold where my own lamb dwelt, and there he has been ever since.

As I finished writing the last sentence, a voice close to my ear said, "Mother." I turned, and received a loving kiss from the lips of Jim. He often does this. I think, in the midst of his happy plays, memory takes him back to the suffering past, and then his grateful heart runs over,

and he tries to reward me with a loving kiss. I did not tell him to call me "mother." At first he said it in a timid, hesitating way, and with such a pleading, half-scared look, that I was touched and softened.

"She isn't your real mother," said Harvey, who happened to be near; "but then she's good, and loves you ever so much."

"And I love her," answered Jim, with a great throb in his throat, hiding his face in my lap, and clasping and kissing my hand. Since then he always calls me "mother;" and the God and Father of us all has sent into my heart a mother's love for him; and I pray that he may be mine when I come to make up my jewels in heaven.

XV.

OIL ON THE WATERS OF PASSION.

"I HAVE been badly treated—very badly!" said Arnold Williams, speaking to a friend, with much excitement of feeling.

"So I think," was answered, "and I do not wonder that you are indignant."

"It was so wanton!"

"Which but increases the provocation."

"If we had been alone when he said it, I wouldn't have cared. But the remark, taking time and place, was offensive in the highest degree."

"I would have knocked him down on the spot," said the friend.

"A thing I was tempted to do, but controlled myself."

"The lesson would have done him good, and been a warning to young gentlemen of his class to put their tongues under better discipline."

"I didn't spare him, you may be certain. I always pay such obligations on the spot. He'll scarcely forget my cutting answer to his ungentlemanly remark. It went home as surely as the thrust of a sword."

"So far so good. My words would have pierced him like a pistol shot. If he had tried that sport on me, I would have sent a friend to him before ten o'clock the next morning."

"If he had possessed any spirit," said Williams, "he would have sent a friend to me ere this; for I disgraced him before all the company."

The story of this rupture between two young men who had been fast friends for years is told in a few words. They had met in a small company of ladies and gentlemen, who were discussing the matter of fancy dresses to be worn at a private costume party to which all were invited. Williams was perplexed in regard to his own selection, and, as usually happens on such occasions, each one of the company had some suggestion to make. He listened, objected, and declined in a half-amused, half-serious manner,

when a young man named Hogan, with whom he was on very friendly terms, said, without reflection, and with a friendly presumption on their intimacy, —

“Go in the character of a gentleman, Williams. That will be entirely new.”

He expected this little sally of wit to be received with a laughing response by his friend; but not so; it happened to come just in the wrong time and place, for there was a young lady present, into whose ears he wished no such words of rude familiarity to enter. His face flushed instantly, and fire flashed from his eyes. He was overcome with an angry spirit.

“A true gentleman,” he retorted, sharply, “never forgets himself.”

“Did you mean that for an insult?” inquired Hogan, his whole manner changing.

“I meant the words for you, and you can take them as you please,” was answered, roughly.

Hogan turned away and left the company, and Williams felt too embarrassed and uncomfortable to remain.

Each of the young men told his own story,

and with his own coloring, and the friends of each condemned the other's conduct in terms of unmeasured denunciation; thus widening the distance between the estranged friends.

“If he had been a gentleman at heart, he never would have taken offence,” said one of the friends of Hogan. “You happened to touch him in a tender spot.”

“If he had been a gentleman he never would have insulted me on that slight provocation,” replied Hogan. “He knew, as well as I did, that my words were only spoken in jest. There is something wrong at the bottom of his character. We never know men until we take them unawares.”

“You did not mean to wound or insult him.”

“Me! No; the kindest feelings were in my breast.”

“But he *meant* to insult you.”

“Undoubtedly. He thrust at me with a malignant spirit.”

“Seeking to disgrace you in the eyes of all who were present.”

“Yes, I saw and felt that.”

"Make him apologize."

"He will never do it," said Hogan.

