

SOWING THE WIND

AND

OTHER STORIES.



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BY T. S. ARTHUR.

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LIST OF SERIES.

- I. *HIDDEN WINGS, AND OTHER STORIES.*
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SOWING THE WIND,

AND OTHER STORIES.

CHAPTER I.

"ARE you ready, Hiram?" said Mr. Overman, calling to his clerk, who remained seated at his desk, intent on a column of figures.

"Not quite. I must balance my cash," replied the young man.

"How long will it take?" asked Mr. Overman.

"Not long. I'm nearly through." And the clerk bent down over the cash-book more intently.

"Mr. Overman, who had closed the front windows and keyed the shutters, now walked the floor for two or three minutes, waiting for his young man to complete the work on which he was engaged. But an error had

crept into the day's business somewhere, and a balance was not reached on the first trial. A slight murmur of disappointment gave Mr. Overman an intimation of this fact.

"Can't you make it balance?" he said, walking to where the desks were placed by a window in the back part of the store, and standing by his clerk.

"It doesn't come out right on the first trial," was answered, "so I must go over it again. I'm sorry to keep you waiting, sir."

"I promised to be home early," said Mr. Overman. "My wife has company. So, here's the key. Be careful about this window, Hiram; and be sure that the bolt is well sprung in the lock,—you know it has a bad trick of catching half way sometimes. Leave the key at my house as you go past."

The young man promised to observe strictly; and Mr. Overman left him to the work of balancing the day's account with cash. It was sundown, and nearly half an hour of twilight remained. Ten minutes were spent in adding up the columns of figures again,

and getting at the amount of money which should be on hand. Then the cash was counted, and the sum added to the balance in bank.

"One hundred dollars over." Something of satisfaction blended with the disappointment that was expressed in his voice. Twice he counted the bills and coin in the cash-box, and then sat very still, his thought running back through the day's transactions in search of some clue to the error. None could be found.

"There's a mistake in the figures somewhere, and I must discover it," he said, with a long sigh; and bent over the pages of the cash-book again.

"Ha! Three, is it? Let me run that column up again." A thrill of excitement was in his low voice.

"Three it is, and my footing is two. That will make the hundred dollars. All right!"

He lifted from the desk an erasing-knife, and laid its edge over the numeral 3; but his hand lingered. A thought, suddenly thrown

into his mind, caused him to hesitate. Then the knife was laid down. He sat absorbed and motionless for several minutes. In that brief time an evil counsellor had prevailed over the young man. His hand was not steady as it moved to the cash-box, and there was a visible tremor of the bank-bills as they passed hurriedly through his fingers. One hundred dollars were selected and laid in a pile on the desk; the balance was returned to the box.

Why does the young man start, and glance around in that half fearful way? It was only the cat's light footsteps that came to his ears, as she moved across the floor. How changed his face! The forehead so smooth and open a little while ago, is cut by three or four lines between the eyebrows. His lips are held tightly together, and express pain as well as resoluteness of purpose. There is a shadow over the light of his intenser eyes. He glances, now from the window, and now looks around the store suspiciously; then his eyes come back to the pile of bank-bills

which were laid off from the rest. With a sudden movement he clutches the money and thrusts it into his pocket; shuts the cash-book, and places it, with the cash-box, in the fire-proof, which he locks. His motions are rapid beyond their wont, indicating unusual excitement of mind, as he closes and bolts the shutter, and locks the door. He forgets Mr. Overman's injunction about the tricky lock, and only half springs the bolt. He is not thinking of duty; but of the hundred dollars that lie wrongfully in his pocket. A single act has obstructed the old right habits of mind. False from will in higher things, oblivion as to common duties comes in legitimate order.

Mr. Overman is standing in his door as Hiram comes in sight. The storekeeper is a kind-hearted, unsuspecting, but careful man, who makes it a point to look closely after his own affairs. He is not much behind his clerk in arriving at the store each morning, and generally locks up with his own hands, at the day's departure.

"Did you get the balance?" he asked, as he took the key from Hiram.

"Yes, sir." But it was not the clear, confident, cheerful "Yes, sir," that usually fell from his lips. He was painfully aware of this; so much so, that a shudder of fear ran along his nerves, lest suspicion should be awakened. He turned off quickly, and without looking up directly into Mr. Overman's face.

His landlady remarked his defect of appetite, and changed manner, at supper-time, and asked if he were not well.

"A little headache," he answered, evasively, and with falsehood.

Hiram Foster was twenty-three years of age. He had been in the employment of Mr. Wesley Overman, as clerk and salesman, for nearly two years, and had his entire confidence, which, until now, had never been abused. He was a young man of some intelligence, and desirous to rise in the world above his present condition. Up to this time his salary had not exceeded four hun-

dred dollars, and it took about all of this to meet his annual expenses. The prospect of rising in the world had not, therefore, looked very bright; and of late, Hiram had fretted thereat considerably. One cause of this lay in a recent awakening of his heart to new and tender experiences. Love had crossed his path. Helen Prescott, the minister's charming daughter, had thrown over him a spell as sweet as it was irresistible. Her father, a man of education and cultivated tastes, thought higher than a storekeeper's clerk for his favorite child; but love obeys its own impulses—looks to persons, not conditions. So, as Hiram advanced, she responded in tender acquiescences, and at the time our story opens, he had told his love to willing ears.

As no objections could be raised to the young man's character, which stood without reproach, Mr. Prescott, the father of Helen, demurred on the score of Hiram's position in the world. He was a clerk, receiving but a small salary,—not more than sufficient for his

own maintenance,—how was he to support a wife and family? The answer, as in all such cases, was ready. The young couple were content to wait until Hiram could push his way to a more advanced position.

But, “content to wait,” though on the young man’s lips, was not in his heart. No, he was not content to wait. Every day he grew more and more restless in thought; and more discouraged at the unpromising aspect of his affairs. Before it would be safe to venture upon marriage, he must have an income of at least seven or eight hundred dollars, and be in the way of advancement towards a substantial citizenship. Patient duty in the present, as the prerequisite of a happy and prosperous future, was not the creed by which he was trying to live; but, in looking too restlessly ahead, from dissatisfaction with the present, he was opening the door for temptation; and we have seen how, when the tempter found him, in an unguarded moment, he fell. Alas! when the feet turn aside from right paths, who can say into what deserts

and wildernesses they may be doomed to wander?

From the supper-table, Hiram went to his room, the door of which he fastened carefully on the inner side. This was an unusual precaution. But Hiram carried with him a new consciousness that involved fear. He drew a deep breath, as if trying to relieve his bosom from a weight. Then he sat down by the table where he had placed his lamp, and thrusting his hand into his pocket, drew therefrom a roll of bank-bills, the rightful property of Mr. Overman. He had partly unfolded them, when a shade of anxiety fell suddenly on his face, and he glanced suspiciously toward the window of his room, crumpling the bills at the same time in his hand, and so concealing them. Rising, he went to the window and looked out, taking careful note of the situation and aspect of two or three houses in the neighborhood, in order to be sure that he was not in the range of observation. Then, after closing the shutter, and drawing an inside curtain that shaded half

the window, he sat down again to the table from which he had just arisen, and relaxing the firm grip with which he was holding the bank-bills, spread them out before him.

A change in look and manner now became apparent. There was a certain lighting up of his face, as from pleasant excitement, and a quick movement of the hands as he counted over the money.

"One hundred dollars." He spoke in a low murmur of sound; and then, as if thought had become active in some direction of interest, sat very still for a long time. His closely-shut mouth, fixed, indrawn gaze, and compressed brows, showed that his mind was intent on themes, to him, of the highest moment. There was no fear, weakness, or repentance, on his almost rigid countenance; but an aspect of fixed determination. He had passed the Rubicon, and was looking forward, not back. A new way had suddenly opened before him—a new way to that advancement in the world on which he was to build, in the future, his temple of happiness.



"Hiram Foster started, turned a little pale, and clutched at the bank-bills."

Mr. Overman was not a suspicious man, and, of late, had trusted him more and more implicitly. Mr. Overman was not a ready accountant; and so, the books were all in his hands. Formerly, Mr. Overman had been careful in his daily examinations of the cash account, but it was a rare thing for him to look over it now, and when he did so, it was in so cursory a manner, that an error might lie just before him and not be seen. All this was thought of by the dishonest clerk, and in it he found encouragement to press forward in an evil way.

There came a low rap on the door. Hiram Foster started, turned a little pale, and clutched at the bank-bills that yet lay upon the table.

"What's wanted?" he asked, the strangeness of his voice startling his own ears.

"Here's a letter for you?" it was a servant who replied.

Hiram slipped the bolt, trying to do it noiselessly, and partly opening the door, received a letter from the servant's hand. It

was contained in an ordinary brown envelope, and the direction, "Hiram Foster," was in a bold business hand, the familiarity of which made his heart leap and tremble. He re-bolted the door, and sitting down by the table, broke the envelope. The enclosure read—

"I wish to see you, Hiram. Call around after supper. WESLEY OVERMAN."

An instant paleness overspread the young man's face; his lips fell apart; beads of perspiration came out upon his forehead; his heart sunk with terror. Was it possible that some one had observed him, through the window, at the store, and communicated his crime to Mr. Overman! That thought, flung into his mind, caused a deep shudder to go down to his very interior consciousness.

"What *can* he want with me?" he said, rising from the table, with a look of anxiety in his face. The money was still held tightly in his hand. To dispose of this money was the next question. He dare not take it with

him, for, if Mr. Overman had received any intimations of the truth, its presence on his person might transpire, and his ruin be hopelessly consummated.

"This is a doubtful and dangerous business!" Ah! if with that conviction, Hiram Foster, and that acknowledgment, you had said in irrevocable decision—"I will stop here, and go back to the right way!"

There was, he felt, as much danger in leaving the money as in taking it with him. If his room should be searched, his trunk would not escape; so he feared to hide it there. One place after another was thought of, and decided against. He was in a maze of perplexity. At last, folding the notes in a piece of paper, he crept under his bed, and placed them beneath the farthest bed-post.

"No one will ever think of going there," he muttered, in an undertone, as he crept forth from his bodily humiliation, fit emblem of that mental humiliation and disgrace into which all come who are forced by crime into stooping duplicity and concealment.

CHAPTER II.

MR. OVERMAN'S house was distant only a few streets from where his clerk resided.

"What *can* he want with me?" was the anxious and oft-repeated question of Hiram Foster, as he walked slowly, and with busy thoughts, toward his employer's residence. It was the first time he had asked to see him in the evening. Something, therefore, of more than ordinary import, was in the summons.

At Mr. Overman's door he stood, with a heart beating confusedly, for some moments, before venturing to ring the bell. When shown into the parlor, he found Mr. Overman alone. The first glance at his kind face dispelled every fear. Not even the faintest shadow of a suspicion was there.

"Sit down, Hiram," said he, in a pleasant tone of voice. "I've sent for you in consequence of having heard something this evening which has interested me."

The young man tried to be altogether at his ease, but it cost him an effort. He looked, but did not venture to speak, an inquiry.

"What I have heard," said Mr. Overman, "concerns you and Helen Prescott. Ah! I see the tell-tale color in your face, and am glad of it. Helen is a dear, good girl. I know her well, and it pleases me that you have chosen so wisely. Has the matter been spoken of to Mr. Prescott?"

"Yes, sir."

"And he gives consent?"

"Not a full, outspoken consent, sir," replied the young man. "He makes no opposition, however."

"No opposition! Why should he?"

"I am only a poor clerk, you know."

"Humph! A poor clerk! Has the minister never read Pope?"

"Honor and shame from no condition rise;

Act well your part; there all the honor lies."

"That is wherein true manhood and high honor repose. *Right action* ennobles. Be

true, faithful, just, Hiram, and you stand the peer of any one!

" 'The man's the gold for a' that.' "

The young man's eyes dropped to the floor. He felt rebuked.

" When do you think of getting married ? " asked Mr. Overman.

" Not for a long time, yet, " answered Hiram.

" Why defer so indefinitely the happy day ? "

" My income is too small. "

" Four hundred dollars a year ? "

" Yes, sir. "

" I was receiving no more when I got married. "

" The times are more expensive, " replied the clerk. " We are expected to live differently now, than when you were a young man. "

" There's something in that, " replied Mr. Overman. " Pride is expensive. Our superfluities cost us more than our necessities. We live too much in other people's eyes, and too

little within ourselves. But the world's ways are enticing, and we cannot go easily against the current of things. Four hundred dollars will not do ; so, Hiram, as you are a faithful, honest, intelligent young man—true to my interests—I will make it six, with a promise of something better, if business holds good. It was to say this that I sent for you. Get married, and be happy. "

If twenty-four hours previous to this time, Mr. Overman had thus spoken to his clerk, what a different and purer element would have been in the pleasure that made his heart leap up and swell—sending bright blood to his cheeks, and lustre to his gladsome eyes! There would have been a different tone in the ardor with which he took the extended hand of his kind-hearted employer, and pressed it tightly in both of his.

" How shall I thank you ? " he answered, and as he said so, he felt that he was acting beyond his real feelings. Two hundred dollars advance of salary! It was something better than he had been receiving,—but not

on six hundred dollars would he venture to marry Helen Prescott, whose father's objections to his humbler condition in life had piqued his pride. But his feelings suffered no depression on this account; for, had he not another source of income?

"Faithful"—"honest"—"true to my interests." It was only by the strongest effort of will that Hiram could keep his eyes on the face of Mr. Overman, as these words were spoken in his praise. For a moment or two, it seemed as if he would lose all control of his countenance, and let shame reveal itself in red confusion. He felt sure that guilt looked out of his unsteady eyes, and so let them drop to the floor.

"Fix an early wedding day, Hiram," said Mr. Overman, in his free, off-hand manner. "There's nothing to interpose now. If Helen's father makes any objection, I'll manage him. A little high-strung, is he? Humph! Your ministers, and lawyers, and doctors have, generally, a weakness in that direction. They seem to think themselves

made of finer stuff than most people. Living so much among books has, I imagine, something to do with the fancy. But Mr. Prescott is a good, sensible man; and we'll have no trouble with him."

As soon as it was possible, without showing indecorous haste to get away from the rebuking presence of Mr. Overman, Hiram Foster retired. He felt strangely bewildered and oppressed, as he gained the street. He had been like one bound and in fear; now, there was a partial sense of freedom, and a removal of dread—but, the haunting terror only went off, so to speak, a little way, and there stood still, large, indistinct, and vaguely threatening. There had occurred, within the space of a few hours, a great change in his inner, or spiritual relations. What they were, he did not comprehend. Nay, his thought did not even dwell on the new mental phenomena that were transpiring. He was more a passive than an intelligent subject—feeling but not comprehending. Tranquillity, and that sense of security which the innocent en-

joy, were gone; and in their place was a sense of impending danger. Hope looked onward to the future that was opening with brighter prospects; but strange, threatening shadows hung over the beauty and brightness that lay in the smiling beyond. As he walked onward, in the calm, starry evening, it seemed as if a shadowy form were moving along just behind him. Two or three times he stopped and turned around, each time appearing to catch a glimpse of something that flitted or faded like a phantasmagorical image.

Hiram Foster's mind was in no condition for an interview with his betrothed on that evening. A great crisis in his life had come—nay, been passed; and the disturbed elements needed time for readjustment. So, he returned to his room, and spent the evening alone. But there the haunting presence which had hovered so near, in shadowy companionship, as he returned from his interview with Mr. Overman, sat down close beside him. He almost felt its breath upon his cheek, and its hand upon his hand, as he

clutched the bank-bills so dishonestly obtained. A cold shudder crept along his nerves. But with the shrinking terror that accompanied this sense of an evil, invisible presence, came no repentance—no thought of retracing the wrong step which had separated him from good—no rebuke of conscience. Onward, in deliberate purpose, as fertile suggestions of dishonest means came flooding in upon his mind, he looked, and schemed, and resolved. And there, alone in his room—no, not alone, for, all the while, a dark, evil, invisible companion was close beside him—he sat until after midnight.

More than one who looked into Hiram Foster's face on the next day, noted a change, and felt as if a hand had been laid upon them, pressing them away to a distance. Of these was Helen Prescott's father; a man of great purity of character, and sensitive to individual spheres.

CHAPTER III.

"How much money is there in the cash-box?" asked Mr. Overman. It was on the morning after Hiram had abstracted one hundred dollars.

The young man's heart gave a quick, strong beat, that sent the blood in oppressive engorgements to his lungs. He did not trust his voice in an immediate reply, but gained time by going, with a deliberate motion, to the iron safe, from which he took the cash and check books. Laying these open on the desk before his employer, he took a small piece of paper, and, with a pencil, deducted the sum standing to their credit in bank from the balance called for by the cash-book.

"One hundred and thirty-four dollars ten cents." The young man's voice had in it a slight unsteadiness, which suspicion would instantly have noted. But there was no sus-

picion in the mind of Mr. Overman. Still, he was disappointed in the amount, and said:

"Is that all? I thought we had over two hundred dollars."

"Look at it yourself, sir." And Hiram pointed to the figures in the cash and bank books, and then went over, aloud, the subtractions he had already made. "Just one hundred and thirty-four dollars and ten cents. That is the sum which ought to be in the cash-box."

And Hiram opened the box and counted the money in the presence of Mr. Overman, who expressed himself satisfied, but not in a tone of sufficient heartiness to relieve the clerk's mind, who felt two burning spots on his cheeks for more than an hour afterwards. Twice, during the day, he saw Mr. Overman examining the cash-book; and his heart trembled each time in anxious fear.

"I thought Perkins settled his bill yesterday," said Mr. Overman, as he looked up from the cash-book on one of these occasions.

"No, sir; he called for his account, and said he would pay it in a few weeks."

"Ah, that was it. I got the impression that he paid."

"His bill is seventy dollars," said Hiram. "If he had paid, the cash in hand would have been over two hundred dollars."

"I see—I see! How singularly things take hold of us sometimes," answered Mr. Overman, in a cheerful, satisfied way, that put the young man's fears for the time to rest.

In the evening Hiram called to see Helen. She was a pure, true, gentle-hearted girl; refined and delicate in her tastes and appreciations; confiding and loving. She had given up her whole heart to him. In her eyes he was noble, honorable, good.

But now, as Hiram grasped her hand, and looked into the pure, deep well of her blue eyes, he saw an expression in them never seen before; and felt something like an outward moving sphere, that seemed as if it would bear him to a distance from her. After a few minutes, the sweet, loving welcome, which had smiled in the face of Helen, gradually faded out, and her mouth grew

almost sober in its calm expression, as her eyes dwelt on the countenance of her lover. Hiram felt the searching inquiry that was in her gaze, and it disturbed him. What could it mean? Was her clear-seeing vision going past the screen of his concealing face, and looking at the dark secret he had taken into his heart? The thought chilled him.

"I have good news, darling," he said, throwing as much gladness of feeling into his voice as he could assume. Assume? Alas! How quickly had a will assenting to evil robbed him of true gladness! Yes, as he could assume. "Mr. Overman spoke of you, last night."

"Of me!" A warm glow lit up the face of Helen, and pleasure sparkled in her eyes.

"Yes; he sent for me and said that he had heard of our engagement. You are one of his favorites, Helen. I can't tell you of all the nice things he said. He insists that there shall be no long postponement of our marriage; and to remove all objections on the score of means, has raised my salary."

"Oh, Hiram!" It was as if a sunbeam had kissed her gentle face. "How good in Mr. Overman!"

"It was kind and thoughtful in him, certainly; but only just, as to an advance of salary," answered the young man. "In all fairness, this should have been done a year ago. Still, better late than never, and I'm very much obliged to him."

"How much has he increased your income?" asked Helen.

"To six hundred dollars." He saw a slight shade of disappointment dim the radiance of her countenance.

"That for the present," said Hiram, quickly. "But a larger increase will soon follow. I saw as much in his countenance, as well as in the intimations of his not very guarded sentences. I am every thing to him in his business, and he knows it. The way of advancement is plain before me, Helen, dear, and I shall walk on, steadily, to success. To-day I stopped to look through one of the pretty cottages that Parker is building, on the new

street just opened across the hill. They are to be the sweetest and cosiest of little places—real dove's nests. The only drawback is, that he is building to sell, and not to rent. However, this may not be a serious hindrance. Parker said that I might have my own time for payment—in all two, or three, or four years, if required. He only asks twelve hundred dollars."

"I'm afraid of debt, Hiram," answered the young girl. "Father was in debt once, and I can never forget the trouble of mind through which he passed, until the final dollar was paid. Don't think of buying a house. I could not bear to see you troubled as my father has been."

"Never fear for me, Helen. I shall take good care not to be in trouble from this account. Whenever I take upon myself an obligation, it will be with so fair a prospect, that no embarrassment can follow. You must go around and look at these cottages. If they please your fancy as they have pleased mine, one of them shall be our dove's

nest. Leave all the ways and means to my providing. I will secure the home, and you shall fill it with sunshine."

And thus they talked on, as lovers will talk, of their future, in which a heaven of enjoyment awaits their advancing steps. But, in each mind was a consciousness that some change had occurred; that instead of being internally nearer, they stood further off from each other than at their last meeting. So strong was this impression with Helen, that after parting with Hiram, she fell into a musing, half disquiet state, that increased until her eyes grew dim with tears, and she went weeping to her pillow.