"He must. An insult is never wiped out except by apology or punishment. Make me your friend in the case, and I will see you through the whole affair, right."

"I am in your hands," replied Hogan, though in a manner that said, plainly enough, "I wish I were out of your hands."

There was a third person present during this interview, who listened, but said nothing. No appeal was made to him, and he expressed no opinion. Seeing the course things were about taking, and wishing to have nothing to do in such affairs, he withdrew himself. But he could not thrust the matter from his thoughts; and the more he pondered it the more troubled he felt. He knew both Williams and Hogan very well. They were young men of good characters and right feelings in the main. The parents of both were living; and both had sisters, and a wide circle of friends. The incitement to a hostile meeting between the two, on so slight a provocation — a meeting likely to end

in the death of one or both of them — seemed to him such a fiendish outrage, that the thought of it, when fully presented, made his blood curdle.

"If Williams should fall into the hands of as bad an adviser," he said, "the most disastrous consequences may follow."

Then it was suggested in his thought that it was his duty to see Williams and volunteer his friendly offices, in order to prevent another, less discreet, from gaining an influence over him. But he tried to thrust aside the suggestion. It was a business in which he preferred to have no hand. If people would quarrel and fight, let them exhaust their bad passions upon themselves. Still his mind would not rest. The dreadful consequences likely to flow from the utterance of a few angry words formed themselves into palpable images in his mind, and haunted him with horrors. He saw the two men going forth to a hostile meeting, saw them take their fatal position, saw the deadly aim, and heard the death-dealing shot; and, still more, saw the manly form of Arnold Williams prone upon the

ground, bleeding and lifeless. A cold shudder ran to his heart. He could repress right impulses no longer.

"I must see Williams, and prevent these awful consequences," he said, and acted without delay from this better resolution. He found the young man alone. Instead of doing as every one else had done, — add fuel to the flame of his anger, — he soothed his chafed feelings, and suggested, but delicately and remotely, palliating thoughts that were not without their influence. He was yet with him when the friend (?) of Hogan called, and in a manner calculated to increase the bad feelings of Williams, put in the demand of his principal for an apology. Williams was about flinging back an offensive refusal, when his friend said, quickly, so as to forestall him, —

"Let me act for you in this matter, which is now assuming a more serious aspect." Then, speaking to the representative of Hogan, he said, "I will see you at your office in an hour."

The latter expressed approval, and immediately retired. A deep, troubled silence followed his withdrawal.

"What is to be done?" Williams was first to speak.

"Have you confidence in my judgment and discretion?" asked the friend.

"I have," was the unhesitating answer.

"Will you be guided by me?"

"I must first know in what direction you propose guiding me."

"Your honor must be preserved inviolate," said the friend.

"It must," was the firm reply.

"All true honor lies in right principle and right action. All else is but tinsel and dross."

Williams looked earnestly into the face of his friend.

"There was a first wrong, somewhere, in this unhappy business."

"There was, and that wrong was with Hogan. He meant to insult me."

"On the contrary, he says that he meant neither to wound nor insult you; that he merely spoke with thoughtless jesting, while the kindest feelings were in his heart."

"Who heard him say this?"

"I did."

"When?"

"Not an hour ago."

"Why, then, has he sent me this demand for an apology?"

"Through the bad advice of a pretended friend, whose evil designs I wish to make fruitless. And now, Williams, let me ask you one question, — Did you not mean to wound and insult Hogan, when you replied to his untimely jest?"

"I did."

"Which, then, was most in the wrong?"

Williams was silent.

"Intention gives quality to every act," said the friend. "Hogan affirms that the kindest feelings were in his heart when he spoke; you that you meant to wound and insult."

Williams bowed his head, and let his eyes rest upon the floor. The calmly-spoken, truthful words of a real friend had brought conviction to his mind.

"What shall I do?" There was a troubled tone in his voice, and a troubled look in his countenance.

"Do right."

"What is right?"

"It is always right, noble, honorable to repair a wrong."

"He demands an apology."

"Well?"

"I cannot apologize under a threat."

"A high moral courage asks only what is right, and does right in the face of all prejudice, misapprehension, or reproach. The bravery that withstands false opinion is deepest laid."

"I am not brave enough to apologize at this stage of the affair," said Williams, gloomily. "Friends and enemies would brand me as a coward."

"Suppose he were to withdraw the challenge?"

Williams was silent.

"You thought he meant to insult you," said the friend.

"I did."

"And was, therefore, indignant. Now, suppose Hogan were present in this room, and were to say that he only uttered a thoughtless jest,

and did not design the slightest offence. What would you do?"

"Withdraw the words I uttered."

"Enough! How long will you remain here?"

"As long as you desire. I have accepted your friendly offices in this matter, and am in your hands. But don't commit me in anything. I am no coward."

"You may trust me safely. I will protect your honor as fully as if it were my own."

Instead of going to the false friend, or second, of Hogan, the friend of Williams called upon Hogan himself.

"If I heard correctly," he said, "you remarked a little while ago that in advising Williams to go in the character of a gentleman, as something entirely new, you only spoke thoughtlessly and in jest."

"It was only designed as a pleasantry. How could he have seen it in any other light? Our intimacy warranted, I thought, the familiarity. It seems that I was mistaken."

"He must have believed you in earnest, or he never would have retorted in a manner that was offensive. Who were present?"

"Miss Wilkins, Mary Hartwell, Florence Adair, and two or three young men besides ourselves."

"Ah, I see the trouble now!" said the friend of Williams.

"I am in the dark," replied Hogan.

"He wishes to appear well in the eyes of Florence Adair."

"I am sorry he made himself look so ill. Miss Adair was disgusted at his ungentlemanly retort."

"I think you were both wrong," said the young man, not appearing to notice this last remark, "he most of all; but you wrong in venturing upon a witty thrust that might occasion unpleasant feelings."

"I was wrong in that, I know," replied Hogan.

"And, therefore, as the originator, even without design, of this unhappy misunderstanding, is it not your duty to take the first step towards a reconciliation?"

Hogan was in no way prepared for a suggestion like this, and looked at the young man in mute astonishment.

"He insulted me grossly; and that forecloses the matter," said Hogan, at length, speaking with some indignation in his voice.

"Not wantonly," said the other; "he thought you had offered him an insult, and, on the impulse of the moment, resented it, as you would have done."

"Nothing was farther from my mind than to offer an insult."

"But he believed differently. And you must admit that the language used, however witty, was scarcely allowable, time and circumstances considered."

"I admit all that, and have blamed myself a hundred times since for my thoughtlessness."

"Why not, then, say so to Williams? My word for it, he will instantly retract his own offensive language."

"But I have demanded an apology from him," said Hogan.

"Don't, let me beg of you, as a friend, place yourself in a wrong position. True honor respects the rights of others. Don't forget that you and Williams have been friends for years.

You know him intimately, and know that he must have been thrown strangely off of his guard when he applied to you such unjust language. But it was your act that threw him off of his guard; and now that you are hurt by his impulsive action, you should not complain too loudly, nor feel too bitterly. Take but one step in the right direction, and all will be well."

Hogan saw with different eyes. Since the unhappy event that separated him from his friend, this was the first instance in which any one had sought to throw oil upon the troubled waters of passion.

"I know," said the friend, "that Williams deeply regrets the language applied to you in sudden anger."

"How do you know?"

"From his own confession."

The struggle in the mind of Hogan between pride and right feelings was vigorous, but brief. Right conquered.

"Will you bear a word from me to Williams?" he said.

"Why not bear it yourself?"

Hogan started in new surprise.

"Impossible!"

"Why not let this reconciliation be complete? See your old friend face to face. I will go with you. There is kindness in his heart, as there is in yours. He is a man of honor and principle. So are you. Friends grow not thick on every bough. Do not, then, give up a true friend for the false ones who are so ready to widen this breach and drive you asunder forever. Come!"