Mr. Overman's kindly manifested interest in his clerk was genuine. When his mind went out in favorable regard towards any one, his generous nature led him to confer benefits. He liked the minister—who was a true man—and the daughter had always been one of his favorites. As soon as it became known to him that Hiram Foster was Helen's accepted lover, he was almost as much

pleased as if one of them had been his own child. In a few days he called to see Mr. Prescott, and spoke in such hearty praise of the young man, that all opposition to an early marriage was removed; and the time fixed some three or four months distant. One of the cottages on the new street was taken, with the knowledge and approval of Mr. Overman, who negotiated a purchase with the builder, obtaining from him a long extended time of payments in quarterly sums. Nor did his generous interest stop here. More than half the neat furniture that adorned the cottage in which Hiram installed his bride on their wedding day, was the gift of Mr. Overman.

CHAPTER IV.

It was the morning of Hiram Foster's wedding day. He was sitting at his desk, the cash-book open before him, and his pen just touching the bottom line of the page. The footing of a column had been pencilled on a slip of waste paper, and he was recording the figures in ink; not, however, we are pained to say, in exact correspondence with the ascertained result, but in deviation therefrom, with dishonest purpose.

"Hiram." What a start and sudden confusion of manner! The young man turned only in part. He would not, for the world, have the eye of Mr. Overman upon his face until a mask was on it.

"Sir."

"You remember Jasper Lloyd?"

"Yes, sir."

"He was with Felton, and went to Thornley as clerk in one of the mills."

"Yes, sir. I recollect him."

"Well, he's turned out a scamp! It's in the paper to-day. He's been robbing the Company!"

"It isn't possible! And yet, I am not surprised." With a bold, impulsive effort, Hiram tried to repress all feeling, and to meet the eyes of his employer with a face in which no revelation of his own true state of mind could be seen. "Not at all surprised, sir." And he turned full around from the desk. "Jasper never struck me as a fair young man. What is the extent of his depredations?"

"It hasn't been fully ascertained; but will not, it is believed, fall short of twenty thousand dollars."

"He played a high game, upon my word! Have they caught him?"

"Yes, and got him in prison."

As Mr. Overman said this, Hiram saw, or thought he saw, something of scrutiny or suspicion in his eyes, which were fixed steadily on his face. He felt a shudder and sinking

of heart—a sense of impending ruin. His breath did not come and go for some moments. Slowly, and with a questioning look, as if doubts had been cast into his mind, Mr. Overman withdrew his eyes from Hiram, and let them fall upon the paper in his hand. The young man turned to the desk, and there was silence between them again. What a weight had been thrown upon the young man's bosom! As he brought his pen down to the paper, his hand trembled so that he could scarcely make the figures that were to be recorded. Did he make them correctly, or in fraud?—alas, in fraud!

“Foolish, foolish young man!” said Mr. Overman. He was thinking of Jasper Lloyd. Hiram started and turned pale. The words seemed spoken to himself. His heart stood still. There were a few moments of appalling suspense. He waited for the next sentence as for words of doom.

“The way of dishonesty is the way of destruction. The end is always certain.

Misery is the sure result. You cannot gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles, Hiram.”

Hiram! Why did he say Hiram in that connection! The still heart of the young man gave a frightened bound, and then sunk down almost motionless again.

“Poor Jasper Lloyd! I pity him, while I execrate his crime!”

A customer entered the store, and Mr. Overman laid down the newspaper and went to meet him. Hiram breathed more freely again. Did he correct the wrongly recorded figure? No—alas for him, no! There was a death's head at the feast, for Hiram Foster, on that memorable evening. As he stood, in the holy and impressive marriage ceremonial, the small white hand of Helen Prescott laid confidingly in his, listening to the minister's low, tender, solemn voice, there seemed hovering just behind him that same evil presence which had haunted him on the night of his first guilty departure from the way of honor and safety, chilling back the warm pulses that tried to leap up joyfully. In

every word of truthful congratulation that came to his ears, was a low undertone of warning. Alas, how was the fine gold dimmed! His wrong deeds, secret though they were, and known only to himself and God, were cursing him in this hour, which should have been one of unalloyed happiness. In grasping at external good, unlawfully, he had lost, as all lose who thus act, internal peace; and in the place of conscious safety, had come an oppressive sense of danger. The shadowy presence stood all the while near, scowling and threatening. His evil counselors had become his tormentors.

"Be true and loving," said Mr. Overman, as he held a hand of both the bride and husband. "Be true and loving, and prudent, and not too eager to grasp the good of this world, and you will be happy—happy beyond the lot of most men and women who enter this holy estate. Don't, like thousands and tens of thousands around you, look outwardly, but inwardly for happiness. Never, in even the smallest things, do what reason

and right judgment disapprove; for, so surely as you act contrary to reason and right judgment, will peace depart from you. Remember, that godliness, with contentment, is great gain; and also remember that possession never brings any pleasure to the mind, unless it comes as an orderly, safe, and equitable result. Never desire worldly things for the present, beyond what present means afford; but in thankfulness, receive from the Giver of All Good that measure of earthly blessing which He, in his wise Providence, knows to be best. We can only enjoy what we have—not what we restlessly desire."

In every sentence Hiram felt a rebuke. He could not look at his kind monitor, but kept his eyes turned aside; and not until Mr. Overman stood at a distance from him, did he breathe in any freedom. It was remarked by more than one present on the occasion, that the young husband had, for most of the time, the soberest face of any in the room. Up to that time, some four months from the fatal day on which he so insanely elected to walk

in an evil and dangerous path, he had, through a system of false entries, succeeded in robbing his kind, confiding employer, to the amount of nearly one thousand dollars. No wonder that he looked sober! no wonder that congratulation and friendly counsel from Mr. Overman, oppressed him! No wonder that there was a death's head at his marriage feast!

CHAPTER V.

TIME passed on. This marriage would have been blessed beyond the usual degree, had it not been for Hiram's secret sin. Helen was a tender, loving, dutiful wife, whose heart, like a vigorously growing vine, was all the while putting forth tendrils, and seeking to grasp the heart of her husband. But though he never repelled, was never unkind, somehow, tendril after tendril failed to gain the support after which it reached forth eagerly, and curled back feebly and helplessly upon itself. Only here and there were attachments made, and they held on with such a strain, that weariness and trembling fear came often,—too often,—instead of sweet security and repose.

The young wife was never certain of the mood in which her husband would return at day's decline. Sometimes he would come

home with cheerful countenance—sometimes with a shadow on his face—sometimes with words on his lips that made her heart leap up with pleasure—sometimes in silence and seeming coldness. Often she would watch his face, as he sat lost in thought, and feel a shrinking fear, as its expression altered from one strange aspect to another; sometimes lighting up with a sudden gleam, and sometimes retreating as suddenly into shadow and darkness. If, on these occasions, she intruded upon him, he would seem annoyed or confused. He did not often speak of his worldly prospects; when he did so, it was in a general way, and in a tone of encouragement.

For three years they occupied their little cottage on the new street, by which time the payments on account of the purchase were all completed. Many tasteful improvements in the grounds had been made during this time; walks laid out, trees and shrubbery planted, a small summer-house built, and also an addition to the cottage—this addition was to the extent of a single room, to be used as a break-

fast and sitting-room. Hiram wanted to have the addition two stories, which would have made the cost at least a hundred and fifty dollars more; but his prudent wife urged his abandonment of this plan so strongly, that he gave it up. Her dread of seeing her husband fall in debt was very strong; so strong that she had known little true enjoyment of the tasteful things with which he was steadily surrounding her, and which she felt could not be obtained, under their limited income, without certain embarrassment.

“I’m afraid you’ll get into trouble, husband, dear,” she would say, now and then, as she saw his mind beginning to run on some new expenditure. “Don’t go in debt. We’ve all that is required for enjoyment. There’s no true possession in any thing not justly our own. Debt robs of beauty even the choicest picture or statue.”

“Don’t fret yourself for nothing, dear,” he would answer. “I’m as much afraid of debt as you are, and shall not put myself in anybody’s power. My salary is a thousand dol-

lars, you know ; and, thanks to your prudent housekeeping, I am laying up a few hundred every year."

If Helen had carefully counted up the cost of living for the three years, adding to this the twelve hundred dollars paid for the cottage, and nearly as much more expended in improvements and additions, she would have been appalled at the result ; for this startling fact would have been revealed : Against an income of six hundred dollars for the first year, eight hundred for the second, and one thousand for the third,—twenty-four hundred dollars in all,—stood an expenditure of forty-three hundred dollars ; showing a called for deficit of two thousand dollars !

And yet, Hiram Foster owed no man, in a legal and acknowledged form, any thing ; but, on the contrary, held stock certificates in a sound banking institution, located three hundred miles away, to the value of fifteen hundred dollars. But of this property his wife knew nothing. That was his own secret.

"Hiram !" The young man had locked the fire-proof and put on his coat. It was after sundown, and the front windows of the store were shut. Mr. Overman had seemed dull and distant all day, and was now sitting in the back part of the store, not seeming to notice the usual preparations for going home. His utterance of Hiram's name gave the young man a start. It did not take much now to give him a start. The evil are always in fear. "The wicked flee when no man pursueth."

"Sir." His back was towards Mr. Overman, but he turned only in part around.

"I have a word or two I wish to say, Hiram ; it's been on my mind for some days." Mr. Overman's voice was very serious. The heart of Hiram Foster leaped with alarm. Poor heart ! It had become habitually afraid. It was no longer a brave, calm heart, beating on in conscious innocence. No—no. Alas, poor heart ! The rustle of a garment ; a sudden step behind ; an unusual tone of voice, or look, from Mr. Overman—these, and a hun-

dred other insignificant things, had power to send through it a pulse of terror.

"Sit down—there." Hiram had not ventured to speak in response, but stood in silence, and with his face a little turned away. He took a chair, and drew it towards Mr. Overman. The imminent peril that seemed impending, gave him power to control his exterior.

"Hiram, I'm afraid you're living a little too free for your income. It has been on my mind to say this for some time." The young man could not keep the blood back from his face. It rushed there, crimsoning it to the brows.

"I see you've been putting an addition to your house; now this has cost at least three hundred dollars. You'll get in debt, if you have not already involved yourself, as surely as the sun shines."

"We live very frugally," answered Hiram, his voice so hoarse and unnatural that the words almost choked him. "And you know my salary is a thousand dollars."

"And that brings me to another thing I must say," remarked Mr. Overman. "Something is wrong in the business, I'm afraid. Some miscalculation or some leak. Things are not working out in the old way. My payments crowd me more closely than in former times. I have to borrow, frequently, from day to day, and this worries me."

Mr. Overman's eyes were fixed steadily on Hiram's face; their expression was severe, and Hiram saw doubt, if not suspicion, in them.

"I'm sorry to hear you say this, Mr. Overman. I thought every thing going on prosperously." The clerk's answer was not well considered. He felt that he ought to say something, and uttered what first came to his lips.

"You must have been blind, then," said Mr. Overman, with some impatience of manner. "Things are not going on prosperously. I'm losing instead of making money. There's a leak somewhere, and it must be found."

"I can't imagine where there can be a leak," replied Hiram, "unless it is in pricing the goods. You've been cutting down the profits, you know."

"And largely increasing the sales," said Mr. Overman. "No, it's not there."

"Our stock of goods is heavier than usual." Mr. Overman shook his head. "No; it doesn't lie there."

"If there's a leak it should be found," said the young man, emphatically. His first tremors were passing away, and he was gaining steadiness of tone, and confidence of manner; "and I'll do all in my power to reach the cause of evil."

How closely duplicity and lying follow upon the steps of crime! They are its natural offspring. A man may not enter the ways of evil without the companionship of lies.

"The leak must be found!" Mr. Overman's manner was imperative. "For more than a year I've had a troubled impression that something was going wrong. It has haunted me day and night. And now, in

looking my affairs in the face, doubt is no longer admissible."

"I'm sorry." There was an affectation of sympathy in Hiram's voice. "Very sorry, sir; and if there's any thing I can do in the matter, you know that only your word is required. Just say in what direction you would have me work, and I'll neither rest night nor day until a result is reached."

"One thing is clear," answered Mr. Overman. "Expenses will have to be reduced. And, to begin, Hiram, your salary must be cut down. I shall not complain if you seek for and find a better situation—indeed, it would give me pleasure, instead of regret, to see you in the service of another person, if with decided advantage to yourself. You have a wife and two children, and must look to them. But as things are, six hundred dollars is all the salary I can afford to pay. I'm sorry, but cannot help myself."

"I shall not leave you, Mr. Overman." There was so much feeling in the young man's voice, that his kind hearted employer was

deceived, and the vague suspicion which had crept into his mind, cast out. "You have been so generous, that I would despise myself if I turned meanly away and thought only of my own affairs when things seemed going wrong with you. I can live on six hundred dollars a year, thanks to the prudence and economy of my wife; or, on five, if necessary. So do not let this trouble you, Mr. Overman. In every possible way I will help you in the work of reducing expenses, and in finding out the leak, if any exists."

"You meet me in the right spirit, Hiram. It is what I should have expected," said Mr. Overman. But there was a dead level in his voice that failed to give assurance to the young man's heart. "You can go home now. I will ponder these matters to-night, and come to some conclusions by to-morrow."

CHAPTER VI.

"Isn't she sweet, Hiram?" said Mrs. Foster, as she held her youngest born, a baby in its fifth month, up for a kiss.

"Sweet as a rose," he answered, touching his lips lightly to the baby's lips, but in so cold a way that the mother's feelings rebelled against such strange indifference. The father's eye, though resting on the cherub face of his little one, did not feel any impression of its beauty. There was a barrier of sin around his heart, which, for the time, kept back the spell of innocence. His thoughts were with his troubled feelings, away from home and its cherished ones. Though present with them as to the body, he was yet afar off in spirit.

"You're not well, Hiram," said the young wife and mother, awaking from the happy dream in which she had been passing the

hours with her two darlings. The coming home, at evening twilight, of her husband, had been like the opening of a door through which a cold blast pressed in upon the warm air of a cheerful room. There was a chilling atmosphere around him. He had come in from the outside world, and a shudder was felt at his entrance. Often, before, had Mrs. Foster experienced this shock, or jar, or repulsion, whatever it might be called, on her husband's appearance, but never to the degree now felt.

"I've been troubled with a headache all day." That is not true, Hiram Foster. Your head never was freer from pain.

"Oh, I'm sorry!" And Helen pressed her hand upon his forehead, and looked at him with a tender concern in her eyes. But he could not bear to have her read his face, and so turned it away. She did not hold the baby for him to kiss again; nor did Flora, his two year old darling, after being pushed, with a strange absent mindedness, aside when she attempted to get upon his lap, ven-

ture near him again. He sat in silence and a stern abstraction of mind, that his wife knew had some other cause than a simple headache, until tea was announced.

"Can't you eat any thing, Hiram?" Mrs. Foster saw that he was only sipping at his tea. He lifted his eyes from his cup, and looked across the table at his wife. Only for a few moments did he hold her gaze, and then let his own fall away. There were questionings in her eyes that his tell-tale face might answer in a way, the bare imagination of which caused him to shudder.

"I am better without food," he answered. "The tea is all I want, and may relieve the pain in my head." Back to the refuge of lies again! Unhappy transgressor; the way in which you have chosen to walk is a hard one, and you will find the difficulties steadily increasing as you press onward.

"Not going out, Hiram!" It was an hour after supper time. The young man had been lying on a sofa, with shut eyes, pretending indisposition, in order to hide the trembling

anxiety and fear that were in his heart. Now, rising up, as if a sudden purpose had moved him, he went into the passage, and was reaching for his hat.

"Yes, for a little while," he answered back, and was away before his wife could follow him with words of remonstrance.

Night had fallen, dark and starless, and the chill November air struck coldly against his face. After leaving the house, Mr. Foster walked rapidly towards that part of the town in which the store of Mr. Overman was located. Turning a corner, that brought him in view of the store, he saw a light gleaming through two crescent-shaped openings in one of the shutters, that which closed against the window at the back part of the store, where the desks and fire-proof were located. He stood still, instantly, striking his hands together. Fear caused his knees to shake. It was even as had been a little while before suggested to his mind. Mr. Overman's suspicions were going in the right direction, and he was at the store examining the books, to

see if the leak he had spoken of could be found in that direction. There were not less than fifty false entries in the cash-book. Was it possible for him to escape, should Mr. Overman's eyes, sharpened by suspicion, go over that account? The wretched young man felt as if suspended by a hair over some awful chasm.

For several minutes he stood, with those sharply outlined crescents of light holding his gaze by a kind of fascination. Then he commenced moving towards them, as if they possessed a weird power of attraction, until he stood on the narrow pavement, bordering an alley but little frequented, that ran down beside the building, and close against the window. His steps were noiseless as the steps of a cat. He held his laboring breath, and hearkened eagerly. But no sound came from within. After listening for some time, he was about moving away, when his ear caught the well known rattle of paper, that often accompanies the turning of leaves in a blank-book. It sent a thrill along every

nerve; for in that sound was a confirmation of every worst fear.

"God help me!" It was a silent, despairing ejaculation; not a prayer sent up from a low deep of misery, bearing hope, were it never so feeble, in its bosom.

"Lost! Lost!" He moved back, noiselessly, out into the darkness, holding both hands tightly against his breast. To his home, and the tender, innocent, beloved ones there, his thoughts went, and he saw that home all desolated; his wife heart-broken, and his babes disgraced. For some moments the idea of flight held his mind. But no—no!—it was thrust aside. He could not abandon all, while there was a shadow of hope. His false entries were dexterously made, and might elude the vigilance of his employer, who was not by any means an adept at figures. Even if a few errors were discovered, he might be able so to confuse Mr. Overman's mind by corrections and explanations, as to make all appear fair.

These suggestions gave partial and moment-

ary relief to his distressed feelings. There was in them a feeble gleam of light. All was not yet lost.

For ten or fifteen minutes Hiram Foster, chilled by the damp, cold air, lingered in sight of the burning crescents, their sharp outline imprinted on every object to which he turned his gaze.

"I *must* know what he is doing!" he said, at last. "I cannot go back with this horrible uncertainty eating into my heart. If I only could find a ladder."

He crossed over to the rear of the store, and looked along the pavement for several rods down the dark alley. A small packing-box stood against a door. He drew it out, and stepped upon the side. But it was not high enough. He went further down the alley, and found a rickety half-barrel, with the head and chime hoops of one end gone. Nothing else, at all suited to his purpose, was to be seen. By placing the half-barrel on the box, and mounting thereon, he might get high enough to look through the crescent

openings in the shutters, and see what Mr. Overman was doing. To think, in the excited state of his mind, was to act. The box was conveyed, in silence, to the window, and then the half-barrel brought and placed on top of it, with the shattered, defective end downwards.

Hiram was in too nervous a state to do any thing carefully or coolly. He struck the barrel against the box in lifting it, making noise enough to be heard inside by any one not greatly absorbed in thought. Aware of this, he moved away, and stood aside from the window for nearly a minute, so as to be out of Mr. Overman's range of vision, should he happen to push open the shutter. But all things remaining as before, he ventured back, and stepping upon the box, mounted to the top of the half-barrel, which yielded sensibly under his weight. His head was now even with the two narrow perforations in the shutter, and as he looked down through them, he saw Mr. Overman standing at one of the desks, and bending over an account-book.

He was so deeply absorbed in what he was doing, that he seemed almost moveless. But, all at once, he turned towards the window, with a quick movement, and looked up towards the crescent opening through which Hiram Foster was gazing down upon him. The young man saw his face for a moment,—it was pale, anxious, but stern,—saw it only for a moment. He drew back quickly, with an instinct of fear, as Mr. Overman's eyes were thrown upwards. The movement disturbed the nicely-poised support on which he stood. Over went the barrel, and over went the man, with a loud crash and rattle, upon the pavement. In the fall, Hiram struck his head against one of the curb-stones, inflicting a severe wound near the temple, and above the right eye. For a moment or two he was stunned by the shock; but the peril of his situation restored him to full consciousness, and instantly springing to his feet, he glided away from the window, just as it was thrown open by Mr. Overman, and the strong light came out, filling a large circle with its rays.

Hiram did not wait to see what next might be done, but let winged feet bear him away into the heavy darkness.

"Hey! Who goes there? Stop! Stop!"

It was the voice of a night policeman, whose ears had caught the sound made by the falling barrel, and who had seen the light which came suddenly from the window thrown open by Mr. Overman. Hiram, in his flight, passed within a few yards of him. Did he stop at this summons? No! But sprung away at a speed defying pursuit.

A countenance turned instantly white with terror met Hiram on his entrance at home: and no wonder, for one side of his face and neck was red with blood, flowing freely from the wound near his temple. Mrs. Foster's colorless lips moved impotently, and she sat paralyzed for some moments.

"Oh, husband! What is it? What has happened?" came at length, in a fluttering and choking voice, as she started to her feet.

"Don't be frightened. It's nothing. Get me some water, Helen. I struck my head

against a projecting sign. Does it bleed much?" The voice of Hiram shook as if he had a chill; and there was a strangeness in his tones that troubled the ears of his wife.

Mrs. Foster brought hurriedly a basin of water, and washing away the blood, came to an ugly, ragged cut, about an inch long, just above the right eye, towards the temple. The blood still flowed freely. Nearly ten minutes elapsed before it could be staunch.