A few minutes later, and the suddenly estranged friends stood face to face.

"Williams," said Hogan, as he reached out his hand, "I only jested. There was no temptation for me to offer an insult, for I valued you too highly as a friend. Forgive the indiscretion."

Almost wildly his hand was seized, as a voice, tremulous with feeling, made answer, —

"It is I who should ask forgiveness, for a sudden anger was in my heart, and I meant to wound. I recall the words to which my foolish lips gave utterance. Can you forget them?"

"They are forgotten, my friend," was nobly answered, "and I shall class him with my ene-

mies who seeks to recall them to my recollection."

At the appointed hour, the friend whose good offices had brought this unhappy affair to so pleasant a termination entered the room of the fiery-tempered young man whose evil genius prompted him to advise the most extreme measures. Hogan was with him.

"I am pleased to say," remarked the latter, "that we have settled this unfortunate business."

"Indeed!" The second might well look surprised. "How? Did Williams apologize?"

"No, but I did."

"You!" The young man stepped back a pace or two, looking blank with astonishment.

"Yes. I gave the first offence."

"But he insulted you!"

"He has withdrawn it."

"First?"

"No. I apologized first, because my offence was first. The moment I said that I had no intention of wounding him, that I had spoken only in jest, he seized my hand, and made the amplest retraction. We are friends again.

And now, let me thank you for the offer of service recently made and accepted. But let me, in all kindness, say, that I do not think you acted wisely or humanely. Had I suffered your counsels to prevail, the saddest consequences might have followed. Hereafter, instead of seeking to inflame anger, be the healer and the pacifier. Instead of stirring up strife between men and brethren, pour, rather, the oil of peace on the troubled waters of passion."

XVI.

AN INDIGNATION VISIT.

"If Ruthy Ann Johnson said that, she's no lady!" The black eyes of Mrs. Pendergrass flashed fire.

"Well, she did say it, and a little more."

Very quiet and very insinuating was the voice that said this. It came from a little woman, who looked almost too insignificant for a mischief-maker.

"That my Hester was as ugly as sin!"

"Her very words."

"What else did she say, Miss Perkins?"

"Why, she said that she could make a better face out of dough."

Mrs. Pendergrass dropped the work she held in her hands. Her face grew red as scarlet. This was the crowning indignity. All the insulted mother in her rose up in angry indignation. "A better face out of dough!" No

wonder Mrs. Pendergrass was "stirred up," to use her own words, "from the very bottom."

"Very well, Mrs. Ruthy Ann Johnson! Very well, madam! Very kind and very neighborly talk, upon my word!"

"I wouldn't be excited about it," said Miss Perkins, in her quiet way. "She's talked as bad about me; but I let it pass."

"You ain't Maria Pendergrass," was the meaning response. "A better face out of dough! Give me patience! But never mind — I'll have it out with her; see if I don't!"

"Ruthy Ann likes to talk," remarked Miss Perkins, making an effort to soothe the feelings she had spurred into excitement. "She's a little glib with her tongue, you know, and is always trying to say smart things. I heard her use them very same words about Phœbe Jenkins, not six weeks gone by. Phœbe is dreadfully homely, you know, and has no more expression in her face than a turnip. I was excessively amused, and have laughed over it a dozen times since. I think she was only talking for talk's sake when she referred to Hester."

"I don't care what she was talking for," replied Mrs. Pendergrass, sharply, "but I can tell her this much, she's got to keep her glib tongue off of me and mine. Hester is as good looking as any of her brats. Wait till I see her!"

Miss Perkins tried to lay the storm she had raised; but Mrs. Pendergrass was touched in a very tender point. She had received a wound which no words of the mischief-making gossip could heal. When her husband came home at dinner-time, she told him, with much feeling, about what Mrs. Johnson had said. Mr. Pendergrass, whose temperament was as different from that of his wife as December is from June, treated the matter very indifferently.