"This doesn't help my poor head any," said Hiram, remembering that he had complained of headache at tea time. "The pain blinded me so that I could hardly see my way in the dark. I think I'll go to bed now. Perhaps I can get to sleep."

And he arose, and was at the foot of the stairs leading up to their bed-room, when some one rung the bell loudly.

"Say that I have a sick headache, and am in bed, Helen, if any one asks for me. Don't intimate that I have just gone up. *Say that I am in bed.*"

Hiram Foster grasped the arm of his wife

in a nervous way, and looked so wildly in her face, that a vague fear crept like a cold shadow upon her heart. What could all this mean?

"Don't forget!" There were warning, anxiety, fear, and command in the strange expression that gleamed on his excited face, as he said this, and then went hastily up stairs.

At the top he lingered for a few moments in a listening attitude. The door was opened. He heard his name.

"Is Hiram at home?" The voice was that of Mr. Overman! A faintness came upon him. He grasped the hand-railing by which he stood, and was conscious of a brain-whirl and a moment of suspended thought. Then, with silent feet he crossed the passage, and entering his chamber hurriedly got into bed.

CHAPTER VII.

It seemed an age to Hiram—the period that elapsed before Mr. Overman went away. He heard the intermitted and intermingling sounds of voices below, but no articulate words reached his ears. When at last the jar of a closing door gave notice that the visitor had retired, and his wife came up to the chamber, he was lying in a nervous chill.

"What did he want?" By a strong effort, Hiram not only steadied his voice, but repressed the tremor that jarred along every nerve and muscle.

"I don't know. He merely asked to see you," replied Mrs. Foster.

"What did you say?"

"I told him that you came home at tea-time with a bad headache,—and were in bed."

"You didn't say that I had just gone up?"

"No."

There came from Hiram's breast a long, full respiration of relief.

"It was as well, perhaps. I wonder what he could have wanted?" His mind had found relief from a pressure of uncertain dread.

"I don't know, dear. Mr. Overman looked disturbed about something."

"He hasn't seemed like himself for some time past," said Hiram. "Business is dull, and I think that worries him. Did he seem much disappointed at not seeing me?"

"It did not strike me that he was disappointed. If I understood the meaning of his face, it expressed something like relief, or pleasure, when I told him that you were in bed. But he had a look about him different from any thing I had ever seen before. 'I wished to ask him a question to-night, but it will do as well in the morning,' he said, as he went away."

"How does the cut in my forehead look?" asked Hiram.

"Bad," was Helen's answer.

"Will my hair cover it? See!"

"Only in part," said Mrs. Foster, as she drew the hair down towards the wound.

"Let me see." And the young man crept out from under the bed-clothes among which he had thrown himself without removing his garments, and going to a toilet-glass, held the light to his face and examined the ugly red scar near the temple.

"How will that look?" He had drawn a lock of his hair down so low that the wound was hidden.

Mrs. Foster shook her head in a dissatisfied way.

"Let the cut be seen," she said. "What harm can arise?"

"No harm. But who likes to be disfigured in this way? People might think I'd been drunk, or in a fight."

"If people choose to think evil, let them."

To be right and to do right should be our chief concern."

There was a searching, questioning look in the eyes of Mrs. Foster, from which Hiram turned away, murmuring,

"My poor head! How it does ache!"

And removing his clothes, while he kept his face so much in shadow that its expression could not be seen by his wife, he laid himself down, shutting his eyes, and turning to the wall.

Did the question of loss and gain come into the thought of Hiram Foster, as he lay in such anxious fear all night that sleep visited him only at long intervals, and then fled quickly before affrighting dreams? Did a picture of how it might have been, if he had kept his honor unsullied, stand out in all its tranquil beauty, contrasted with the dread actuality in which he was shuddering like a criminal at bay? He had a true-hearted, tender, loving wife, and two as sweet babes as a father's heart could desire. His income was large enough to meet every want that happiness re-

quired,—had been large enough from the day of his marriage. Not a single thing bought by dishonest gains had given him any true pleasure;—always his enjoyment was marred by an intruding concern. There was a great form of evil ever threatening him, and ever throwing a shadow from uplifted hands over life's sunniest landscapes. Emotions of pride, as he contrasted his handsome house and grounds with those of men quite as well off, honestly, as he was, would now and then ripple over his heart; but they soon fell back again under the pressure of superincumbent anxiety. A gratified love of possessing this world's goods, was the only thing like a compensating balance to all the loss he was sustaining—but how poor and insignificant was this to the riches of enjoyment he was madly casting aside!

Did the question of loss and gain come fairly into his mind? Yes; but it was pushed, with a feeling of bitterness, away. He felt that it was too late. The haunting spirit of evil, which had been his dread companion

ever since that fatal evening when his feet went out from right paths, seemed to throw its arms close around him, and to shadow into confusion and obscurity his thoughts; so that all right conclusions and purposes were dispersed like unsubstantial vapor.

Morning found him exhausted, but in a heavy sleep. Nature had asserted her power over the senses. Mrs. Foster, as the light came in, and gave distinct outline to every feature of his face, saw, with painful concern, its pinched look and pallid hue. In staunching the flow of blood from the wound in his forehead, she had covered it with a strip of adhesive plaster. From the edges of this, blood had oozed out; and there were blue and purple discolorations extending down towards the right eye, the veins around which were visibly congested. On his pale lips, shut closer than is usual in sleep, sat an expression of trouble, that startled a slumbering sigh in her bosom, and brought blinding tears to her eyes.

Without disturbing her husband, Mrs.

Foster went down stairs. A little while before breakfast was ready to be served, she returned to the chamber, and found him still sleeping. While standing close over him, and debating in her mind whether to arouse him or not, he sprung up with an exclamation of alarm, and a look of terror in his face. Mrs. Foster had never seen so wild and frightened an expression on any countenance.

"Oh, Hiram!" she ejaculated, drawing her arms around his neck. But he tried to escape; pushing her away, and shrinking towards the wall. The brief struggle brought him fairly awake.

"Oh, Helen! It's you! What a dream I have had!" He was shivering like one in an ague fit. Covering his face with the bed-clothes, he lay still for a little while, trying to compose himself, and put on a serene countenance.

"What time is it, Helen?" He pushed aside the bed-clothes, and looked out. His face was calm.

"Past seven," she answered.

"So late! Why did you let me sleep?" And he arose up quickly.

It was after eight o'clock, an hour beyond his usual time, when Hiram Foster reached the store of Mr. Overman. Nearly a quarter of an hour had been spent in trying so to arrange his hair as to conceal the wound on his forehead; but without a satisfactory result. His great desire to conceal this scar, coupled itself in the mind of his wife with the unusual visit of Mr. Overman on the night before, and his anxiety to give the impression that he had not been out since tea-time; and in doing so, cast a vague fear into her heart. That something was wrong with her husband, she felt sure; something that foreshadowed evil and involved disaster.

"What's the matter?" Mr. Overman confronted Hiram as he entered the store, and with knit brows, and a look of searching inquiry, put this question.

"I came near knocking my head off last night," answered the young man, coolly, and

with a forced smile. "See!" And he pushed up the hair that partly covered the dressing which lay over the cut he had received in falling.

"How did that happen?" There was not a relaxed muscle on Mr. Overman's face.

"I returned home with a severe headache last evening. After supper, it grew worse, almost blinding me with pain. I went into the cellar, foolishly enough, without a light, and got this knock on the head. I was so stunned for a little while, that I lost my senses. You came to see me, Helen said. Was it for any thing very particular? I'm sorry that I was in bed; Helen might have called me."

"It was of no consequence," Mr. Overman replied, in a tone that showed his mind to be in a state of doubt and dissatisfaction.

"Have you reached any solution of the matter about which we talked yesterday?" Now, of all things, Hiram wished that subject postponed for the present; but he brought it into the light, desperately, in

order to give Mr. Overman the impression of perfect innocence on his part—an innocence that courted investigation, knowing that it had nothing to fear from the fullest exposure of truth.

“A partial solution,” was answered coldly, and with eyes fixed so steadily on the young man, that the gaze could hardly be borne. Hiram was conscious of tell-tale looks, and tell-tale color on his cheeks. Not feeling it safe to tread further on such dangerous ground, he passed Mr. Overman, and went to the back part of the store, where his work with the account books chiefly lay. The fire-proof had not been opened. He took the key from a drawer in the desk, where it was lying with the door keys, and unlocking it, brought out his books, and commenced posting from the journal. While thus engaged, he had occasion to refer to the cash-book. While doing so, he noticed a slight pencil mark near a figure that represented a false entry. His heart stood still instantly, and he felt a nearer approach of the shadowy form

of evil that haunted him night and day. Closing the book, and pushing it aside, lest Mr. Overman should observe him,—how wary and suspicious is guilt!—how constantly on the alert!—how full of human prudence!—Hiram bent over his ledger, affecting employment, while he debated what was best to be done.

The false figure had been made two days before, and in virtue thereof, sixty dollars appropriated by the young man. Now, if Mr. Overman had detected the error, and then counted the cash in the money-box, which was a thing to be inferred, he must be in possession of the fact that sixty dollars were “short.”

Hiram's first conclusion was to restore that sum to the money-box at once. He had the sixty dollars still in his pocket. But, then came the thought, that Mr. Overman had marked the figure purposely, and was, of course, on the alert. He knew just what was in the cash-box—not over forty dollars—and to add sixty thereto, would be to insure cer-

tain exposure, should the false entry be referred to that morning, and a counting of the cash take place.

"Better wait," said he to himself. "If money comes in freely, I'll add sixty dollars to the bank deposit."

"How was your cash yesterday?" asked Mr. Overman, about an hour after Hiram came in. The young man anticipating just this question, had considered more than a dozen different answers, not one of which seemed safe or prudent to make, and he was quite as unprepared when it came as in the beginning.

"Right, I believe, sir." An answer had to be made, and this was ventured, blindly. He spoke in a tone of confidence.

"Let me see the cash-book." There was an unusual quality in Mr. Overman's voice.

Hiram took the cash-book from a rack over the desk, and opening it, passed a piece of India rubber, quickly but firmly, over two or three pages, along the columns of figures, saying as he did so—

"I forgot to rub out the figures made in pencilling a balance."

That simple act saved him. Mr. Overman could not find the entry he had marked with a pencil. After running his eye a few times, up and down the rows of figures, he shut the book, and went out into the store to attend upon a customer who had just come in.

CHAPTER VIII.

"How is the cash?" asked Mr. Overman, as he saw his clerk, sitting with an appearance of perplexity—how well it was feigned,—over the cash-book, after the accounts of the day had been made up.

"It doesn't come out exactly right," answered Hiram.

"Short?"

"No, sir."

"Over?"

"Yes, sir."

"How much?"

"Let me run up the columns again," said the young man. And, in mere pretence, he bent down over the book. Then the cash was counted in the presence of Mr. Overman, and the balance in bank added thereto.

"The excess is just sixty dollars." Hiram spoke with well-assumed unconcern.

"Let me see the cash-book." And Mr. Overman looked over the entries a few days back, coming down page by page. But he could not find the erroneous entry he had discovered on the night before.

"I must find this mistake," said Hiram, as he drew the book again before him. "Let me try the footings once more." In this trial, he went back page by page, until he came to that on which the false entry was made. "Is this figure intended for a six or a naught?" he spoke as if to himself. "It should be a six. Ah, here it is, now! I called it naught in the addition of the column. Look, Mr. Overman. The figure is carefully made, but it stands for six."

"Yes, I see." But the tone did not express full satisfaction. The cash had been pronounced right on the day before. He did not remark on this fact, however, but accepted the adjustment as right.

From this time, for many months, Hiram Foster kept back his evil hands from speculation. In the discharge of his duties to Mr.

Overman, he was more than ever attentive, seeming to have no thought or care but for his employer's interest. Early and late, he was at the store, and ever prompt and efficient in the transaction of business. So much pleased was Mr. Overman, that, from kindness of feeling, as well as from a sense of justice, he kept the clerk's salary at one thousand dollars, instead of reducing it to six hundred. During these months of honest dealing with his employer, Hiram was in a more peaceful state of mind than he had known from the day he stepped aside from the ways of integrity. Fears haunted him, however, all the while,—if not so impending as they had been, still, with an unquiet sense of danger.

But, there was no integrity in his heart. That principle of right, in which lies a man's true honor and safety, had been crushed out. Only fear of consequences restrained him, and as that fear diminished, the old eagerness to possess himself of what belonged of right to another, grew stronger and stronger. Scarcely had six months elapsed before he was at his

work of abstraction again; now, however, he proceeded with the extremest caution. Instead of letting a false entry represent every instance of robbery, he appropriated money from sales made in the store at times when Mr. Overman was absent, so that no examination of the account-books could lead to detection. But, as this method of accumulation was slower than suited his eager desires, a system of false entries was also pursued, every one of them laying upon his guilty mind an additional weight of concern. They were the tracks left behind him as guides to pursuit; and he felt this all the while as a keen sense of danger; a danger more dreaded day by day, as the two home-flowers,—Flora and Helen,—opened daily with increasing fragrance and beauty, in the sunshine of their mother's love. And yet, for all this, he seemed under a kind of possession from evil spirits; a possession that was like an irresistible power, driving him onwards in an evil way he had entered in an evil hour.

Hiram Foster loved his two little ones very

tenderly. Naturally, he had a fondness for children, and this, when it stirred the father's heart, became a strong impulse. But always, as he held them in his arms, or watched them in their innocent gambols, a sense of o'ershadowing evil would creep into his heart, and extinguish all delight. A thought of exposure and disgrace for them never came without a shudder.

And so the months and years went on, Hiram retaining his place with Mr. Overman, and steadily pursuing his system of abstraction, with a blind and evil infatuation that, under the haunting fears which were his daily companions, made life a hell upon earth. Among men, he wore a fair and pleasant face; but a face that seemed to grow old rapidly, and to lose the signification of earlier years. To his wife he became more and more enigmatical. The frank, cheerful, loving husband of their early married life, changed to a reserved, abstracted, cold, and, at times, irritable man. To her, it was plain that some great trouble lay upon his mind; but whenever she sought

to penetrate the mystery, he pushed her back in such a resolute, and sometimes impatient way, that, in self-protection, she had learned to keep silent. This was ground upon which she must not tread. Here he stood alone, and would admit of no companionship.

Mrs. Foster was a woman of pure religious feelings, a member of her father's church, and a communicant. Her husband always accompanied her on the Sabbath, and showed respect and reverence for the things of worship. He was, to all appearance, an attentive listener to the sermons of Mr. Prescott, which were frequently so keenly searching, that, if he really followed the thread of the good minister's discourses, he must have recognized pictures of himself and shrunk from their deformity. But, for the most part, his thoughts were occupied with other things than doctrinals, or life-precepts. Attention was only an assumed exterior, and the minister's voice but an idle sound in his ears.

Being a pew-holder, Hiram, after a few years, was chosen a secular officer of the

church. He accepted the mark of confidence and respect as an assurance that, so far, no breath of suspicion had tarnished his good name. But, the distinction was only felt as a new weight of concern; for, if the ever dreaded exposure of his mean peculations should come—and that presentiment was an abiding thing in his mind—the disgrace would be so much the deeper.

Mrs. Foster understood but too well that in her husband's mind was no religious sentiment. She was glad always to have him attend church with her, and his election to an office in the church gave her hope that, in the associations it would bring, some higher interests would be awakened. But she perceived no change in the man, though he began to talk more about the church, and entered with some spirit into whatever concerned its outward well-being. Always he gave liberally.

Ten years after Hiram Foster's marriage, Mr. Overman failed in business; and, in the settlement of his affairs, was able to pay only

seventy cents on the dollar, under an extension of two years. The failure threw Hiram out of employment; Mr. Overman being required to reduce expenses to the smallest possible sum in the arrangement with creditors by which he was permitted to continue business. A son, eighteen years of age, was brought home from school, to take Hiram's place in the store.

The amount which had been abstracted, up to this time, reached the large sum of fifteen thousand dollars, all of which was securely invested, at distant points, and in sums not exceeding one or two thousand dollars. Hiram had been very wary. Of all things, he dreaded discovery; and to guard against such a fatal disaster, managed his investments with the utmost caution.

CHAPTER IX.

FRANK OVERMAN, who succeeded Hiram Foster, was a clear-headed, intelligent young man. With a view to going into his father's store, he had taken a thorough course of book-keeping. From some cause, an early dislike to Foster had been infused into his mind; a dislike which was never concealed. Hiram, more than once, tried to overcome this, but the boy kept always at a reserved distance. Now that he was to take his place, he sought to get near and familiar; but Frank still repelled him coldly. Foster proposed to give a few weeks of his time to the work of closing the old books and opening a new set, and Mr. Overman favored this, as it would make his son's duties simpler and easier in the beginning. But Frank objected, and maintained his point against all arguments.

"I would rather take the work as it is now, and make myself familiar with the business," he said. "I shall go back with most of the accounts, and trace them up, in order to get the run of things. There's no use in going to the expense of a new set of books; and whenever they are needed, I wish to open them."

"Have it your own way, then," replied Mr. Overman. "Perhaps you are right, after all. You're not afraid of work, I see; and that is a good sign."

There was, for the ears of Foster, a meaning in the young man's voice, when he spoke of going back through most of the accounts, that caused him no little uneasiness of mind. If he had been permitted to open a new set of books, the old ones, in which were the footprints of his crime, would have been laid aside, and a guarantee of safety thus secured. But, to have these come, daily, under the scrutinizing eyes of Frank Overman, was to put every thing in jeopardy. So imminent seemed the danger, as thought dwelt upon it,

and his imagination grew excited with possible contingencies, that he found no peace day nor night. Having no employment, there was time for an idle mind to cut, like a sword, into its scabbard; and before six weeks had elapsed, he was in a state of such nervous apprehension, that sleep almost fled his pillow.

Every few days he would drop in at the store, and note the appearance of things. Frank was always at the books; and in answer to any questions he might propound, gave cold and evasive answers, in which he saw foreshadowings of evil.

"Have you found any mistakes in my work?" he ventured to ask one day. He tried to speak in a tone of indifference.

"Yes." Frank gave only a monosyllable in answer, but the look which accompanied it sent a thrill along his nerves. He was conscious that a betrayal of guilt was in his face, and let his eyes fall to hide their expression from the young man's apparently intent observation of his countenance.

"Let me see them," said Foster.

"I'm too busy now," replied Frank, and turned back to the work from which the question of Foster had withdrawn him.

"Are you sick, Hiram? What's the matter? You're very pale!" Mrs. Foster looked at her husband in alarm, as he came in a little while after this visit to the store.

"One of my bad headaches," he replied; "that's all," and passing her, he went upstairs and threw himself, in the exhaustion of haunting fears, upon his bed. He remained there pretending to be asleep whenever his wife came in, until dark. At tea-time he joined his family, and endeavored to look unconcerned. His two children hung about him with loving caresses, and but for that dreadful secret, the shadow of which was ever on his life, there would not have been a happier man in all the region round about. For a wife, he had one of the truest and tenderest of women; and no home-nest had in it sweeter or more loving children. But, all the while he felt that a cruel hawk

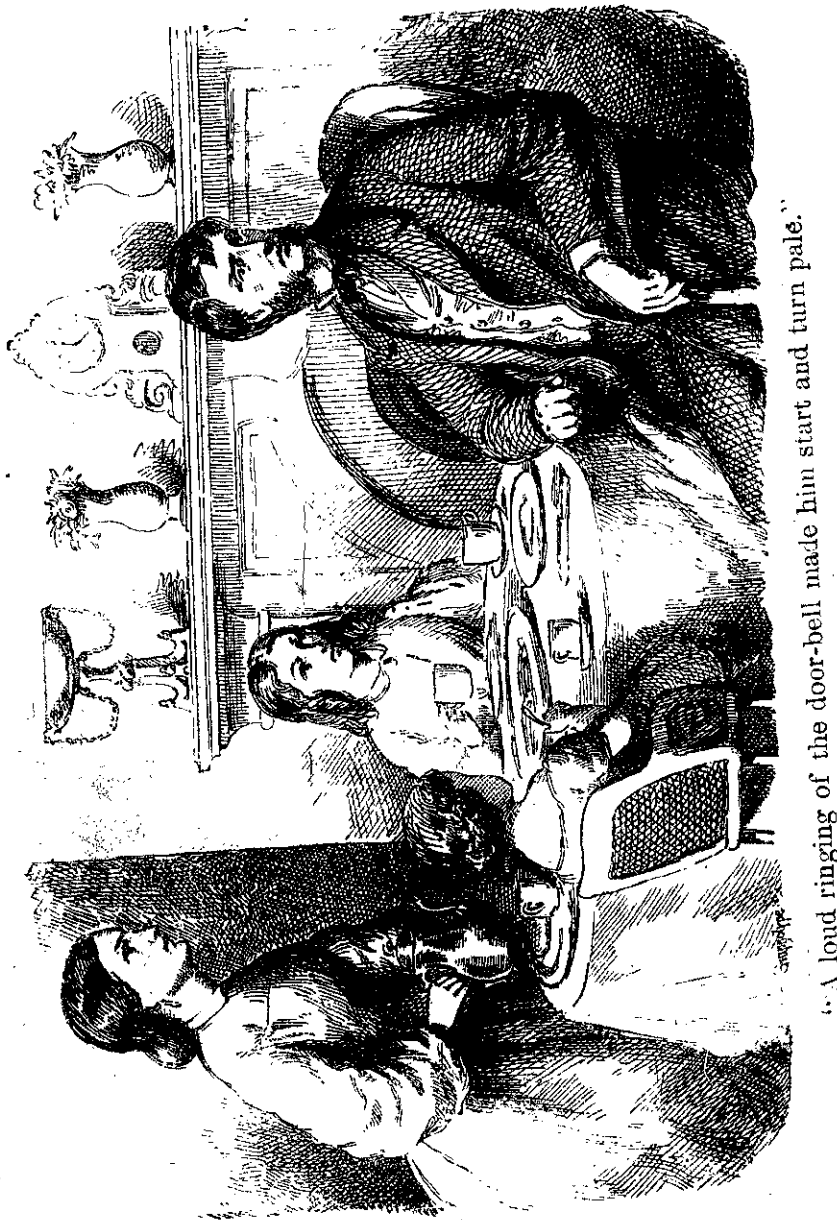
was in the air above his nest, ready at any moment to strike his beloved ones with his fearful talons. More than ever did this fear oppress him now.

Would there have been a home comfortless, or a future of darker promise, had Hiram Foster been content to take the world honestly, and trust in God for weal or woe? Let us see. Mr. Overman had a warm side toward his clerk, and if things had prospered, would have taken him into copartnership. But the exhaustion of his means, through this clerk's robberies, caused him to abandon this long-cherished purpose, and finally to dispense with his services altogether. As a partner, acting in concert with Mr. Overman, and yet with the leading force of a principal, he would have given an efficient life to the business in certain neglected directions, which could not have failed to increase its profits very materially. Thus, he would not only have received, in all the passing years, a good income, but laid stone after stone, in these passing years, the solid foun-

dations of an honorable prosperity—a prosperity that should be a blessing and not a curse.

Alas! how different was all now. He had acquired property; but the tenure by which he held it was of such a doubtful character that his mind did not rest a moment in security. It was felt, all the while, as a mill-stone about his neck, to sink him into the gulf of perdition should his feet be driven from the solid ground. Through all the days, an oppressive concern weighed upon his mind; through all the nights, haunting fears tormented him. Busy thought was ever suggesting danger from this point, or danger from that. In men's faces, tones, eyes, he read suspicion or warning. Remarks, born from no thought of him, would startle him with alarms. He was always on the alert. There was, for him, neither rest nor peace!

As he sat at tea with his wife and children on that evening, a loud ringing of the door-bell made him start and turn pale. Trifles agitated him now. Mrs. Foster saw the ef-



"A loud ringing of the door-bell made him start and turn pale."

fect on her husband, and a vague fear came over her like a cloud.

"Who is it?" There was a husky sound in the voice of Hiram Foster.

"Mr. Frank Overman," replied the servant.

Foster pushed back his chair, and arose with a suddenness that startled his wife. She saw blank terror in his face.

"He's gone," said the servant.

"Gone! What did he want?" Foster sat down and leaned on the table like one suffering from exhaustion. He was aware that his appearance was betraying far more than he wished to be seen, and he made an effort to put on a composed exterior.

"He said that his father would like to see you this evening."

"Very well." And Foster turned his face as much away from the light as possible.

It was now over a week since the unhappy man had slept beyond an hour or two at a time. For the last two nights, his mind had not once lost its waking consciousness. He

was, therefore, nervous and exhausted, and subject to disturbance from little things. Aware of a growing inability to assume a composed exterior, he felt that his danger was increasing; for if called to answer, on any suspicion of wrong, it would be impossible to hold back his countenance from a betrayal of guilt.

After tea he went out; not so much with the purpose of going directly to Mr. Overman's as to get alone in order to think. But thinking had become a most unsatisfactory process. Anxious fears were so oppressive that thought ran swiftly to inevitable consequences, instead of giving hope, encouragement, or means of escape. The more he thought, the more his mind fell into bewilderment.

For half an hour Mr. Foster walked the street, and then, with a desperate compulsion of himself, went to the residence of Mr. Overman. At the door he stood with the feeling of a man whose next step would be to certain ruin. He rung the bell, passed in, and

entered the parlor. Mr. Overman was there alone. The face of the kind-hearted old man, which the care and suffering consequent upon his recent failure had robbed of its cheerful aspect, was grave almost to severity.

"Hiram," he said, as he extended his hand to Foster, and then referred him to a seat, "I want to say a few words about a matter that has been on my mind, and troubling me."

"Well, sir."

The voice did not sound like that of Hiram Foster. It was strange in his own ears, and strange in the ears of Mr. Overman.

"I was told, a few weeks ago, that thirty shares of stock were standing in your name on the books of a certain bank in New York. Is that so?"

"No, sir." The answer was prompt, but false.

Mr. Overman looked steadily into his face. Hiram felt like a man over deep water, with the ice giving way under his feet. To say "yes," was to hazard all; in "no," there might be safety.

"No, sir." He repeated the denial. "Who said that I had bank shares?" Faintly rose indignation in his tones.

"A gentleman who is often in New York," said Mr. Overman. "One of my creditors."

"Mr. Osborne?"

"Yes."

"I will see him, and know by what authority he makes such a statement."

"Not yet, if you please," said Mr. Overman. "I will say to him that you deny the fact."

"If any stock is standing in the name of Hiram Foster, it does not mean me." The young man spoke in an assumed manner.

"I should hope not," remarked Mr. Overman.

Should hope not! His mind was not satisfied, and Hiram saw it with increasing concern.

"There is another thing," said Mr. Overman, after a brief, but embarrassed silence, "that I would like you to make clear. Since my troubles, it has been suggested to me by more than one person."

"Say on, I am ready to answer."

"Your salary has been only a thousand dollars."

"Yes, sir."

"People say that you have lived fully up to that sum annually, and yet you are the owner of property valued at not less than four or five thousand dollars."

"People know more of my affairs than I do myself," answered the young man with some asperity of tone. "It has never cost me over six hundred dollars a year to live, and what I saved annually, carefully invested, amounts to no more than fair and honest accumulations."

"I trust not, Hiram. It would pain me beyond any thing I have yet suffered, to find that you had wronged me in any thing."

"Wronged you! God forbid! I have never wronged you, Mr. Overman! Heaven is my witness that I have not been unfaithful in even the smallest thing."

Hiram Foster was visibly agitated, but spoke with an assured manner. Yet, in thus

calling upon Heaven to be witness of perjury, he felt as if the very blackness of darkness had gathered around him. No moon, no stars, were in his sky—only thick, impenetrable clouds. He shuddered as one upon whom a cold wind blows suddenly.

"I must accept your solemn denial." Mr. Overman did not speak like a man from whose mind all doubt was removed, and Hiram felt this. But what more could he say! There was no higher tribunal to which he could refer.

Poor, unhappy wretch! When Hiram Foster went out again into the still night of nature—bright as noonday compared to the night that enshrouded his soul—he felt that pitfalls were in his way, and that to go forward in safety was next to hopeless. He had three thousand dollars invested in the stock of a New York bank, and if Mr. Osborne was the man who had discovered it, there was no question in his mind that he would, on his next visit to the city, make sure of his identity in the case. Frank Over-

man was, he felt certain, under the stimulus of ill-will and suspicion, making a thorough examination of the books, and if he went over the work, entry by entry, discovery was inevitable!

CHAPTER X.

HIRAM FOSTER, after leaving the house of Mr. Overman, did not go directly home. He was in no state to meet his wife, and answer her inevitable questions. Without any purpose in his mind, he walked onward, until he found himself out upon the suburbs of the town, and in the neighborhood of a mill-pond. As the dark water revealed its surface, there came the thought of plunging in and thus escaping the dreaded evils that were as hounds upon his footsteps. One leap,—a moment of mortal agony,—and all would be at an end!

That dark presence, which had never been afar off during the past ten years, drew very nigh to him now; seemed to lay upon him its ghostly hands, and push him forward. Terror seized his soul,—reason wavered,—his enemy was bearing him down with a fearful malignity. In the last moment of this dread-

ful contest, how feeble the strife on his part! Just as he was going to spring out wildly into the black waters, he saw, as clearly as if the vision were a reality, the forms and faces of his children. Back, back, he moved from the tempting brink,—back, as they approached,—until he was twenty feet away. Then he stood still in darkness and alone. But the fiend's spell was broken, and he turned his feet homeward. A haggard face met his wife as she opened the door for him,—a haggard face, and restless, fearful eyes. He was panting like one pursued.

"Oh, husband! What ails you? What has happened?" she said, anxiously. He had locked the door, hurriedly, on closing it, and exhibited all the appearance of a man suffering from great alarm.

"Listen!" he said; and he stood still, hearkening.

"What is it, Hiram?" There was no sound without.

"A man chased me for three or four squares."

"Chased you!"

"Yes. As I came through that lonely place, on this side of Fleetwood's mill, I heard steps behind me, and on looking around, saw the dark figure of a man. I quickened my steps, and he did the same. Then I started forward, running, and he came after me at full speed. He was almost on me when I passed through the gate. Hark! I heard a noise."

His face was working painfully, and his eyes were full of terrors.

"I heard nothing, Hiram," said his wife.

"There it is again!" He turned towards the parlor, the door of which stood open.

"Are the shutters closed?"

"Yes; I closed them myself."

"There! Didn't you hear it again. He's trying a window."

Fear crept, chilly, into the heart of Mrs. Foster. Did her husband hear real sounds, or were his senses at fault? She stood still and listened.

"I hear nothing. Your mind is over-

excited. Come into the sitting-room." And Mrs. Foster drew her husband away from the hall in which they were standing. He sat down, though still with uneasy looks, and a listening air.

"That's some one walking around the house," he said, as a new fear came into his face. "There! Didn't you hear a man cough?"

But Mrs. Foster heard no sound.

"Does your head still ache?" she asked.

Foster laid a hand against his forehead, and sat like one trying to recollect something.

"Headache?" He spoke in an absent way, as if at fault.

"Yes; you complained of a bad sick headache at tea-time."

"Oh,—yes,—yes. Headache! No,—my head doesn't ache exactly; but it has a strange feeling."

"Strange, how?" asked his wife.

"I don't know. It feels, somehow, as if it wasn't a head," and he turned his neck from side to side two or three times.

Mrs. Foster now urged him to go to bed.

"What's the use of going to bed?" he answered. "I shall only lie awake. I never sleep any now."

"But what will you do, Hiram?" Tears began to fall over the distressed face of his wife, to whom the thought came, with a sudden chill, that he was losing his reason.

"Sit up and watch for him." A gleam, not of fear, swept over his countenance. "I'll get my revolver, and make sure work." He got up with a resolute air.

"Oh, Hiram! No,—no!" And Mrs. Foster caught the arm of her husband; but he shook her off, almost fiercely, and starting from the room, ran up stairs. She followed, like his shadow. The revolver, to which he referred, was kept in a locked drawer, the key of which he always carried. The key was in the lock when Mrs. Foster seized his arm; as she did so, it fell to the floor; she caught it up and concealed it.

"Why did you do that?" His wild face flushed with anger, and he grasped her arms

with a grip that left the marks of his fingers deep in her tender flesh.

With loving words and caresses Mrs. Foster tried to soothe her husband; but he only demanded the key.

"Give me that key!" said he. "There's a man after my life, and I must defend myself. Give me that key!"

"Who is the man?" asked Mrs. Foster, seeking to divert his mind. "Who's after your life?"

"I'll tell you," he answered; "but you mustn't breathe it to a soul."

His manner changed,—his grasp on his wife's arms relaxed,—he was as one about to impart a great secret.

"There, sit down, dear," and Mrs. Foster drew him towards a chair. "Now tell me; I'll keep it as secret as death."

Poor wife! How pale with fear and agony her face! What a new relation for her! What a night of terror had closed down, suddenly!

"I know the man who chased me. I'm sure of it," said Foster, confidentially.

"Well, dear! Who was it?"

He bent close, and whispered—

"Frank Overman!"

"No,—no, Hiram! That's impossible. Why should he want to injure you?"

"He hates me."

"O, no."

"Yes he does. He hates me, and wants to kill me! I know. It's his fault that I lost my place with his father. He's always hated me. I know him. He's a very devil. And now he's trying to kill me. It was he who waylaid me to-night, and he's watching round the house now."

Hiram Foster spoke with all the earnestness of a man thoroughly convinced of what he said.

"I'm sure you're wrong, Hiram," answered his wife; "so very sure that I'll go out all alone, and walk around the house to satisfy you that nobody is near us."

"O, dear, no,—no! Not for the world, Helen! Not for the world! He'd rush in the moment you opened the door and murder

us all. Let me have the key. I must get my revolver. We'll be all murdered."

He grew strongly excited again:

"I'll keep the key for the present," Mrs. Foster answered, firmly. "If anybody attempts to break in, you shall have the revolver in time for protection. But, you know, I'm afraid of pistols."

He quieted down at this, and after a great deal of persuasion, was induced to go to bed; but he would only take off his boots, coat, and vest. Mrs. Foster dimmed the light, and laid herself down beside him. In a little while he raised up, and sat listening.

"Don't you hear?" he said. "Somebody's at work on the outside door."

Mrs. Foster rose up in bed, and hearkened for some moments.

"It's nothing but your imagination, Hiram! Nothing in the world. Why will you torment yourself in this way? Lie down and go to sleep."

The wretched man fell back upon his pillow with a sighing groan.

"If harm comes to me, it will be all your fault, Helen," he said, half mournfully, half despairingly. "If I had my revolver, I could defend myself."

"You shall have it the moment I see danger," replied Mrs. Foster, in an assuring voice. "But there is none now, believe me, my dear husband. You are as safe this moment as you ever were in all your life. God is your protector from evil."

"God!" The voice in which this name was spoken sent a shiver to the heart of Mrs. Foster. The tone was not blasphemous; nor one of rejection; but it expressed utter hopelessness, as if he had said, "For me, there is no help in God!"

What a night followed! We will not linger in detail. It would fill pages. There was no sleep, no rest, no relief from haunting terrors. Not for so long a time as half an hour did Hiram Foster once lie in bed. Fear was all the while conjuring up new alarms, and taking on new shapes. Many things were darkly hinted, in half-incoherent mut-

terings, that started strange questionings in the mind of Mrs. Foster. There was fear of Mr. Overman, as well as fear of Frank; fear of some impending ruin, as well as personal fear.

"Thank God for daylight!" he said, as the dawn opened, at last.

A kind of mental stupor now came over him. Nature yielded to the night's exhaustion and sought restoration in apathy, if not sleep. Mrs. Foster's first act in the morning was to send for her father, to whom she related all that had occurred during the night. Mr. Prescott then went up to see Hiram, who had not yet arisen. He found him with wide open, brilliant, but restless and strange-looking eyes. Sitting down by the bedside, the minister took his hand and said,

"I'm sorry to find you indisposed, Hiram."

The young man looked at him a little fearfully, and seemed to shrink away; but did not answer.

"How are you now?" asked Mr. Prescott.

"Very well," he replied, a little heavily.

"All I want is sleep."

"You don't sleep well?"

"No, Sir. I haven't closed my eyes for three nights."

"Not for three nights, Hiram! How comes that?"

"I don't know. I get to thinking, and it keeps me awake." He was arousing from his stupor.

"What do you think about? What troubles you?"

"I'm not doing any thing, you know. What is to become of us?"

"Fear not, my son. He that gives food to the raven will not forget you and yours."

Hiram shook his head.

"Take no thought for the morrow; let the morrow take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof," said Mr. Prescott.

The unhappy young man shuddered at the comforting words. They brought no assurance to his mind. Ah! How intensely had

he taken thought for the morrow,—thought that cursed his to-days, and shrouded his to-morrows in doubt and fear. There was rebuke, not consolation in the words that come, daily, to so many hearts with peace and hope.

“Does any thing else trouble you?” asked Mr. Prescott.

“What else *should* trouble me?” Foster’s tone was rather sharp, and he looked suspiciously at his father-in-law.

“I merely ask,” said the old man, as he searched the face of Hiram.

“But, why do you ask?”

“The loss of a situation doesn’t usually trouble a man in the way you are troubled, Hiram. There is something beyond this, I am satisfied; and, as your best friend, and the one, after your wife, most interested in your welfare, I ask your entire confidence. There’s something wrong in your affairs.”

“Who says so?” The young man started up, with a look of terror, and he began trem-

bling violently. Mr. Prescott laid a hand upon him and said, with great seriousness of manner,

“Hiram! many people think you are better off in the world than you should be.”

“What? Who? What people?” There was blank alarm in his face.

“I, for one. And now, Hiram, I conjure you by every consideration of safety, to make an open breast. If your feet are astray, let me know it, that I may lead you back, if possible, to paths of security.”

“They are not astray, sir! I can lay my hand upon my heart, and call God to witness my integrity.” The young man spoke almost vehemently.

“Hiram! Beware! God is present! God hears! God is righteous!”

The hand of Mr. Prescott was lifted in warning. His tones were solemn. His startling sentences and impressive manner threw back the young man upon himself. There was a shudder,—a strongly agitated countenance,—

and wild terror in the eyes, as if he stood face to face with destruction. Then, a low, blood-curdling laugh chattered on the air.

"Hiram!" Mr. Prescott caught the hand of his son-in-law in an affrighted way. But the young man drew back, with returning fear in his countenance.

"Keep off!" he cried. "Don't touch me! I won't be taken."

"Hiram! My son!"

But Foster had sprung out of bed, on the side opposite to that on which Mr. Prescott sat, and was making toward a window. His wife came in at the moment, and it required all the strength of both her father and herself to keep him from leaping out.

"There is nothing to fear, my son." Mr. Prescott spoke in soothing tones. "No one is present but Helen and myself, and you are safe with us."

"Am I?" He came back from the window timidly and doubtingly, looking first at Mr. Prescott and then at his wife. "And you won't tell them I am here?"

"Tell who, Hiram? Nobody wants to harm you," said his wife.

"They're after me, the bloodhounds!"

"O, husband! O, father!" Mrs. Foster wrung her hands impotently.

"I'll not be taken! I've sworn to that!" Hiram turned again to the window; but his wife sprung in advance of him, and interposed her body. At this, wild terror seized him. Grasping her arms, he jerked her away with a giant's strength; threw off Mr. Prescott, who caught hold of him, as if he had been a child, and was out of the window before they could recover themselves. A piazza ran around on that side of the house. From the roof of this he leaped to the ground, and commenced running away. Men were passing on the street, who, at a call from Mr. Prescott, caught him and bore him, struggling fearfully, back into the house.

CHAPTER XI.

THE harvest time of Hiram Foster's life had come, and here was the bitter fruit. He had sown the wind, and was now garnering the whirlwind. A mind naturally sensitive and excitable had brooded over the dangers that beset his path—had dwelt on the fearful retributions that seemed impending—had felt so long the dark presence of a haunting phantom, which, constantly impelling to evil, as constantly suggested tormenting fears—that reason gave way; gave way in the very prime of life; and a madhouse received him among its reason-wrecked inmates; received him, but never gave him back restored. When the doors opened outwardly for Hiram Foster, a sheeted corpse came silently over the threshold.

Months before this last act in the tragedy of a life, which but for crime would have

been so full of happiness, the work of restitution had been completed by Mr. Prescott and his heart-broken child, even to the last farthing. Sufficient evidence appeared among the papers of Foster to indicate the means by which he had acquired his property. Satisfied that neither she nor her children had any claim to hold even the smallest part thereof, she passed every thing to Mr. Overman, and returned to her father's house as portionless as when she went out. The sum thus obtained by Mr. Overman, and received from the hands of Mrs. Foster with a feeling of painful reluctance, was just sufficient to pay the deficiency left standing in the settlement with his creditors. This amount, it is true, had been signed off; but Mr. Overman was an honest man.

Never,—from the day Mrs. Foster passed out from the home where her children were born; from the home where some of the happiest hours of her life had been spent; from the home which but for the criminal infatuation of her husband, might have been one of

the sunniest homes in all the land—and returned to lay her head in a sorrow too deep for tears upon the breast of her mother,—never was she seen beyond the threshold of her father's house. A few years of suffering, from any true realization of which our hearts shrink away, and she laid herself down in the sleep that knows no waking to mortal pain. Her children live; but the memory of their father's guilt is a shadow that ever dims in other eyes the beauty of their characters. Of the particulars of that guilt, they have remained in ignorance. But it is kept in remembrance by others, and told to their disgrace, over and over again, in thoughtless gossip, or a spirit of mean depreciation. They are growing up in the home of their grandfather, in loveliness and purity; but more than one true-hearted man, who felt their attractions, has turned with a sigh away, as the story of their father's guilt shocked his ears, to seek another alliance.

Ah! If guilt cursed only itself! If wrong deeds came back, in retribution, only on the

wrong-doers! If men had to bear alone the consequences of folly and crime! But, this may not be. Our lives are bound up in other lives. If we build our house upon the rock, the safety and blessing thus secured will be shared by those whose lives pulsate with our lives; but, if we build upon the sand, destruction will overwhelm them and us in a common ruin.

The way of transgressors is hard—hard always, from the first act to the inevitable consequences. There is no escape from the law that binds effects to causes. As the cause is, in quality, so will the effect be. Evil actions always produce unhappiness; and crime against others, disaster. No, there is no escape; and the intuitive consciousness that it must be so, is a troubling ghost in the life of every man who steps aside from the path of honesty, and leaves behind him, as all such do, the footprints of his way.