"I never considered our Hester much of a beauty," he said. "But she's a good girl, which is best of all. As to her being ugly as sin, that is a mere extravagance of expression, sometimes indulged in by thoughtless people, such as Mrs. Johnson. It amounts to nothing, and I would let it pass as the idle wind."

"Indeed, and I'll not let it pass, then. Nobody has a right to talk so about my Hester."

I shall tell Ruthy Ann Johnson a piece of my mind."

"You'd better not, Maria. No good will come of it. You'll only make an enemy of her," said Mr. Pendergrass.

"I don't care!" The black eyes of Mrs. Pendergrass burned like coals of fire. "I'd rather have such a woman for my enemy than my friend."

"Never make an enemy, even of a dog, Maria. It isn't good policy. Enemies are always dangerous."

But there was no use in talking to Maria Pendergrass. Passion had usurped the throne of reason.

About four o'clock in the afternoon, Mrs. Pendergrass started for the house of her offending neighbor, a woman of equal spirit with herself. Not the slightest forewarning had Mrs. Johnson of the intended visit. She was sitting with her basket in a chair by her side, engaged in the important work of darning stockings, when Mrs. Pendergrass came in with a bustling, impressive air, and a face of no very mild aspect.

"Good afternoon, Mrs. Pendergrass," said Mrs. Johnson, pleasantly, rising as she spoke; "I'm glad to see you."

"No, you ain't!" was the unexpected answer to this cheerful salutation.

"What's the matter? What do you mean?" said Mrs. Johnson, stepping back a pace or two, while her face became as scarlet.

"Just what I say," was replied. "You ain't glad to see me, you mean hypocrite!"

Mrs. Pendergrass, at the very outset, went quite beyond herself. She had thought over all the words she would say, and they were to be calmly spoken, but with a very cutting edge upon them. But on meeting the neighbor who had so deeply offended her, memory and self-possession fled, and instead of asking, as she had intended doing, whether Mrs. Johnson had spoken thus and so about her daughter Hester, she weakly and foolishly replied with insult to a kind welcome.

"Let me be what I am, no lady would use such language in the house of a neighbor," said Mrs. Johnson.

"You are no lady! You — you — hypocrite!"

Mrs. Pendergrass was blind with passion.

Mrs. Johnson was a large, strong woman, while Mrs. Pendergrass was of rather diminutive stature. Outraged by this sudden, and for all she could see, wholly unprovoked, assault, the former advanced suddenly upon her violent neighbor, and grasping her firmly by one of her arms, led her to the front door, and thrusting her out into the yard, said, as she unclasped her vice-like hand, —

"Don't let me see you again until you know how to behave like a decent woman." And the door was shut in her face.

Maria Pendergrass was bewildered, confounded, and doubly outraged by this violent assault upon her person; exceeding, as it did, a thousand-fold, in her estimation, the wrong already inflicted through the person of her daughter. There was scarcely any wicked thing that she would not have felt inclined to do, by way of retaliation, on the spur of the moment, had the opportunity been presented. One tempta-

tion was, to throw stones and break her neighbor's windows; another was to kill a pet lamb, that happened to be lying on the grass-plat before the door; and another was to trample on a flower-bed, in which some choice and valued plants were just beginning to unfold their tender leaves in the genial sunshine.

But she refrained; not in consequence of a preponderance of right sentiments, but because the act would too feebly express her great indignation.

The fiercer the tempest, the sooner it is over. Violent passions quickly exhaust themselves. By the time Mrs. Pendergrass reached home, the thermometer of her feelings had lost many degrees. The range was far below fever heat.

We cannot say that she felt particularly well satisfied with her own performances in the rather serious comedy at Mrs. Johnson's, which reached so sudden a termination. She had studied her part thoroughly, but, on the stage, forgot even the opening passages, and blundered in consequence most terribly. Instead of helping matters any, she had made them ten times worse, by

presenting herself as an assailant, instead of one demanding explanation and redress.