If we sow the wind, we shall reap the whirlwind.

II.

GROWING BEAUTIFUL.

"You remember Kate Maxwell?" said a lady friend, an old acquaintance. We had met at an evening party, and were talking of auld lang syne.

"Very well," I answered. "It would be difficult to forget her homely face."

"How long is it since you saw her?" inquired my friend.

"It must be several years. I think it was in 18— that her family removed from the city."

"Yes, it was in that year."

"It is a misfortune to be so homely," said I.

"A beautiful spirit is more to be desired than a beautiful person," remarked the lady.

"True," I replied; "the eye's brightness and the skin's pearly lustre are but transient; while the soul's beauty is imperishable."

Kate was a good girl, for all her singularly unattractive exterior."

"She had many true friends," said the lady, "and they were all of the better class—better, I mean, in its right sense."

I was about changing the subject of conversation, when my companion directed my attention to a young lady, the centre of a group of three or four ladies and gentlemen. She was talking with some animation, and there was a glow of feeling, and a play of thought in her face, which, though not possessing a feature that might be called handsome, had something in it that was singularly attractive.

"Who is it?" I inquired.

"Don't you know her?" said my friend, smiling.

"The face is quite familiar. I ought to know her. But I am in doubt as to her identity."

"Let me mention her name."

"Do so, if you please."

"Kate Maxwell."

"Impossible! It may be a cousin, or a

sister—but not homely Kate Maxwell.” I was incredulous.

“It is Kate herself. Hasn’t she improved?”

“Wonderfully! Why, she is really growing handsome. Has she discovered the fountain of beauty?”

“She has been drinking of its waters for years,” replied my earnest friend.

“I must renew our acquaintance,” said I. And we walked together across the room. A nearer view was not the breaking of an illusion. The smile of true pleasure that lit up her countenance, as she recognized me, covered every plain feature like a veil of transparent light. How remarkably was she changed!

Later in the evening I had a quiet talk with her—first about old times, and then upon a variety of themes suggested by the occasion, or coming into thought spontaneously. What an exquisite perception of things true and beautiful she had! Her thought was lucid as crystal. But most apparent was her interest in all things pure and good in our com-

mon humanity. In speaking of others she seemed to take a peculiar delight in magnifying their excellencies.

Present, in that company, was another maiden, whom I had known for years. She and Kate had been intimate, before the latter removed to another city. They were much together, and people of a certain class used to say that Nancy Lee was incapable of a sincere friendship for any one, and only associated intimately with Kate Maxwell in order that she might have a foil to her beauty. This was stating the case a little too strongly, and the remark had its origin in a certain smartness of speech cultivated by many persons, and which is very nearly allied to ill-nature. Nancy Lee had regular features, and a face narrowed to a fine oval. Her lips were moderately full, and of faultless outline; her chin slightly prominent; her neck queenly; her eyes dark, large, and lustrous, with long fringing lids that lay like shadowy lines upon her cheeks. Every one pronounced her beautiful at a glance; and those who

met her for the first time turned to gaze at her again. And yet, the oftener you looked into her face, the less satisfied were you with its beauty. Something was lacking. It was not that you felt, as when looking at a statue, that soul was wanting; for taking up the sculptor's ideal, thought creates a soul even more beautiful in its diviner attributes than the chiselled marble; but, it was the glimpses of the soul, less beautiful than its investiture, caught now and then through revealing expressions, that was forever disappointing the half-entranced beholder.

The beauty of Nancy Lee did not grow upon you. The more intimately you became acquainted with her, the more indifferent did you become to her personal attractions. As she stood beside Kate Maxwell again, after the lapse of four years, the beauty of the one, and the exceeding plainness of the other, did not strike you as remarkable. That conscious beauty, which is really so unbeautiful, was eclipsed by the unconscious soul-beauty in the face of the lovelier maiden.

Almost involuntarily I made the two countenances a study. In all the physical elements of beauty, taking feature by feature, and comparing one with the other, the contrast was ludicrously against the homelier one. A single instance will show this—as in the long, dark lashes of the one, and the thin, white lashes of the other, that did not even hide the coral-tinted lids. But, looking away from single features, and from mere physical elements, and the beauty of the former lost much of its power, while the lack of beauty in the other ceased to appear as a defect. In the conversation of Nancy Lee I found nothing of interest. Her mind seemed to be asleep to all but the little outside world of fashion and pleasure. But every word that fell from the lips of Kate Maxwell stirred some thought in my mind, or sent some newly awakened ripple, glittering in sunshine, over the waters of feeling.

Not in my eyes alone was the change in our gentle friend apparent. All of her old

acquaintances were struck with it, and from more than one I heard the remark—

“Really, Kate Maxwell is growing beautiful!”

And so she was, with a beauty imperishable as eternity.

“How is it,” said a young man, who had known Kate during her former residence in the city, but had not been over attentive to her—he was not then old enough, or wise enough to see below the mere surface, and distinguish between the real and the apparent—“How is it that Kate Maxwell compares so much more favorably now with her ‘foil,’ as we used to call her, than she did a few years ago? I do not see that the color of her hair or eyebrows is at all improved, nor that her nose has gained a single classic outline, nor that her complexion is better. And yet she is no longer a foil to Nancy Lee, but holds her own in the comparison. I think Nancy has changed some. There is an expression in her face that repels rather than attracts—a homeliness of feeling, so to speak,

that is to me repulsive. On the contrary, I have looked into Kate’s face more than once, this evening, when it seemed radiant with beauty. What does it mean!”

My lady friend, of whom I spoke in the beginning, was present, and as I perceived her face brightening, I thought it best to let her answer the query.

“You saw,” she replied, with the fine enthusiasm of her character, “the soul shining through the body’s transparent veil—a veil that, strive as we may to render it opaque, grows thinner and thinner as our true life gains strength, until it no longer hides the spirit’s true quality, but suffers it to reveal itself in beauty or deformity. Some people grow plainer as they grow older, and some more lovely in exterior. Need I state the reason?”

“No,” said the young man, into whose mind a flood of light seemed breaking. “The reason is apparent enough. Only the good are really beautiful.”

“Truly spoken,” was answered. “The

fabled fountain of eternal youth and beauty is the fountain of celestial love, drinking at which we grow more and more into the likeness of those radiant ones, whose highest joy is found in doing good. The origin of beauty is not in nature—there we see only its perishing form, and we are ever marring it by evil passion and selfish desire. But, why need I seek to illustrate what is so self-evident? Your own words carry with them an undoubting conviction. Only the good are really beautiful.”

After this brief conversation I noticed that the young man, who had hardly been civil to Kate a few years before, kept close to her side during the remainder of the evening. It was plain that, in his eyes she was growing more and more beautiful every moment.

I did not meet this gentle friend again for three years, though I could not fail to hold her in pleasant remembrance; and then it was as the bride of the young man just referred to, who had a soul capable of appreciating that true beauty which fades not in the cor-

roding atmosphere of time. In this new relation to life, Kate had returned to her native town, and I met her at a large party given on the wedding occasion by the friends of her husband. She was standing in a group of ladies as I entered the crowded rooms, and so changed in three years that I was in doubt as to her identity. At the last meeting I had not perceived any change in the physical lines of beauty, but only a shining through the plain face of her beautiful spirit. But her soul had a freer outward development, as well as a more interior life. The deep joy of loving and being loved had awakened new delights that pervaded her whole being, and recorded themselves in every feature and expression. Love had become her very life, and its transforming power was seen in the gradual softening of harsher outlines, and in touches of beauty here and there, scarcely recognized each by itself, but pleasing the sight in their combined harmonies. I said that she was standing in a group of ladies as I entered the room. One of these was Nancy

Lee, also a bride, and in all her bridal attractions. She had loaded herself with ornaments, and was dressed in a showy costume, all intended to heighten her personal charms. She stood in the eyes of all, a conscious beauty, and her young husband felt very proud at being the possessor of so much loveliness. But few, I think, envied him, who were capable of appreciating the soul-beauty of Kate, so strongly contrasted with the mere flesh and blood beauty of his bride, as she stood, unconscious of a single personal attraction, by the side of her old friend and companion. The effect of the two faces, as transformed by living affections, was remarkable.

From that time I met the two young brides often, and could always see new evidences of the changing power of their interior lives. To the one I was attracted, from the other repelled. The one appeared to grow less selfish and more lovely all the while; the other more worldly minded, more heartless, and more unpleasing to the eye. Contentment enthroned itself on the brow of one; discontent on that of the other.

It is now ten years since their bridal, and ever since this change has been progressing—Kate growing lovelier all the while, and her old friend fading into a coarse, showy, sensual beauty; a seeker of that admiration which is deceived by cosmetic arts. At home, in the eyes of her husband, the latter scarcely exhibits a single personal charm, so completely has her spirit transfused itself into her face; while in the home of Kate, every thing seems to have taken a portion of beauty from her beautiful soul, to reflect it back upon her as from a mirror. Daily, hourly, momentarily, she is growing more beautiful; and this will progress until she attains the transcendent loveliness of an angel. Only strangers, at a first meeting, see her face as a plain one. To her friends it is always full of attractions, for every feature is an index and a remembrance of spiritual graces that adorn her life, and render her a true friend, loving companion, and teacher, by example, of those sweet virtues that are born of a diviner essence.

III.

UNFORGOTTEN WORDS.

"HAVE you examined that bill, James?"

"Yes, Sir."

"Any thing wrong?"

"I find two errors."

"Ah! let me see."

The lad handed his employer a long bill that had been placed on his desk for examination.

"Here is an error in the calculation of ten dollars, which they have made against themselves; and another error of ten dollars in the footing."

"Also against themselves?"

"Yes, Sir."

The merchant smiled in a way that struck the lad as peculiar.

"Twenty dollars against themselves!" he remarked, in a kind of pleasant surprise.

"Trusty clerks they must have!"

"Shall I correct the figures?" asked the lad.

"No; let them correct their own mistakes. We don't examine bills for other people's benefit," replied the merchant. "It will be time enough for us to rectify these errors when they find them out. All so much gain, as it now stands."

The boy's delicate moral sense was shocked at so unexpected a remark. He was the son of a poor widow, who had given him good instruction, and taught him that to be just was the duty of all men. Mr. Carman, the merchant in whose employment he had been for only a few months, was an old friend of his father's, and a person in whom his mother had always reposed the highest confidence. In fact, James had always looked upon him as a kind of model man; and when Mr. Carman agreed to take him into his store, he felt that great good fortune was in his way.

"Let them correct their own mistakes." The words made a strong impression on the

mind of James Lewis. When first spoken by Mr. Carman, and with the meaning then involved, he felt, as we have said, shocked; but as he turned them over and over again in his thoughts, and connected their utterance with a person who stood so high in his mother's estimation, he began to think that perhaps the thing was fair enough in business. Mr. Carman was hardly the man to do wrong.

In a few days after James examined the bill, a clerk from the house by which it had been rendered called for a settlement. The lad, who was present, waited with considerable interest to see whether Mr. Carman would speak of the error. But he made no remark on that subject. A check for the amount of the bill as rendered was filled up, and a receipt taken.

"Is that right?" James asked himself this question. His moral sense said no; but the fact that Mr. Carman had so acted bewildered his mind.

"It may be the way in business"--so he

thought with himself—"but it don't look honest. I wouldn't have believed it of him!"

Mr. Carman had a kind way with him that won upon the boy's heart, and naturally tended to make him judge whatever he might do in the most favorable manner.

"I wish he had corrected that error," he said to himself a great many times when thinking, in a pleased way, of Mr. Carman and his own good fortune in having been received into his employment. "It don't look right; but maybe it's the way in business."

One day he went to bank and drew the money for a check. In counting it over he found that the teller had paid him fifty dollars too much. So he went back to the counter and told him of the mistake. The teller thanked him, and he returned to the store with the pleasant consciousness in his mind of having done right.

"The teller overpaid me by fifty dollars," he said to Mr. Carman, as he handed him the money.

"Indeed!" replied the latter, a light breaking over his countenance. And he hastily counted the bank-bills.

The light faded as the last bill left his fingers.

"There's no mistake, James." A tone of disappointment was in his voice.

"Oh! I gave back the fifty dollars. Wasn't that right?"

"You simpleton!" exclaimed Mr. Carman. "Don't you know that bank mistakes are never corrected? If the teller had paid you fifty dollars short he would not have made it right."

The warm blood stained the cheeks of James under this reproof. It is often the case that more shame is felt for a blunder than a crime. In this instance the lad felt a sense of mortification at having done what Mr. Carman was pleased to call a silly thing; and he made up his mind that if they should overpay him a thousand dollars at the bank he would bring the amount to his employer, and let him do as he pleased with the money.

"Let people look after their own mistakes," said Mr. Carman.

James Lewis pondered these things in his heart. The impression they made was too strong ever to be forgotten. "It may be right," he said to himself, but he did not feel altogether satisfied.

A month or two after the occurrence of that bank mistake, as James counted over his weekly wages, just received from Mr. Carman, he discovered that he had been paid half a dollar too much. The first impulse of his mind was to return the amount to his employer, and it was on his lip to say, "You have given me too much, Sir," when the unforgotten words, "Let people look after their own mistakes," flashed upon his thoughts, and made him hesitate. To hold a parley with evil is, in most cases, to be overcome.

"I must think about this," said James, as he put the money into his pocket. "If it is true in one case it is true in another. Mr. Carman don't correct mistakes that people

make in his favor; and he can't complain when the rule works against himself."

But the boy was very far from being in a comfortable state. He felt that to keep that half dollar would be a dishonest act. Still he could not make up his mind to return it; at least not then. He would retain it for the present, and think the matter over more carefully. He could, if the case did not prove clear on further reflection, make all right with himself and Mr. Carman.

To hold a parley with evil is, as we have just said, in most cases to be overcome; and it was unhappily so in the present case. James did not return the half dollar, but spent it for his own gratification. After he had done this it came suddenly into his thought that Mr. Carman might be only trying him, and he was filled with anxiety and alarm. How bitterly did he regret having spent that half dollar! For two or three days it was as much as he could do to keep from starting when Mr. Carman spoke to him; or to look steadily into his face when

receiving from him any direction. It was his first sad experience in wrong-doing. But as no lack of confidence was exhibited James felt reassured in a few days.

Not long afterward Mr. Carman repeated the same mistake. This time James kept the half dollar with less hesitation.

"Let him correct his own mistakes," said he, resolutely; "that's the doctrine he acts on with other people, and he can't complain if he gets paid in the coin he puts in circulation. I just wanted half a dollar."

From that time the fine moral sense of James Lewis was blunted. He had taken an evil counsellor into his heart, who not only darkened his clear perception of right, but stimulated a spirit of covetousness—latent in almost every mind—and caused him to desire the possession of things beyond his ability to obtain.

James had good business qualities, and so pleased Mr. Carman by his intelligence, industry, and tact with customers, that he advanced him rapidly, and gave him before he

was eighteen years of age the most responsible position in his store. But James had learned something more from his employer than how to do business well. He had learned to be dishonest—that is the word. He had never forgotten the first lesson he received in this bad science; and he had acted upon it not only in two instances, but in a hundred, and almost always to the injury of Mr. Carman. He had long since given up waiting for mistakes to be made in his favor, but originated them in the varied and complicated transactions of a large business in which he was trusted implicitly; for, strangely enough, it had never for an instant occurred to Mr. Carman that his failure to be just to the letter in dealing might prove a snare to this young man.

James grew sharp, cunning, and, skilful; always on the alert; always bright; always prompt to meet any approaches towards a discovery of his wrong-dealing toward his employer, who held him in the highest regard.

Thus it went on until James Lewis was in his twentieth year, when the merchant had his suspicions aroused by a letter that spoke of the young man as not keeping the most respectable company, and as spending money too freely for a clerk on a moderate salary. Before this time James had removed his mother into a pleasant house, for which he paid a rent of four hundred dollars. His salary was eight hundred dollars; but he deceived his mother by telling her that he received fifteen hundred. Every comfort that she needed was fully supplied, and she was beginning to feel that after a long and often painful struggle with the world her happier days had come.

James was at his desk when the letter just referred to was received by Mr. Carman. Guilt is always on the alert, and suspicious of every movement that may involve betrayal or exposure. He looked stealthily at his employer as he opened the letter, and observed him change countenance suddenly. He read it over twice, and James saw that

the contents, whatever they were, produced disturbance. While he was yet observing him, Mr. Carman glanced toward his desk, and their eyes met; it was only for a moment, but the look James received made his heart stop beating.

There was something about the movements of Mr. Carman for the rest of the day that troubled the young man. It was plain to him that suspicion had been aroused by that letter. Oh, how bitterly now did he repent, in dread of discovery and punishment, the evil of which he had been guilty! Exposure would disgrace and ruin him, and bow the head of his mother, it might be, even to the grave.

"You are not well this evening," said Mrs. Lewis, as she looked at her son's changed face across the tea-table, and noticed that he did not eat.

"My head aches," he replied, as he turned partly away from his mother's direct gaze.

"Perhaps the tea will make you feel better."

"I'll lie down on the sofa in the parlor for a short time," said the young man, rising from the table. "A little quiet may give relief." And he went from the dining-room.

Mrs. Lewis followed him into the parlor in a little while, and sitting down by the sofa on which he was lying placed her hand upon his head. Ah, it would take more than the loving pressure of a mother's hand to ease the pain from which he was suffering. The touch of that pure hand increased the pain to agony.

"Do you feel better?" asked Mrs. Lewis, after she had remained for some time with her hand on his forehead.

"Not much," he replied; and rising as he spoke, he added, "I think a walk in the open air will do me good."

"Don't go out, James," said Mrs. Lewis, a troubled feeling coming into her heart.

"I'll only walk a few squares." And James went from the parlor, and taking up his hat, passed into the street without another word.

"There's something more than headache the matter with him," was the thought of Mrs. Lewis, and the slight feeling of trouble she had experienced began deepening into a strange concern that involved a dread of coming evil.

For half an hour James walked without any purpose in his mind beyond escape from the presence of his mother. Every phase of Mr. Carman's manner toward him after the receipt of that letter was renewed and dwelt on, in order if possible to determine whether suspicion of wrong-dealing was entertained. At last his aimless walk brought him into the neighborhood of Mr. Carman's store, and in passing he was surprised at seeing a light within.

"What can this mean?" he asked himself, a new fear creeping, with its shuddering impulses, into his heart.

He went near and listened by the door and windows, but could hear no sound within.

"There's something wrong," he said.
 "What can it be? If this thing is discov-

ered, what will be the end of it? Ruin! ruin! My poor mother!"

The wretched young man passed on, and walked the streets for two hours, when he returned home. His mother met him as he entered, and inquired, with unconcealed anxiety, if he were better. He said yes, but with a manner that only increased the trouble she felt, and passed up hastily to his own room.

In the morning the strangely-altered face of James, as he met his mother at the breakfast table, struck alarm into her heart. He was silent, and evaded all her questions. While they still sat at the table the door-bell rung loudly. The sound startled James, and he turned his ear to listen in a nervous way, which did not escape the observation of his mother.

"Who is it?" asked Mrs. Lewis, as the servant came back from the door.

"A gentleman wishes to see Mr. James," replied the girl.

James arose instantly, and went out into

the hall, shutting the dining-room door as he did so. Mrs. Lewis sat, in almost breathless expectation, awaiting her son's return. She heard him coming back in a few moments; but he did not enter the dining-room. Then he returned along the hall to the street door, and she heard it shut. All was now silent. Starting up, she ran out into the passage, but James was not there. He had gone away with the person who had called, and without a word!

Ah, that was a sad going away! Mr. Carman had spent half the night in examining the accounts of James, and discovered frauds to the amount of over six thousand dollars. Blindly indignant, he had sent an officer to arrest him early in the morning; and it was with this officer that the unhappy boy went away from the home of his mother, never again to return.

"The young villain shall lie in the bed he has made for himself!" exclaimed Mr. Carman, in his bitter indignation. And he did not hold back in any thing, but made the

exposure of the young man's crime complete. On the trial he showed an eager desire to have him convicted, and presented such an array of evidence that the jury could not give any other verdict than "Guilty."

The poor mother was in court, and audible, in the silence that followed, came her convulsed sobs upon the air. The presiding judge then addressed the culprit, and asked if he had any thing to say why sentence of the law should not be pronounced against him. All eyes were turned upon the pale, agitated young man, who arose with an effort, and leaned against the railing by which he stood, as if needing the support.

"Will it please your honors," he said, "to direct Mr. Carman, my prosecutor, to come a little nearer, so that I can look at him and your honors at the same time?"

Mr. Carman was directed to come forward to where the boy stood. There was a breathless silence in the court-room as the prosecutor obeyed the order, and came forward so as to be in the eyes of all. James looked at him

steadily for a few moments, and then turned to the judges.

"What I have to say, your honors, is this"—he spoke calmly and distinctly—"and it may in a degree extenuate, though it cannot excuse, my crime. I went into that man's store an innocent boy; and if he had been an honest man I would not have stood before you to-day as a criminal."

Mr. Carman interrupted the young man, and appealed to the Court for protection against allegations of such an outrageous character; but he was peremptorily ordered to be silent. James went on in a firm voice.

"Only a few weeks after I went into his employment I examined a bill by his direction, and discovered an error of twenty dollars."

The face of Mr. Carman crimsoned instantly.

"You remember it, I see," remarked James; "and I shall have cause to remember it while I live. The error was in favor of Mr. Carman, and I asked if I should correct the figures, and he answered, 'No; let them correct their

own mistakes. We don't examine bills for other people's benefit.' It was my first lesson in dishonesty, and I never forgot the words. I saw the bill settled, and Mr. Carman take twenty dollars that were not his own. I felt shocked at first; it seemed such a wrong thing. But, soon after, he called me a simpleton for handing back to the teller of a bank fifty dollars overpaid on a check; and then—"

"May I ask the protection of the Court?" said Mr. Carman, appealing to the judges.

"Is it true what the lad says?" asked the presiding judge.

Mr. Carman hesitated, and looked confused. All eyes were on his face; and judges, jury, lawyers, and spectators felt certain that he was guilty of leading the unhappy young man astray.

"Not long afterward," resumed young Lewis, "in receiving my wages, I found that Mr. Carman had paid me fifty cents too much. I was about giving it back to him when I remembered his remark about letting people

correct their own mistakes, and said to myself, 'Let him correct his own errors,' and dishonestly kept the money. Again the same thing happened, and again I kept the money that did not, of right, belong to me. This was the beginning of evil, and here I am! Mr. Carman has shown an eagerness to convict and have me punished, as the Court has seen. If he had shown me any mercy I might have kept silent. But now I interpose the truth, and may it incline you to show some consideration for the unhappiest being that is alive to-day."

The young man covered his face with his hands, and sat down overpowered by his feelings. His mother, who was near him, sobbed out aloud, and bending over, laid her hands on his head, saying,

"My poor boy! My poor boy!"

There were few eyes in the court-room undimmed. In the silence that followed Mr. Carman spoke out:

"Is my character to be thus blasted on the word of a criminal, your honors? Is this

right? Is this just? Is this the protection a citizen finds in the court-room?"

"Your solemn oath that this charge is untrue," said the judge, "will place you all right. It was the unhappy boy's only opportunity, and the Court felt bound, in humanity, to hear what he wished to say."

James Lewis stood up again instantly, and turning his white face and dark piercing eyes upon Mr. Carman: "Let him take that oath if he dare!" he exclaimed.

The counsel for the prosecution now interfered, and called the proceeding an outrage on all justice, and unheard of before in a court-room. But the judge commanded order, and then said to Mr. Carman:

"The Court offers you the only way of reparation in its power. Your oath will scatter the allegation of the criminal to the winds. Will you swear?"

Mr. Carman turned with a distressed look toward his counsel, while James kept his eyes fixed upon him. There was a brief conference, and the lawyer said,

"The proceeding is irregular, and I have advised my client to make no response. At the same time he protests against all this as an outrage upon the rights of a citizen."

The judges bowed, and Mr. Carman withdrew. After a brief conference with his associates, the presiding judge said, addressing the criminal,

"In consideration of your youth, and the temptation to which, in tender years, you were unhappily subjected, the Court gives you its lightest sentence, one year's imprisonment. At the same time, in pronouncing this sentence, let me solemnly warn you against any further steps in the way you have taken. Crime can have no valid excuse. It is evil in the sight of God and man, and leads only to suffering. When you come forth again, after your brief incarceration, may it be with the resolution to die rather than commit a crime!"

And the curtain fell on that sad scene in the boy's life. When it lifted again and he came forth from prison a year afterward, his mother

was dead. From the day her pale face faded from his vision as he passed from the courtroom, he never looked upon her again.

Ten years afterward a man sat reading a newspaper in a far Western town. He had a calm, serious face, and looked like one who had known suffering and trial.

"Brought to justice at last!" he said to himself, as the blood came into his face. "Convicted on the charge of fraudulent insolvency, and sent to the State's Prison! So much for the man who gave me in tender years the first lesson in wrong-doing! Too well, alas! did I remember his words. But thank God, other words have been since remembered. 'When you come forth again,' said the judge, 'may it be with the resolution to die rather than commit a crime!' and I have kept this injunction in my heart when there seemed no way of escape except through crime; and, God helping me, I will keep it to the end."

IV.

THE STORE GIRL.

A WEEK at the sea-shore gives large opportunity for the study of human nature. Its phases, as there seen, are curious and instructive. What people really are, comes out on exhibition. Individuality is thrown with great distinctness, on a common background, and each reads the other's character almost as plainly as if it were written in a book. Ask your friend what she thinks of Mrs. or Miss So-and-So. If she have met her at the sea-shore, she will answer without hesitation, and offer you a leading trait, favorable or unfavorable, but very near the exact truth. It is remarkable how entirely some people are off their guard at the sea-shore—how completely they act themselves out. You see the true lady and gentleman there—limited to no class, grade, or set; the snobbish pretenders, whose every act gives the lie to their pretence; the

jaunty vulgar, who obtrude their lack of culture and common sense in the faces of all; and the consciously inferior, or over-modest, who move about straight-laced, weakly imagining that they are the observed of all observers. .

Sitting on the piazza of the Surf House at Atlantic City, enjoying the cool sea breezes, this conversation reached me. I could not help hearing it, for the speakers were close by, and talked in loud tones.

"Who is that girl?" was asked in a curious voice, as if the person indicated had, from some cause, awakened an interest in the speaker's mind.

The individual referred to was a young lady of fair complexion, whom I had noticed several times. There was something about her that attracted all eyes; and yet she was neither richly nor gayly attired, and evidently shrunk from observation. The style of her face was a regular oval; complexion, as I have said, fair; eyes, a soft bluish gray, large and calm; height, medium; carriage,

easy and unconscious; dress plain, and not costly, but of the finest quality and in perfect taste. No wonder that in the flaunting, obtrusive, over-dressed mass of her sex, she stood individualized, nor that the question which had just come to my ear was frequently asked. I listened for the answer.

"Don't you know her?" "I noticed a tone of contempt in the voice.

"There's something familiar in the face, but for the life of me I can't make her out;" returned the first speaker.

"One of Levy's store girls."

"No!"

"Yes; I've bought many a dress from her."

"Now, you don't say so! Well, it does beat all! Oh, yes, now I recognize her. One of Levy's girls! Isn't it about time we were going home, Kate?"

"I rather think it is. When it comes to being mixed up with this sort of cattle, I'm for retiring. A store girl! Well, well!"

Naturally, after such a revelation of them-

selves, I observed more narrowly the speakers. How remarkably they contrasted with the young lady about whom they talked so depreciatingly. They were dressed in gay grenadines, and exhibited a profusion of costly laces and jewelry. At first sight their faces indicated gentle blood; a second and closer inspection revealed the essential taint of commonalty. I speak of blood in the truer sense, as representing mental and moral qualities. The refined and the vulgar are in all social grades. Blood flows not in obedience to conventionalities. It may be as pure in the veins of a peasant, as in those of a titled nobleman.

A tall lady passed, leaning on the arm of a short, stout gentleman. She was pale and thin, with a refined and gentle face—he bluff and hearty. The two girls looked at each other, drew down the corners of their mouths, snickered—I use the right word—and then stuffed their handkerchiefs in their mouths to keep from laughing outright.

"They'll kill me, Em, if they stay here much longer," said one of them, shaking with

laughter as the couple disappeared in the house. "I never saw any thing so funny."

"Hush, Kate," was rejoined; "here's Father Time."

I looked in the direction of their eyes, and observed a thin, white-haired man, with bent form and slow steps, coming along the piazza. His figure was striking, and gave the impression of a once strong man, who had yielded under protest, step by step, as age advanced, and now stooped, half sadly, in conscious weakness, under the weight of many years. I was touched by his aspect. Not so my young ladies. He was game for them. Already they had designated him as "Father Time;" and now, as he came towards us, they stared at him rudely, casting sly looks at, or nudging each other.

"A scythe and hour-glass would make the figure complete."

He was close upon us. I felt shocked. Unless very dull of hearing, the rude sentence must have reached him. There was a second crowding of handkerchiefs into the young

ladies' mouths, to keep from laughing. The old man stood close to them for a little while, then remarked in a pleasant, familiar way, so beautiful in aged persons who have grown old wisely and gracefully, and which all the truly refined accept as a compliment instead of an intrusion, though the person be a stranger—

"A charming day, young ladies."

But, instead of meeting this salutation with the instinct of gentle blood, these vulgar misses bridled and frowned, and tried to look haughty and dignified. The old man regarded them in momentary surprise, and then moved on again.

"What do you think of that?" asked one of the other.

"Did you ever hear of any thing so rude?" was the almost angry response.

"Never in my life. The old brute!"

For a short time, they expatiated on the old man's brutality and want of breeding in mistaking them for ladies, and then resumed their amusement of remarking upon and caricaturing the various individuals who passed

before them. Nothing escaped their searching eyes. Every peculiarity was magnified, and even beauties and virtues turned into deformities and vices. They were witty at times, and showed familiarity with Dickens, Thackeray, Bulwer, and the leading novelists, and applied with some skill the characters in books to the living personalities of the hour. But, in all this, they showed an ingrained coarseness, selfishness, and vulgarity that was really shocking, taking into consideration the social place they assumed to fill.

It was my turn to make inquiry, and in due time I learned that my young ladies were daughters of two Philadelphia merchants, who had grown rich in trade, and now lived in splendid suburban residences. I further learned that their fathers had once been poor clerks, and their mothers poor girls—one of the latter having actually been employed in a dry-goods store at four dollars a week, occupying that position at the time of her marriage. Their fathers were known in the com-

munity as shrewd merchants and honorable men; not very refined nor well educated—early culture having been denied them; but sensible men in the main, and good citizens; men in no way ashamed of their humble origin; but, rather, proud of the fact that they were architects of their own fortunes, and thence inclined to an ostentatious display of wealth. The weaker vessels were the mothers, whose heads turned a little with the elevation to which they had risen through no strength of their own, and who, looking down from that elevation, were disposed to think meanly of every thing below. False pride and false estimates of things, were naturally imbibed by the daughters, and mingled with every thread, as the shuttle flew backwards and forwards, weaving the fabric of character. And so, they were less than their mothers to blame for what they were; though, taking the natural stock, it would have required much budding and grafting to get pleasant fruit.

In the evening, there was music and dan-

cing in one of the parlors. Em and Kate, whom I noticed as almost inseparable, were there. They had taken a sofa to themselves, spreading out their wide skirts, so as to fill the space which four persons might have conveniently occupied. The tall, pale lady, evidently an invalid, came in, leaning on the arm of her stout, hearty-looking companion. Nearly every seat in the room was occupied. They came and stood near the sofa filled by my fine young ladies, Em and Kate. I saw the tall lady shrink a little in stature, and lean hard upon the stout gentleman's arm, evidently from weakness. He looked concerned, and glanced around, to find a seat. Observing that only these two girls occupied the large sofa, he said to one of them, in a polite way—

"Will you be kind enough to let this lady have a seat with you on the sofa?"

But neither of them moved an inch.

"Take my seat," I heard a low, gentle voice say, and turning my eyes from the two misses, I saw the "store girl's" hand on the

invalid's arm, to whom she was offering her chair in that kind, persuasive way, that takes no denial.

"Thank you!—thank you!" answered the tall lady, in one of the sweetest of voices; "but I cannot deprive you of a seat."

"No deprivation at all. I can stand for hours without being weary. So, don't hesitate; your acceptance will give me pleasure." And she gently drew the invalid to her chair.

Now, there was nothing intrusive—nothing for effect in the girl's manner; but a spontaneous acting out of the true lady, that was really beautiful. A native refinement gave grace to every movement. Several of those standing near observed the little scene, and I saw by their faces a common sentiment of admiration. The stout gentleman added his thanks to those of the lady, and the girl drew back from observation.

The music and the dancing went on. My two refined young ladies held their places on the sofa, their heavily flounced, gay silk

dresses covering the entire surface, from end to end. Presently one of them received an invitation to dance, and was led to the floor. Instantly, I saw the stout gentleman look around from where he stood by his invalid companion, and seeing the girl who had given up her seat, took her half-resisting hand, and led her to the vacant place on the sofa. She did not resist, although I saw by her countenance that she would have preferred standing unobtrusively where she was; but the instinct of good breeding kept her from objecting to an act so kindly meant. Silk and jewelry was shocked by this sudden propinquity of the store girl. I saw her shrink, frown, and sweep the ample range of her dress closer to her person. Then she looked about uneasily; and then, unable to endure so close a contact with vulgarity, left her seat, and crossed the parlor with an air of affected dignity, that caused many lips near me to curve in amusement or contempt.

Three ladies now found room on the sofa, in the space just occupied by one. Among

these, I recognized Mrs. H——, wife of an eminent lawyer, and known as one of the most cultivated, refined, and excellent women in the city. She had been standing for ten or fifteen minutes, while my pinks of gentility, who could hardly endure to breathe the air in which one of "Levy's store girls" respired, sat in forced occupation of twice the room to which they were entitled. It so happened that Mrs. H—— came next on the sofa to the interesting young lady, whose humble position was held by Misses Pride and Pretension as a sign of inferiority. I noticed her turn and recognize her with a brightening face, at the same time offering her hand in a cordial manner and saying—

"Why, Gertrude! Is this you?"

She smiled in an easy, quiet way, answering—

"Yes, ma'am; I'm here for a few days."

"I'm right glad of it," returned Mrs. H——. If any one needs sea air, change, and recreation, it is you. When did you come down?"

"Day before yesterday."

"You must remain as long as possible."

"I shall have to return day after to-morrow."

"No, no, Gertrude; you must stay the week out, at least. I shall be here until Saturday—"

She did not finish the sentence, for at that moment, the stout, bluff gentleman came up to the sofa, and said, in a hearty, familiar way—

"Why, bless me, Mrs. H——! How glad I am to meet you!"

"Captain G——!" Surprise was in the voice of Mrs. H——, as she stood up and warmly pressed the hand that was grasping her own. "This is indeed a pleasure! Where is Mrs. G——?"

The stout gentleman turned quickly to where the tall, pale lady was sitting, and leading her forward, said—

"Here is Alice."

The greeting between the two ladies was of the most cordial nature, for they were old

friends, warmly attached to each other from their earliest years, as I learned from what passed between them.

Already, the girl who had been talking, a moment before, with Mrs. H——, was on her feet, and moving away, so that her place might be taken by the invalid; thus giving the two friends an opportunity to sit side by side. Observing that she was about to withdraw, Mrs. H—— called to her, saying—

"Don't leave us, Gertrude."

"No—no—keep your seat. I will not disturb you a second time," said the pale lady, in remonstrance.

The stout gentleman bustled past the trio, and bringing the chair just vacated by his wife, arranged the three ladies to suit himself; Mrs. H—— and Gertrude on the sofa, and his wife in the comfortable chair she had been occupying, right in front of them.

"That's Captain G——, of the Navy," I heard a gentleman near me remark.

"And who is his wife?"

"The daughter of Senator——," was replied.

The country knew them well, the Captain and the Senator, and held them both in honorable regard. I advanced a few steps nearer, for my interest was increasing.

"Let me introduce Miss Gertrude T——," said Mrs. H——, presenting the young lady to both Captain G—— and his wife. Gertrude met this introduction with a modest, retiring manner, yet with no appearance of conscious inferiority.

"Miss T——?" The Captain looked at her curiously. "Not the daughter of our old friend Hermann T——?"

"The same," replied Mrs. H——.

"Born a lady, as he was a gentleman, every inch, from head to foot." And the bluff, warm-hearted Captain, looked at her with a brightening face. "The daughter of my old friend Hermann! I'm right glad to meet you, for your father's sake. Does she belong to your family?" He turned to Mrs. H——.

"No; Gertrude stands alone in the world."

"Alone?" the Captain did not comprehend this remark. He seemed perplexed.

"She is a believer, Captain, in the nobility of self-dependence. Like you, and my husband, she serves society to the best of her ability; taking what she earns as her own, and asking favor of no one."

I heard nothing further. Loud voices in another group, drowned, for my ears, what passed among these old friends. Looking up, I saw among the listeners who had been attracted by the little stir of recognitions and introduction, a face rather blank with surprise; it was the face of one of my young ladies of such immaculate quality, that plebeian usefulness could not touch it without leaving a soil.

Every day after that, until the week closed, I saw Gertrude T—— in the company of Mrs. H—— and Mrs. Captain G——, and their deportment towards her was always that of friends and equals.

Since then, I have looked in at Levy's a few times, and noticed this young lady at her place behind one of the counters, and the sight awakened sentiments of respect; and

since then, I have seen the two immaculates on the street, and at public places, dressed in "rich attire," bold, pretentious, flaunting, and my soul despised them.

So you have the contrast—the sensible, refined, independent "store girl," as the elegant Misses Em and Kate called her; and the proud, vain, coarse-minded parvenus, who mistake money for merit, and obtrude their want of good breeding in the faces of all, and to the astonishment and disgust of all. Is it too sharply drawn, observant reader? We leave it with you to decide.

V.

THE BROKEN MERCHANT.

"You remember the fall of '57?"

"It would be singular if I did not."

Two merchants were in conversation. One, the first speaker, was a man past fifty, with a face that showed marks of care and anxious thought—not present care and thought, but only the signs of what had been. You saw at a glance that life's hard experience in the business world had not deadened the beat of human sympathy in his heart. The other was a younger man, with a firm, confident mouth, and an eye that showed energy and purpose. There was nothing of the selfish hardness that we often see in countenances of his type.

"Have you not missed old familiar faces since then?" said the elder of the two men.

"Many," was answered. "Many. Yet

no one seems to think of the wounded or maimed in life's battle."

"No; nor of what they may yet be suffering."

"How quickly a man who is thrust by misfortune outside of our business circle is forgotten!"

"Yes. Or if remembered, it is with an unforgiving spirit for the loss that was suffered when he fell. You have not forgotten T. L——, leading partner in the firm of T. L—— & Co.?"

"No; of course not. Poor man! He struggled hard to keep up when that fearful storm raged; but it was too fierce and strong for him. Oh, yes, I remember L——."

"I saw him a few days ago."

"Ah! Is he in the city?"

"Yes, or, rather, in our vicinity."

"There was scarcely a day, for years before the 'panic,' that I did not meet him. Our houses had many transactions together. But since that time he has not once crossed my path. He vanished from among us like

one who dies. I have not thought of him for more than a year. And he is still in or near the city?"

"Yes."

"What is he doing?"

"Not much, I think. You remember what a fine presence he had. What a steady eye, and uplifted countenance?"

"Very well. He was one of the pleasantest men to do business with I ever knew. Prompt, gentlemanly, clear-headed, and highly honorable."

"You would hardly know him now."

"Indeed!"

"The change is painful. If any who lost by his failure remember him with unkindness, they need only see him to dismiss the feeling."

"I thought," said the younger of the two men, "that L—— had naturally a great deal of reactive power—that if he went down in any disaster, he would struggle up again."

"Such was my opinion. But it seems that we were mistaken. He was proud and sensitive; and felt himself, in a certain sense, dis-

graced by his failure. Some merchants fail half a dozen times in their lives, scramble up on their feet again, look boldly or bravely into men's faces, and move onward as confidently as if nothing had happened. There are others of finer or weaker stuff, who are too cowardly, or too sensitive on the score of obligation, to face their old associates. Mr. L—— is one of these. Poor man! I feel sad when I think about him."

"When and where did you see him? I am interested in his case."

"I am glad to hear you use the word interest. It was in order to awaken in your mind a feeling of interest for Mr. L—— that I spoke of him. As a class we are to blame for lack of sympathy with men who, after suffering misfortune in business, shrink away from among us into almost helpless obscurity. Business honor is a sacred thing in the minds of all rightly thinking men. A true merchant is sensitive on this point in a high degree. Touch him here, and you touch him vitally. He may never recover from the

wound. He goes out from among us, and comes not back. We neglect, perhaps forget him: he is stung to the quick. He feels disgraced. All his mind falls into morbid action. Alas! how many hundreds of such, whose faces we have not seen for years, are hiding from common observation in our city, suffering poverty as well as pain! We forget our business associates too soon. We let them pass from our memories and our sympathies as if they were only automatons.

"But I was speaking of Mr. L——. You have the old, pleasant picture of him in your mind. Look at it for a moment. Now I give you the reverse. I was over in Williamsburg a few days ago; and having occasion to make an inquiry, stepped into a little office where orders were taken for coal. It was not in size over six by eight feet. In one corner was an old, grim-looking pine desk, at which a man was sitting. His dress was in keeping with the place, and not exactly in keeping either; for I noticed that, though worn, soiled, and mended in places

here and there, it was not of common material. My question was answered in a polite, kind way; but in a tone that lingered, and stirred my feelings a little unusually. My glance into his face was momentary, but the expression of that lingered also.

“‘I have seen this man before,’ said I to myself, as I turned from the little office. ‘Who can he be?’ And I tried hard to identify the voice and features. But no familiar personality came up in my mind. After transacting the business which took me to Williamsburg, I made my way to the ferry, and was stepping on board the boat to return to New York when my perplexity of mind in regard to the individuality of the man I had seen for only a moment became so intrusive that I stood still, and said to myself:

“‘I must know who he is.’