"I'm glad I didn't break her windows, nor kill her pet lamb, nor trample on her flower-bed!"

Mrs. Pendergrass said this to herself, quite soberly, as she sat alone in her room, less than half an hour after her return from that fruitless indignation visit.

"Now, haven't I gone and made a fool of myself?" she added, with a depressing sense of humiliation, as the remembrance of what she had said and done presented itself with mortifying distinctness. "What must Ruthy Ann Johnson think of me? She'll tell her husband, of course; and he's a fiery, hot-headed little whiffet, and will be after Pendergrass for explanation. I'm mad at myself. Why didn't I talk to her right? I had it all laid out; every word was in its place. I'm a fool! Maria Pendergrass, you are a fool! There!"

Very meekly did Maria Pendergrass bear this self-denunciation; though, had anybody else dared to express a similar estimate of her char-

acter, she would have given a very different exhibition of her quality.

"I wish Miss Perkins had staid at home and minded her own business!"

Ah! that is the reward your tattling mischief-maker usually receives in the end, even from those whose ever-open ears invite the tale of evil.

"I've heard it said that she will stretch the truth, and it's as likely as not that she's done so in this case. What if Mrs. Johnson never said anything of the kind? Or what if Miss Perkins denies having told me?"

These were sober considerations.

"I've put my foot into it, and no mistake!"

Rather a coarse comparison, Mrs. Pendergrass, but forcible and true. People who make indignation visits generally do that thing. Your experience is quite up to the average of such experiences.

Mrs. Pendergrass could not summon sufficient courage to speak with her husband about the exciting event which had occurred. She meant to do so, in order to prepare his mind for a return

indignation visit from Mr. Johnson, which she was very certain would be made before the evening closed. Momently, from the time he came home at sundown until ten o'clock relieved her anxious suspense, was she in expectation of this visit from Mr. Johnson.

The next morning found Mrs. Pendergrass in rather a sober state. She could not look back upon the events of the preceding day with any feeling of self-approval. Her behavior at Mrs. Johnson's was certainly of an extraordinary character, as was also the treatment which she had received. Every passing hour she looked for some message from Mrs. Johnson, or for the visit of a friendly neighbor to inquire about the strange stories that were buzzing through the village. But the entire morning passed without her seeing a living soul besides her own family.

As for Mrs. Ruthy Ann Johnson, the subsidence of her disturbed feelings was almost as sudden as the excitement which had extinguished, in a moment, every fraction of self-control. When she grasped the arm of Mrs. Pendergrass, and thrust her violently from her

house, she was angry beyond measure. When she turned back from the shut door, and sat down by the basket of stockings from which she had started away on being so roughly assailed by her neighbor, the whirlwind of passion was over, and bowing her face upon her hands, she wept violently. The provocation she had received was great, but she did not look back upon it in any spirit of self-justification.

The afternoon wore away, and evening brought the return of Mrs. Johnson's husband. She wished to talk with him about the unpleasant affair, but he was an excitable and not very wise little man, and she feared to trust him with her version of the story, lest he should do something that would only make matters worse. So she had to bear the burden of unpleasant thoughts alone.

Like Mrs. Pendergrass, she passed most of the next day in a condition of unhappy suspense; every moment expecting some annoying message, or visit in company with interested friends, from the neighbor she had handled so roughly. She did not go out to see any one, for she really

felt ashamed to look a neighbor in the eyes, after she had disgraced herself by such unwomanly conduct. No one came near her all day, and this she regarded as unmistakable evidence that Mrs. Pendergrass had been all over the village, giving her version of the story.

The third day brought no change in the aspect of things, and no special comfort to either of the unhappy ladies. Both felt disgraced in the eyes of their neighbors, and each was angry with the other for having provoked her to unseemly anger.