“Turning, I walked slowly along the street, questioning in my mind as to whether I should go back to the coal-office, or ask, in the neighborhood of its location, the attendant’s name. I concluded to see the man him-

self, and so called once more at the office. I found him still sitting at the high desk, which took up nearly half the space enclosed by the office walls.

“‘Did you find the place?’ he asked, as I looked in at the door. There was a kind, gentlemanly manner about him, but not much life in his tones. I was more struck than at first with the familiar expression of his countenance. The voice I had certainly heard before.

“I thanked him for the direction he had given me, and replied that I had found the place that I was seeking. Then I said:

“‘Haven’t I met you before, Sir? I ought to know your face.’

“I was struck with his changed expression. The inquiry was plainly not wholly agreeable.

“‘Pardon me,’ I said, quickly, ‘if my question is in any way obtrusive.’ He had dropped his face a little, and turned it partly away.

“‘No, Sir, it is not obtrusive,’ he answered, still with his face slightly averted.

There was a subdued tone in his voice, which was not sadness, yet so near akin that it stirred in me a feeling of sympathy. 'You have met me before.'

"Where?" I looked at him closely, but failed to make out his identity.

"In New York.' Still I was at fault.

"May I ask your name?"

"He raised his eyes, and looked at me steadily for a few moments—steadily, and I thought curiously.

"And you have really forgotten me!" A faint sigh came to my ears. 'But no wonder,' he added, in a lower voice; 'I am not as I was when we met almost daily. Misfortune breaks a man down, and changes him rapidly. My name is L——.'

"Not of the old firm of T. L—— & Co.?"

"The same.' My tone of surprise did not seem to stir the dead level of his feelings.

"I took his hand and held it firmly, while I looked into his wasted countenance with all the kind interest I felt.

"It can't be possible,' I said. 'T. L——!'

"It is possible and actual,' he replied.

"You knew me?"

"Certainly, the moment you came in.'

"Why didn't you call me by name?" I asked.

"You might not have cared to know me; and I have no desire to intrude myself upon old business acquaintances.'

"This is not the place for you,' said I, glancing around the little office. My tone was firm.

"I have learned to be thankful for even a place like this,' he replied.

"How the words touched me! For my thought went back to that neatly carpeted counting-room in which you and I have so often sat with him; to the large warehouse that held the costly goods he called his own; to the elegant home in which he had surrounded his family with luxury. Thankful even for that narrow apartment, which stifled you with its close walls as if it were a

coffin! And surely the man had buried his hopes there. What a change for two short years!

“‘Is this business your own?’ I asked.

“‘Oh, no!’ The answer was quick, as if the very question surprised him.

“‘You are paid for attending the office and taking orders?’

“‘Yes.’

“‘Do not think me intrusive, but I would like to ask as to the salary you get.’

“His brows closed a little. ‘Three hundred dollars,’ he replied, after some hesitation.

“‘Only three hundred!’ I did not attempt to conceal my surprise.

“He smiled faintly, repeating in answer, what he had said before, ‘I have learned to be thankful for even a place like this.’

“‘But,’ said I, ‘you are competent to fill a better and higher place. This won’t do. A man with your business capabilities must not be lost from his right sphere.’

“‘I don’t know that I have any business

capabilities,’ he answered, in a desponding way.

“‘Others know it if you do not,’ said I, confidently. ‘But why have you kept yourself so entirely aloof from your old friends?’

“‘Friends? I have no friends.’

“‘Old business friends, I mean.’

“‘There are no friendships in business,’ he replied, contracting his brows.

“‘Business is business, and friendship friendship,’ I returned. ‘Because a man is engaged in business, it isn’t conclusive against him that he has no heart.’

“‘He may have heart for his own kith and kin, but the men with whom he does business come to be regarded as the tools and machinery by which he makes money. If they break, and can’t be mended again, they are cast aside as useless, and no longer thought of or cared for.’

“He spoke with considerable bitterness. I felt the truth of what he said.

“‘There are many exceptions to this,’ was my answer, ‘as you might have proved long

ago, had you not so wholly withdrawn yourself from old associations.'

"He shook his head doubtfully.

"What of your family?' I ventured to ask. I remembered his wife and daughters. The former, a bright, intelligent, rather fashionable woman; the latter, two handsome, well educated girls, who had only made their way into society a year before their father's failure.

"I half regretted the question, it moved him so strongly. His face, which had shown no very marked feeling, now fairly rippled with emotion.

"I am not asking from idle curiosity,' said I. 'My interest is sincere. You have not sought me out, but I have discovered you. Will you not speak to me of your present condition as it is? I remember Mrs. L——, and I remember your daughters. Are they still living?'

"I was sincere, and he could not help feeling it.

"Yes, thank God!' he replied, in a sub-

dued way. 'They are living, and have been every thing to me.'

"They are in Williamsburg?'

"Yes. We live here. The girls are teaching.'

"A school?' I asked.

"No; Agnes teaches music, and Clara French and drawing.'

"New York is a better place for them,' said I.

"It might be; but we cannot afford to live there.'

"He did not answer very freely. Misfortune and suffering had not, it was plain, crushed all the pride out of him. Our interview was embarrassed, at least on his side.

"I will see you again, Mr. L——,' said I, on parting with him. 'There's something better for you than this.' I spoke cheerfully and confidently.

"He thanked me for the interest I had manifested, and went so far as to say that if I could help him into a better position, I would lay him under a deep obligation."

The young merchant to whom this relation was made sat silent for some time after his companion ceased speaking.

"You have given me the heartache," he said, at length. "I remember Clara and Agnes very well. They were lovely, attractive girls; the reigning belles for a season. But little over two years have gone by, and now they are humble teachers toiling in obscurity for bread. I have daughters. The bare thought that it may be so with them sends through me a throb of pain. And yet my position in business is not so good as the one that was held by Mr. L—. Will it be my turn next?"

"It is well," said the oldest of the two men, "to bring these matters home to ourselves. It will help us better to feel for others. Among business men there is too little sympathy for the unfortunate. They go down amidst the stormy waters, and no man thinks of grappling to save them."

"We must save L—," responded the other, resolutely.

"We must. Only three hundred dollars for such a man! Just think of it! Now I will tell you what we can do, if we go rightly to work. I have thought it out; but much will depend on you, as you are younger and more active than I am."

"Tell me what to do, and the thing shall be done."

"There is to be an election for President of the A— Insurance Company on next Monday. L— is just the man; and the salary is twenty-five hundred dollars. I own a few shares of stock, and so do you; and what is better, you are a Director."

"The very place for him!" And the younger of the two merchants struck his hands together. "But how is it to be managed? Colson is talked about for the place."

"He isn't fit for it. L— must get the election; and I think you and I can bring the right influence to bear. We will try at least."

"We will!" was the resolute answer.

Where there is a will there is usually the way. A week from the time our kind-hearted merchant met Mr. L—— in his humble position of clerk in a coal-office, he saw him again in the same place, and handed him, without a word of comment, a letter announcing his election as President of the A—— Insurance Company. Mr. L—— read it twice before making any response. There was a great change in his countenance when he looked up into the merchant's face.

"This is your good work," he said, quietly.

"I have taken part in it," replied the merchant.

L—— grasped his hand, held it tightly for a few moments, and then, as tears fell over his cheeks, said, in a broken voice,

"God bless you!"

The merchant had his reward at that moment in full measure, shaken down and running over.

VI.

NOT THOUGHT OF.

"DID you notice that face, Mr. Long?"

"I did. It struck me as familiar."

"You have seen it before."

"I can't remember where, Sir."

"She's been your partner in waltz and cotillion many times. The last occasion on which I saw you dancing with her, was at Newport."

"Me dancing with that girl at Newport, Mr. Hartley?"

"Yes, you. But, judging from her appearance to-day, I scarcely think she will have that honor next season."

"I think not, Sir. But, pray, who is she?"

"You have not forgotten the Parrys?"

"The Parrys! And is that Kate Parry?"

"Yes."

"Is it possible? Why, I haven't thought

of the Parrys for a long time. Kate Parry! I declare! It is sad to see a come-down like that, isn't it?"

"Yes, sad enough to look at; but sadder still in the actual experience. I think but few of us realize, in any adequate degree, the hard, stern fact of such a case. A merchant fails, and his fashionable, maybe highly accomplished and intelligent, wife and daughters pass from the old circles that will see them no more, and are forgotten. We let them go from among us with scarcely a sigh of regret, and ever after, unless fortune should smile on them again, they are to us as the dead."

"Kate Parry! Really, I can't get over that, Mr. Hartley. Why, she was dressed as meagrely as the poorest working-girl one sees hurrying along the crowded street at nightfall. And how pale and careworn, or toilworn, her face was!"

"I read it as careworn and toilworn both."

"Have you seen her before?"

"Not since her family went out from the old circles they once helped to brighten with their

presence; and, as in your case, the thought of them has not crossed my mind. I take blame to myself for this. It is not right. Why, in common humanity, we should give some thought and some care to the unfortunate. We call ourselves Christians; but, do we, like our Saviour, go after the lost or straying sheep? Oh, no! The lost and straying ones are not even thought of."

"Do you know any thing of her father?"

"Nothing. He may be dead, or in an insane asylum, for all the knowledge I have of him."

"Well, well! This is a strange world," said Mr. Long. "It has phases and transitions almost as wonderful as we find in dreams. But, I can't get over this apparition of Kate Parry. Poor girl! It must have gone hard with her since the storm desolated her home. It was the patient sadness of her pale face that first attracted my attention. Its familiarity struck me next."

"I knew her, at a glance, when she entered the car," was replied; "and the patient sad-

ness of her face, to which you refer, touched me like a rebuke."

"Do you think she knew us?"

"I think it more than probable. We have not changed as she has."

"Her eyes, every now and then, sought my face," said Mr. Long. "But the interest which must have shown itself in my manner, as I looked at her, would naturally have drawn her attention."

"Yes; but I think she knew us. Indeed, I am sure of it."

"Did you notice the street at which she left the car?"

"It was at Twentieth street."

Some minutes passed before either of the men spoke again, then the one named Hartley said:

"I have cause to remember old Mr. Parry, and with grateful feelings. Once, I was in a very narrow place. Through lack of prudent foresight, I had allowed obligations to mature in a certain month, so much greater in amount than the month's resources, that I became seriously embarrassed. There was one day in

particular—I shall never forget it—on which I had ten thousand dollars to meet in bank, besides sundry items of borrowed money to adjust. The previous day had been a heavy one, and also the one preceding that; so that my means of raising money were well nigh exhausted. I did not sleep much during the night previous; and when I dreamed, it was in a troubled way of checks, notes, and bank balances. Occasionally, when short, I had borrowed of Mr. Parry; and a few times had reciprocated the favor. I had been to him twice during the week, and now stood his debtor, for temporary accommodations, in the sum of a thousand dollars. I set him aside, therefore, in my day's calculation of resources. By nine o'clock I was in the street, in order to anticipate other borrowers as much as possible, and secure from business friends such amounts as they might have over for the day. The work proceeded slowly, for I had already used my friends quite freely. Two o'clock found me still three thousand dollars short, and at my wit's end. I had ample means:

was worth two dollars for every one I owed; and yet stood on the utmost verge of commercial dishonor, and consequent ruin of a good and growing business. A quarter past two found me in Mr. Parry's store. I had sought him, as a last resource in my extremity, but with only a faint hope of succor; for I was already, as intimated, his debtor, on borrowed money account, in the sum of one thousand dollars.

"What's the matter?" he asked, kindly, as he held out his hand. "You look excited, Mr. Hartley."

"It is hard for a man in my situation not to feel excited," I answered, frankly.

"Any special trouble?" he inquired.

"I am still three thousand dollars short, and it is almost three o'clock," said I, not able to conceal my nervousness.

"That won't answer, Mr. Hartley. Let me see what I can do for you?" And he turned, without a sign of hesitation, to his check-book. "I can let you have fifteen hundred dollars."

"I shook my head, saying, 'I've already raised seven thousand to-day, and beyond this I cannot go.'"

"Then I must get it for you. Sit down a moment." And away he went. In less than ten minutes he returned with a neighbor's check for fifteen hundred, which he handed to me, and then filled up another check for a similar amount. "There, go and take up your notes, or make your deposit, as the case may be. No time is left for compliments now. In the morning we can talk about this matter."

"I was saved from ruin. And yet, debtor as I was and am to Mr. Parry, I could let even the thought of him pass from my mind within two years of the day on which the temple of his fortune crumbled to the earth! I blush with shame to think of it."

"It is the way of the world," said Mr. Long. "Our fate when the tide turns."

"It's a bad way; a cruel way; an unchristian way!" returned the other, warmly. "But this fleeting vision of Kate is my

reminder of duty. I must see after Mr. Parry. Why didn't I speak to the girl, and ask about her father? I may now search for them for weeks in vain."

"Isn't Kate home yet?" asked a man, speaking in a low, faint voice. He was reclining in a large chair, supported by pillows.

"She is late this evening," replied a woman, who sat sewing by the light of a single oil lamp, and bending close to it, in order to see her work distinctly.

"And it is quite dark." His voice was anxious. "I can't bear to have her out so late." And he sighed heavily. He added: "Poor Kate! Poor child! Oh, it is so painful to think of. I never dreamed it would come to this."

"Here she is now!" And the woman's hands, that held the work close to the light, fell into her lap, as she bent her head to listen.

There was heard a quick, light step on the stairs. Then the door opened, and the object of their solicitude entered.

"Oh, Kate! It is you. I'm so glad you are home!" said the man, feebly, but tenderly and earnestly.

"The days are getting shorter, you know, father," the girl replied, as she came and kissed him. "It is almost dark at six."

"And will be almost dark at five in a little while, Katy. And must you stay always until six o'clock?"

"That is the rule. All the girls work until six o'clock."

The father caught his breath between a sigh and a sob.

"I don't think I shall have to stay so late." The voice of Kate betrayed an anxious feeling.

"Why not?"

"Business is not so good as it was; and there is a report in the building that one-third of the folders will be discharged on Saturday. If this is so I shall have to leave; for I am

not a rapid folder, and came in among the latest who were employed."

"I don't know that I shall be sorry." The sick man spoke in a sad, desponding way.

"Not sorry, father!"

"No, child. I would rather starve than have you exposed in this way."

"Don't, father, dear! Don't talk in that manner;" and Kate laid her hand softly on his head, and pushed the hair back from his temples. "You are sick and weak, but I am young and strong."

"Young and strong! Oh, Kate!" And his voice quivered and choked.

"You mustn't give way in this manner, father," said Kate, tenderly, as she drew the sick man's head against her. "You are getting better fast, and will soon be well again."

"Well again!" he said, mournfully. "Not in this world, Katy."

"Oh, yes, you will. I can see that you are growing stronger and better all the while. You couldn't stand up a month ago, and now you can walk across the room."

But he shook his head in a sad, desponding way.

The mother had left the room, and now came in with a tea-tray in her hands.

"Oh, let me set the table," and Kate went quickly from her father's side, and drew a small table close to his chair, on which their frugal evening meal was placed.

"I saw two old friends in the cars this evening," said the daughter, as they sat at tea.

"We have no friends," was the sick man's gloomy answer.

"Who were they?" asked the mother, a flush of interest coming into her face.

"Mr. Hartley and Mr. Long."

"Did they know you?"

"Of course not," said the sick man.

"I think they did, from the way they looked at me."

"Knew you as beasts of prey know their victims."

"Don't, father! Why will you talk so strangely? There was kind interest in their

faces, but I think they were not fully assured of my identity."

"Hartley has cause to remember me. I saved him, once, from inevitable ruin. But such things are forgotten in a day. Dear, dear! It is a heartless world!"

"In what way did you save him, father?" Kate spoke with awakening interest.

"I lent him money to take up his notes, when he was in the last extremity."

"Did he pay you back?"

"O, yes. But the obligation remains."

This was the family of Mr. Parry, to whom the two men in the cars had referred. Soon after Mr. Parry's failure in business, he was stricken down by paralysis, the consequence of intense excitement and mental suffering. All means of support being thus taken away, they quickly went down to a condition of extreme poverty; and at the end of two years, had nothing between them and actual want, but the small earnings of Kate as book-folder in a bindery, and the trifle that Mrs. Parry could earn with her needle. Mr.

Parry was gaining strength, but very slowly. He had lost all heart, and become fretful, gloomy, and desponding. But Kate always talked to him hopefully, and pointed to a better future, when life flowed through his veins once more in healthful currents.

On the next morning, when Kate went to the bindery, she found no work on her table. The foreman of the room told her, in a kind way, that business had become dull with the booksellers, and that they were obliged, in consequence, to send away all but a few of their old hands. As she had been in the bindery for only a few months, her turn came among the first to go. The amount of wages due was placed in her hands, and the poor girl went out from the building with a heavy heart, not knowing where to look for employment.

The thought of Mr. Hartley came into her mind as she passed from the bindery into the street, and as the remembrance of his obligation to her father came with the thought, she felt strongly impelled to go to him, and tell

of their great extremity. She even went so far as to turn her steps toward that part of the city in which he had his store. But she checked her feet, after going for the distance of a block, saying:

"No—no. Not that! I cannot do it."

And retracing her steps, she hurried back towards the Park, where she entered a car, and took her way homeward, feeling so utterly hopeless, that she could not hold the tears from her eyes. She had ridden for a short distance, without noticing any of her fellow-passengers, when a man sitting nearly opposite, changed his place and took a seat along side of her.

"Is this Miss Parry?" he asked.

Kate started at hearing her name, and turning, recognized one of the men she had ridden with on the day before, Mr. Hartley.

"I am Miss Parry," she answered, in a repressed voice.

"I am glad to meet you," and Mr. Hartley offered his hand in a kind, frank way.

"How is your father?"

"Sick and helpless." There was a quiver in Kate's voice that she could not repress.

"Sick and helpless! That is bad, Miss Parry. How long has he been sick?"

"For a long time. His trouble broke him down rapidly, and brought on a stroke of paralysis."

"You don't tell me so! I'm really grieved. I have cause to remember your father with kind feelings, Miss Parry; and must see him. I wish that I had known of this before."

Kate did not answer, but her heart was fluttering with new-born hopes. The hour of deepest darkness had come upon her; and already there was a lifting of the curtains that lay along the black horizon.

"Where do you live?"

Kate gave the number of the house in which they occupied two rooms.

"Tell your father that I will see him this evening." And Mr. Hartley arose, and bowing, left the car.

"Home, Katy! What's the matter? Are

you sick?" Mrs. Parry spoke in anxious tones.

"No, mother, I'm not sick. But it has happened, as I was afraid it would. Work has given out."

"O dear! O dear!" broke out the father, in a weak, fretful voice. "What shall we do? I wish I was dead!"

"Now why will you talk so?" said Kate, going quickly to his side, and laying her arm around his neck. "If one means fails, God will provide another."

"He hasn't provided very well so far," was the querulous answer.

"H-u-s-h! There, don't say that again, dear father!" and Kate laid her fingers lightly on his lips. "It isn't good—it isn't best. I think I've got a word of hope for your ears."

"What is it?" And his pale, wasted face was upturned to hers.

"I saw Mr. Hartley again to-day."

"Where?" He looked at her narrowly.

"In the car as I was coming home. And he spoke to me."

"What did he say?"

"He asked for you in a very kind manner; and when I told him how sick you had been, he looked really troubled, and said he wished that he had known of it before. He is coming to see you this evening."

"Mr. Hartley is!" Something like a sudden gleam of light passed over the wan face of Mr. Parry. Then he glanced around the small, poorly furnished room, and pride stirred uneasily in his heart. A sigh breathed through his lips, and his face fell into shadow again.

"He said, father, that he had cause to remember you with kind feelings," said Kate.

"Did he? I'm glad there's one man in the world who is not dead to all feelings of gratitude."

"He is not, you may be sure; and you will say so when he calls to-night," answered the daughter, confidently. She had looked into the man's face and heard his voice, and she knew that generous purposes towards her father were in his heart.

In the evening, true to his word, Mr. Hartley came. When he sat down in the narrow room occupied by Mr. Parry, his wife, and daughter, and remembered the elegant home in which they lived scarcely two years before, he was affected almost to tears.

"This won't do, Sir; this won't do," he said, with much feeling, after a few kind inquiries had been answered. "Why didn't you let some of your old friends know of the heavy hand sickness had laid upon you? Why didn't you let me know? I blame you for it, Sir."

"Mr. Hartley, we are of a stock that can starve, but not beg," said the sick man, his eyes lighting up suddenly with a gleam of pride. "If this hand had not forgot its cunning; if these feet had not——"

He choked, sobbed, caught eagerly after his failing self-possession, and then burst into tears.

"How wrong it is to fret yourself in this way, Mr. Parry!" His old business friend took his hand, and spoke with kindness and

sympathy. "I know well that if disease had not robbed you of strength, you would long ago have returned to the place in which your presence was once so familiar. And we shall see you there again, I trust."

"No—never—never!" Mr. Parry shook his head.

"What does your physician say?"

"I have no physician."

"Oh, Sir," exclaimed the visitor, "you give me the heart-ache! In the name of justice and humanity, why did you let me remain in ignorance of your condition? Did you think so meanly of me, as to suppose that I could ever forget the obligation you once laid me under?"

"It is not in John Parry to remind any man of an obligation," answered the weak, trembling invalid, proudly.

"Nor in John Hartley to forget an obligation. Good-night, Sir!"