In the mean time, Miss Perkins was gliding in and out among the various families in the village, smooth of tongue, insinuating, yet all-seeing and all-hearing. On the fourth day, Mrs. Johnson's came in turn. She received her usual welcome, but soon saw that her friend — every lady in the town was her "friend" — seemed ill at ease, and was under considerable restraint. Every moment, Mrs. Johnson expected to hear some question or remark on the subject of her late trouble with Mrs. Pendergrass. But not the slightest allusion was made thereto. This was strange.

Mrs. J. could not understand it. What had Mrs. Pendergrass said? Something very discreditable, or else Miss Perkins would not be so silent on the subject — a silence evidently meant to save her feelings. At last, unable to bear this suspense any longer, Mrs. Johnson determined to open the way for Miss Perkins, by saying, —

"When did you see Maria Pendergrass?"

"Well, let me think." Miss Perkins spoke almost indifferently. "It is now three or four days, I believe, since I was there. Yes, now I remember. It's just four days. I saw her on Tuesday."

That was the memorable day!

"In the morning, or afternoon?" inquired Mrs. Johnson.

"It was in the morning. Why do you ask?" And Miss Perkins looked curiously at her friend.

Mrs. Johnson's eyes dropped to the floor.

"You haven't seen her since?"

Mrs. Johnson looked up with a more confident manner.

"Not since; nor have I heard of her being out

anywhere, which is a little curious, now I come to think of it, for she goes about a great deal, you know. As Mrs. Jenkins says of her, — 'She's always on the run.'

"Maybe she's sick," remarked Mrs. Johnson.

"I shouldn't wonder; for I don't know of anything but sickness that would keep her three days in the house. By the way," added Miss Perkins, smiling, "don't you remember that funny speech you made about her Hester once?"

"No; what was it?"

"I've laughed about it a hundred times since; it was so ludicrous, and yet so true. Hester, you know, is as homely as mud."

"She's not handsome, certainly," replied Mrs. Johnson. "But she's good; and that is worth far more than beauty."

"Just what you said, afterwards, to take the cutting edge off your funny speech."

"What was the speech? I have entirely forgotten it."

"You said that you could make a better face out of dough. Ha! ha!"

"It was thoughtless and unkind, and by no

means expressed my true feelings towards the child. Ludicrous ideas often present themselves to my mind, and I have the bad habit of clothing them in language at times when it were better to be silent."

"Somebody who heard you say this was kind enough to tell Mrs. Pendergrass."

"O, no!" Mrs. Johnson looked surprised and grieved.

"It's true; and she was very angry about it."

"I don't wonder," said Mrs. Johnson. "It was thoughtless in me to make the remark, but wicked in the one who repeated it."

"Wicked and malicious," replied Miss Perkins, who thus thought to divert all suspicion from herself.

After that, conversation flagged.

"I wonder if Mrs. Pendergrass is sick?" Mrs. Johnson had been silent for some minutes, and the remark evidenced considerable interest.

"I shouldn't wonder," said Miss Perkins.

"Suppose we call over and see her."

To this Miss Perkins assented, and Mrs. Johnson made herself ready with particular despatch.

"How's your mother?" Miss Perkins asked of Hester, who opened the door for them.

"She's right well. Won't you walk in?"

You may be sure Mrs. Pendergrass started when she saw them, and turned all manner of colors. Mrs. Johnson, as she advanced towards her, said, —

"Will you answer me a question, Mrs. Pendergrass?" She spoke calmly and respectfully.

"Certainly: say on;" was answered, with some little show of offended personal dignity.

"Who told you that I had spoken unkindly of your daughter?"

"Miss Perkins," was the firm answer.

"O, no — no, Mrs. Pendergrass; you forget. It wasn't me; you forget." Miss Perkins was all in a flutter.

"Not at all. My memory is very clear on the subject. You were my informant, and nobody else."

"What did she say?" inquired Mrs. Johnson.

"Why, that you said my Hester was as ugly as sin."

"I never used the language, nor anything like it," was positively answered.

"O, but Mrs. Johnson, did you not say that you could make —"

"Yes, Miss Perkins, I did utter that thoughtless, silly speech; I regretted it in a moment afterwards. And I also said that she was good, and that was best of all. Did you tell that, also?"

"No, Mrs. Johnson, she did not, evil mischief-maker that she is!" said Mrs. Pendergrass, rising, and extending her hand.

Mrs. Johnson grasped it, and replied, —

"Forgive my foolish speech, that had in it no real meaning, and would have done no harm if there had been no evil tongue to bear it to your ears."

"And forgive my hasty words, uttered in blind passion," said Mrs. Pendergrass. "I have been sufficiently punished."

"And so have I. As for your Hester, I have always liked her; and have said, many and many a time, as Miss Perkins well knows, for I have said it to her, that I wished my Ruthy was as thoughtful of her mother, and as kind among her brothers and sisters. As to good looks, I don't

think there is anything to boast of on my side of the house. Ruthy is plain enough, I am sure; and if you couldn't make as good a face out of putty, I wouldn't give much for your skill."

A gleam of kind feeling threw its warm rays over the flushed countenance of Maria Pendergrass. The outraged mother was fully satisfied. She saw that neither ill will nor contempt had darkened the mind of her neighbor, who had, as every one knew, "a funny way of speaking" sometimes, but meant no harm, and was a true woman at heart.

In a few moments, a change came over the face of Mrs. Pendergrass, as her thoughts took a new direction. A sudden fire flashed in her small, black eyes; her brows fell, and her flexible lips took a firm, angry curve. Turning to the astonished and confused Miss Perkins, she said, sharply, —

"And now, my lady, you shall have a piece of my mind! — you tattling, mischief-making, wicked —"

Mrs. Pendergrass was losing herself, and would have gone quite passion-blind again, had

not Mrs. Johnson laid a hand firmly upon her arm, and said, —

"Maria! Maria Pendergrass! Don't waste words on her. She isn't worth a decent woman's indignation!"

She grasped her neighbor just in time, as a drowning man is sometimes caught and saved at the last instant of immersion, and drew her back to the dry ground of reason and self-possession.

"Right, Ruthy Ann. Right. Thank you for the timely words." And Mrs. Pendergrass caught her breath, like one who had been on the verge of suffocation. "I must say this, however;" and she turned again to Miss Perkins.

"Don't darken my door again. You have done so once too often."

Miss Perkins arose, and, turning meekly away, retired slowly, and with the air of one who had been deeply injured.

"The sneaking hypocrite!" ejaculated Mrs. Pendergrass.

"I would have liked her better if she had shown fire and fight," said Mrs. Johnson. "But your secret detractors are always spiritless cow-

ards. Let her go! She is not worth, as I have said, a decent woman's indignation; and I am vexed when I think that her smooth tongue and false heart were able to arouse into such angry turbulence the feelings of two women who had been friends from girlhood up to middle life. And now, Maria, if you hear of any more of my foolish speeches, come to me in all friendly frankness; not as you did —"

"Don't fear another indignation visit, Ruthy Ann!" said Mrs. Pendergrass, interrupting her neighbor. "I'll never make such a fool of myself again — never!"

"Have you spoken of it to any one?" asked Mrs. Johnson, a little gravely.

"No; have you?"

"Not even to my husband. I was too much ashamed of myself."

"Good!" said Mrs. Pendergrass; "it is our own secret."

"And our own it must remain. By its memory we will be faster friends."

Many a good laugh had they afterwards to themselves, about the skill of Mrs. Johnson in

making faces out of dough and putty, and over that ludicrous indignation meeting, which both had the good sense to forgive, and the humor to enjoy.

They were friends, though within an ace of being made enemies for life, as thousands are made, by thoughtless words, too freely, yet innocently, spoken. It is the tattler who is the real social criminal. Her offence is capital, and there should be no reprieve.