And the visitor arose, in an agitated manner, and left the room.

In less than a week, the sick man was

breathing in ampler rooms and amid pleasanter surroundings. One of the most skilled physicians in New York was meeting his case with invigorating remedies, and he was beginning to look hopefully into the future.

"I feel as if I should be a man again, Kate."

Yes, these were the inspiring words that came from lips which had, for more than a year, given forth only gloomy utterances.

And he was a man again, in far less time than even the most hopeful of new friends from amid the old circles, who took a warm interest in his case, for an instant imagined. A little help; a little encouragement; a little opening of the darkened windows to let in gleams of sunlight—how like potent charms upon his mind and body they acted.

Not thought of! No, he had not been thought of for almost two years. But, when thought finding him out at last, grew quick with generous feelings, how soon the desert in which he lay weak and perishing, began to grow rich with greenness.

Men of business! you are too forgetful of those whom misfortunes press out of your quickly closing circles! You let them pass from memory, and interest, as well as from the old places. Think a little out of yourselves on this subject; and begin to inquire after the absent ones. Some of them may be, even now, in the saddest extremity, to the relief of which you would go instantly if you knew of its existence. But how are you to know, if you never think of, or ask for them?

VII.

LONG AFTERWARDS.

"YOUR coldness hurt Mrs. Lincoln," said one lady to another.

"I'm sorry," answered the lady to whom the remark was addressed; but the admission of a regret was not made with any feeling.

"Why do you treat her with such a distant reserve, Mrs. Arnold? I've noticed this a number of times. She's an excellent lady. We all like her exceedingly."

The eyes of Mrs. Arnold fell to the floor, and her face became grave.

"I wonder that you do not fancy Mrs. Lincoln. She's a lovely character—so intelligent, so refined, and with such a sweet spirit towards every one. The fault must be in yourself, if there is any natural repulsion."

It was an intimate friend who spoke, and the closing sentence was uttered with a smile.

"In that you may be right," said Mrs. Arnold, half smiling in return.

"Then there is a felt repulsion?"

"Yes."

"I call that singular. To me it seems that you were born for friends. Your tastes and sympathies run in the same direction; and you are interested in the same general subjects. I am sure, if you knew each other as well as I know you both, you would become closely knit together in friendship. I must get you into a nearer relation to Mrs. Lincoln."

"I would prefer remaining at my present distance," replied Mrs. Arnold.

"Why? There must be a reason for this."

"I don't like her."

"Mrs. Arnold! I'm surprised to hear you speak so decidedly. Mrs. Lincoln admires you; I've heard her say so, often; and wants to know you more intimately than she now does."

"That she never will, I'm thinking!"

Mrs. Arnold's brows began to gather darkly.

"What's the matter? What do you know about Mrs. Lincoln, that sets her beyond the limit of your friendly acquaintance?"

"The truth is," said Mrs. Arnold, "I've got an old grudge against her. There was a time when it would not gratify her social pride to call me her friend—and she treated me accordingly. She was a woman when I was a child."

"Well—go on."

Mrs. Arnold had paused, for she was conscious that her cheeks were burning—that her voice was losing its steadiness of tone.

"Perhaps I had as well keep silent," she said. "The subject is not a pleasant one."

"Go on, now. You have excited my curiosity. I would like to know exactly how you stand with Mrs. Lincoln."

"There may be pride and weakness in the case," returned Mrs. Arnold. "But no matter. Thus it stands: I was a quick, intelligent child, but very sensitive. Mrs. Lincoln visited my mother, and I often met her in the parlor, when company was present. She

was a beautiful talker, and it was one of my greatest pleasures to sit and listen. I was really fascinated with her; and I thought her the loveliest lady I had ever seen. One day when she was at our house, I sat listening to the conversation that was passing between her and some other friend of my mother's, drinking in, I apprehend, a great deal more than was imagined, and drinking it in with delight. My mother had left the room for some purpose. While she was absent, Mrs. Lincoln, in speaking of prevalent human weaknesses, quoted a couplet from Pope:

"The love of Praise, howe'er conceal'd by art,
Rules, more or less, and glows in every Heart."

"Now I had read largely in Pope, and held in memory a great many of his terse maxims. Every word of this couplet was familiar, and my ear instantly detected one wrong word in the quotation. In my childish ardor and artlessness I said, looking into Mrs. Lincoln's face:

"It is *reigns*, ma'am."

"Her eyes turned, flashing on me, in an instant, and with an angry face, she said :

"'You've forgotten yourself, Miss Pert! Children should be seen, not heard.'

"She never saw or heard me in the parlor again. I went out, with hot cheeks and heart full of pain and bitterness. I was sensitive to a fault, and this rebuke—so unjustly given—hurt me to a degree that few would imagine. I never mentioned it to my mother; nor, indeed, to any living soul before this time; and it is over twenty years since the slight occurrence. My pride was deeply wounded. She had said these cruel words before two or three other ladies in whose good opinion I wished to stand well; and as a child I could not look them in the face again. From how much pleasure and instruction was I shut out from that time. Before, I had been anxious to meet my mother's intelligent friends; now, I kept myself out of sight as much as possible, when we had company, for either Mrs. Lincoln, or some one of the ladies who had been present when she re-

buked me, was almost sure to be of the number.

"It has so happened, that, since I became a woman, Mrs. Lincoln and I have, until recently, moved in different circles. I grew up, out of her observation, and married. It is more than probable that she has entirely forgotten the incident which burnt itself into my childish memory—may not even now remember me as the daughter of her old friend. But, I have not forgotten, and can never forget. Grown people fail to remember, in their treatment of children, that girls and boys have memories, and that girls and boys, in a few years, become men and women.

"And now, my friend, you have the secret of my repugnance to Mrs. Lincoln. She pushed me away from her once; but she will never have a second opportunity."

"The child's resentments should not accompany, into after life, the child's memory," said the friend, as Mrs. Arnold ceased. "Mrs. Lincoln spoke from a sud-

den sense of wounded pride, and no doubt repented, in the next calm moment. Your mature reason, your observation, and your acquired self-knowledge, should put you right in this matter. It was not the best side of her nature that presented itself then, but her worst side perhaps. I have my worst side, and show it, sometimes, to other people; and it is just the same with you. But, neither of us would like this worst side to govern common estimation. No—no, my friend. You are wrong in letting that old grudge, as you call it, remain.

"Forgive and forget! Why, the world would be lonely,
The garden a Wilderness left to deform,
If the flowers but remembered the chilling winds only,
And the fields gave no verdure for fear of the storm."

"I shall let her go her way through the world," replied Mrs. Arnold, coldly. "It is wide enough for us both. That I have not sought to harm her, you will see in the fact that I have never spoken of this before; and I have done so now under a kind of compul-

sion. But, I can never feel pleasant in her company, and shall, therefore, keep her at a distance."

A few days after this conversation, the lady friend who had talked with Mrs. Arnold was sitting in company with Mrs. Lincoln. Conversation passed from theme to theme, when, at what seemed a fitting moment, the lady said:

"Do you remember this incident, of years ago? You made a quotation from a well known poet, and a little girl corrected you in a single word."

A flash of interest went over the face of Mrs. Lincoln.

"Yes, I remember it very well."

"And what you said to her?"

"I do; and as one of the regretted things of my life. She was a dear little girl; sweet tempered and intelligent—but, a trifle forward, and apt to put in a word now and then, in so mature a way, that innocence on her part sometimes seemed like forwardness. Yes; I remember her correction, and that I

lost temper, and called her Miss Pert, and I don't know what else. I was sorry and ashamed the next moment. That she felt it keenly I know, for, always after that, she was so cold and distant, that I could hardly ever get a word with her. But that was more than twenty years ago. Her mother died while she was still young, and she then passed from my observation. How came you to know of this?"

"I had the story from her own lips."

"When?"

"Only a few days since."

"And she has carried the memory of that hasty rebuke rankling in her heart ever since?"

There was a tone of sadness in the voice of Mrs. Lincoln.

"Ever since," said the lady. "It hurt her sensitive pride to a degree that made forgetfulness impossible; and it hurts her still."

"Ah! if we could so recall our hasty words, as to take away their power to do

harm, what a blessed thing it would be? But an impulse once given, cannot die. If it moves to good, happy are they who set it in motion—if to evil, alas! alas! I set an evil impulse in motion, and it is hurting still. But where is she? I must bring her, if possible, into a better state of mind."

"You have met Mrs. Arnold."

"Mrs. Arnold! Can it be possible! Surely she is not the daughter of my old friend Mrs. Willis. She is not the little Emily I have thought of so many times, and always with a troubled memory in my heart."

"The same," was answered.

"And in all these years she has not forgotten nor forgiven my fault. I must have wounded her sorely."

"You did. Hers seems to be one of those proudly sensitive natures, into which all impressions go deeply. I asked her why she kept herself at such a distance from you. But she avoided a direct answer, at the same time intimating a state of repulsion. I pressed

for the reason, and she gave it rather reluctantly, averring, at the same time that she had never opened her lips on the subject in all her life before—not even to her mother.”

“Extraordinary! I could not have believed that an impression, made on a child’s mind, would remain in such distinctiveness and force through so many years. What a lesson it is!”

“I wish it were possible for you to get near her, Mrs. Lincoln, and let her feel how kind a heart you have. She has admirable qualities. And I am sure that if this barrier were removed, you would be fast friends.”

“Oh, it must be removed,” said Mrs. Lincoln. “Now that I know of its existence, I will have no peace until it is level with the earth. It was my hands that builded it, and my hands shall take down every stone of separation.”

“There is a lady in the parlor,” said a servant, coming to the door of Mrs. Arnold’s room. “And here is her card, ma’am.”

Mrs. Arnold took the card, and read the name of Mrs. Lincoln. She stood, for some time, irresolute. It was on her lips to say—“Ask her to excuse me. I am engaged.” But she was not engaged. And, moreover, since her communication to the friend who had spoken so favorably of Mrs. Lincoln, she had felt less satisfied with herself. It did seem like a vindictive spirit thus to cherish ill-will through so many years.

“Say that I will be down in a few minutes.”

It cost her an effort to utter this; but it was said; the meeting must take place. She sat in quite a disturbed state for some time, before venturing to go down stairs. Then with what self-possession she could assume, she went to meet the woman who, twenty years ago, wounded her so deeply that the pain had not yet died out of her consciousness.

The two ladies stood face to face, and hand in hand. The name of Mrs. Arnold had been spoken warmly; that of Mrs. Lincoln with an

almost repellent coldness. There were a few moments' silence. Mrs. Lincoln said—

"Your mother was my best friend. I loved her as a sister. Will you not, for her sake, forgive the cruel words that hurt pride sent thoughtlessly from my lips—words repented of almost as soon as spoken, and regretted many, many times?"

The voice of Mrs. Lincoln trembled with the deep feeling that was in her heart.

"Oh, if I had dreamed of their power to hurt so deeply, I would have sought, years ago, to repair the wrong."

This was unexpected. There was no time to reconstruct the barrier which Mrs. Lincoln had suddenly thrown down. No time to gather up the broken chain of ill-will and unite the links. The tender and true in Mrs. Arnold's heart responded. She was softened to tears. Her mother's name had touched her like a talisman. "My best friend; I loved her as a sister." These words disarmed her.

"Let the past be forgotten!" she answered,

resolutely, as she closed her hand tightly on the hand that was clasping hers.

"Forgotten and forgiven both, my dear Mrs. Arnold, so that we may be friends in the true acceptance of the word. My heart, even without recognizing in you the child of an old friend, has been drawing toward you steadily. It perceived in you something congenial. And now, may I not receive from your lips a kiss of forgiveness?"

Mrs. Arnold bent toward her.

"Let it be genuine," said Mrs. Lincoln.

And it was. In that kiss the old pain of wounded pride was extinguished. How long it had rankled!

A single hasty ill-spoken word, what years of bitterness may it not give to some weak heart! We fling out hard sentences, in the heat of sudden anger, that may hurt like hammer-strokes; and, in most cases, forget that such blows were given. But they have made memory, against us, retentive by pain.

VIII.

SOMEBODY.

"Who is that young lady?"

"Her name is Perkins," was the answer.

"There's a style about her not often met with."

"Yes; I've noticed her on the street a great many times. Once seen, she is likely to be remembered."

"Perkins? Perkins? What family of Perkinses?"

"I can't enlighten you beyond the fact that her father is said to be very rich. He is from New York, I have heard. You know the elegant house Randall built?"

"Yes."

"He's bought that property."

"Ah! then he must have a few spare dollars. What is his business?"

"He has none, I believe."

"A retired merchant, I presume."

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"No doubt."

"He's got a stylish looking girl for a daughter, that's certain. Just observe her now, as the light falls over her! Isn't that a face, once seen to be remembered? What a brilliant pair of eyes! full of fire and feeling. And such a complexion! As the poet would say—

"Like the apple-tree blossom
From the dew-fountains fed,
Is the bloom of her cheek,
With its white and its red."

Thin, wide nostrils, and lips of which a sculptor might dream! Ah! that is a face of exquisite perfection."

"Beautiful, certainly; yet to me it fails in womanly softness. She carries her head a little too proudly."

"Conscious superiority cannot always hide itself. Gifted, accomplished, and, for a nature like hers, something undisciplined, we may infer, it can hardly be a cause of wonder, or even rebuke, that pride should a little vaunt itself. The wonder would be at a dif-

ferent result. We forgive in some what we never tolerate in others."

"Did you see that?" asked the other, his tones expressing surprise.

"I did."

"What do you think of it?"

A young lady, well known to both of the gentlemen who were conversing, had just been presented to Miss Perkins, who received the introduction with an icy stiffness of manner, that could not be called lady-like. Her head drew itself up with an undisguised haughtiness, her lips closed proudly, her eyes looked coldly into the crimsoning face of the modest girl who stood before her. Conscious superiority was stamped on attitude and expression.

"It doesn't just please me," was replied to the question. "And yet she looks beautiful, even under the veil of pride. The manner of her education, and the social sphere in which she has moved, have conspired to give her false ideas of personal consequence. So I explain it."

"She will not gain much in the estimation of people in our circle by putting on airs of superiority toward Mary Langdon."

"No; but when she comes to a more intimate acquaintance with Miss Langdon, she will honor her as an equal."

There was an unsatisfied shrug in response.

Remarks of this character were not confined to the interlocutors we have introduced. The air, manner, style of beauty, dress and conduct of Miss Perkins, drew upon her observant eyes from all directions. She was noticed on the street, in company, at public places—everywhere, with a minuteness of observation that girls of less dash and pretension escape. Sensible people, and those who understood what the word lady meant, were not favorably impressed by Miss Perkins. They saw snobbishness—a homely but expressive word—where others saw an air of genuine superiority, to the manner born.

"She acts as if she was somebody, and knew it," was said by another, as he looked

after her, moving across the room, on the arm of a young man not over highly esteemed for moral worth in the community. Her step was very stately.

"The ground is hardly good enough for her feet. There ought to be a great deal of real substance back of all this."

"And is, without doubt. She is hardly the fool to build so imposing an edifice on a poor foundation."

"I don't know. Real worth is not, usually, pretentious. I am always suspicious in cases of this kind."

"What do you know of her family?"

"Nothing. Common report says that Mr. Perkins has immense wealth. He is some retired merchant prince, I suppose."

"He doesn't strike me as a very princely looking man."

"No. But men don't always, in the outer aspect, reveal their true quality."

"Who is this Perkins?" The question was put to a third person, who came up at the moment.

"A retired shoemaker, or leather-dealer, whichever you will."

"No!"

"It's a fact, and nothing to his discredit; rather to his honor, that he had energy enough to make a fortune out of the slender materials that were given into his hands."

"Are you certain of this?"

"Yes; I have it from one who knew him thirty years ago, and who has worn shoes of his manufacture. He started in life as a journeyman shoemaker; saved enough to open a shop for himself; got along by industry and economy; and finally accumulated a handsome fortune which he is now enjoying."

"And this handsome, proud, dashing young lady, who can treat Mary Langdon with indifference, as though beneath her, is his daughter! I must get a little nearer to her, and see what are her personal merits."

"The Langdons live opposite the Perkinses?"

"Yes."

"And in a far humbler manner."

"Yes. Mr. Langdon is poor, and Mary gives lessons in music, French and Italian, in order to lighten the burdens that rest upon her father."

"And a noble girl she is—worth a hundred of your painted, butterfly chits, who in all public places offend the eyes of sensible men and women. Mr. Langdon, once among our wealthiest citizens, but now reduced in circumstances, is as far above common men, as to character, education, mental endowments, and social accomplishments, as his daughter is above the crowd of girls I have designated. Look at him and then at Mr. Perkins. You will be in no doubt as to which is made of fine, and which of common stuff."

The two gentlemen, soon after, found themselves in a group of which Mary Langdon and Miss Perkins formed a part. The former was quiet and observant, the latter gay, talkative, and disposed to make of herself a central attraction. A new book was mentioned, and the opinion of Miss Perkins asked. She had

not read it, but ventured a flippant criticism on the author.

"Have you read the book, Miss Langdon?" asked one of the gentleman who had joined the group.

The question was meant to bring the two young ladies in contrast.

She smiled, and said, "Yes."

"How were you pleased?"

"The reading of that volume," she replied, in her sweet unobtrusive way, "is a thing to be remembered. To me it was a rare pleasure."

"He draws his characters with great skill."

"Yes," she answered; "with a skill that makes them stand out, individualized, to your mind, as clearly as characters in real life stand out. And yet none of them are the men and women we see."

"Hilda is charming," remarked one of her auditors.

"For that sweet type of pure womanhood all women should thank him," said Miss

Langdon, as a new beauty, born of the spirit, flushed her gentle face.

"And all men, too," was answered; "for such an ideal in the mind of a woman, must lift her, in some degree, above selfishness and conventionality, making her more worthy of her high mission—and the more worthy she becomes, the more surely will man rise to higher and purer altitudes."

"What do you call her mission?" here broke in Miss Perkins, smartly. "To sew on buttons, and nurse babies?"

And she laughed a gay little laugh. The conversation had gone beyond her depth, and she made an effort to draw it back into shallow water.

Two or three pairs of eyes were turned upon her face, suddenly, though not admiringly. No one answered. After a pause, Miss Langdon said:

"I have read many descriptions of St. Peter's at Rome; but never had the vast interior so clearly represented to my mind as in this book. And the remarkable thing

is, that the description, which is really subordinate to the incidents that hold your deep feeling in the story, leaves on your mind an almost daguerreotype impression. I stood, for the time, amid its aisles and chapels, awed by its grandeur, and bewildered by its untold wealth of ornament."

A cloud was visible over the face of Miss Perkins, and it veiled, to more eyes than one, the beauty that played over it, like sunshine, a little while before. She felt the superiority of Miss Langdon, and it made her angry. Again she threw in a remark, intended to change the subject of conversation; but she failed as before, and drew eyes upon her whose expression by no means flattered her vanity.

"Do you sing, Miss Perkins?" asked one of the group.

"No, Sir," was answered, with a slight toss of the head, and an air meant to convey the impression that she thought singing a vulgar accomplishment.

"You play; I have heard you." And

the young lady was taken to the piano, on which she pounded expressionless, through a difficult piece of Italian music, which her teacher had given her as an exercise, and into the theme of which she had not the appreciative taste to enter. There was a sudden stillness in the room, when the first chords of music ran through it with an emphasis; but, in a little while, the murmur of voices began again, and soon half drowned the throbbing instrument.

Miss Perkins left the piano in disgust and ill humor at the close of her first performance, much to the relief of all sensitive ears. Then Miss Langdon took her place, at the request of more than one.

The same stillness pervaded the room at her first touches, as in the case of Miss Perkins; but how different were the touches and how prolonged the silence! There was no effort at brilliancy; no choice of imposing subjects; no loud clashing of the strings. She was not performing in the effort to extort a reluctant admiration, but to give, if possi-

ble, pleasure to her listeners. And so she took familiar themes, light and pleasing; or tender with pathos; or sweet with bird-like melodies—her fingers all the while playing with the keys as if every touch were a sentiment. The murmur of voices did not go on again after the first stillness; but every ear listened until the last notes died. Then words of praise, or expressions of delight, passed from lip to lip. Miss Perkins heard them, and they stung her pride.

“Nothing but a teacher!” she said with a curling lip, to a girl who sat near her; “and this is her card. Perhaps she’ll get a new scholar to-morrow.”

The girl laughed at her petty smartness, but did not admire the spirit in which she had spoken. It happened that within ear distance, one of those independent, free speaking, not over-delicate individuals, met in all companies, happened to be standing. Mary Langdon was one of her favorites, and the remark of Miss Perkins, which she heard distinctly, put the match to her quick feel-

ings. Turning towards her, she asked, loudly enough for at least half a dozen to hear—

“Can you tell me in what respect a shoemaker is better than a teacher?”

We by no means justify this unladylike rudeness. We merely give the fact. Miss Perkins had provoked a rebuke, and it was given in no honeyed shape. Her face burnt crimson-red in an instant, and she bent it down low to hide the tell-tale glow.

“That was rather severe, Miss Caspar,” said one of the gentlemen, whose curious observation had already been drawn towards Miss Perkins.

“I know it was,” she answered; “but the shallow upstart provoked me beyond endurance. You heard her remark about Mary Langdon?” “No.”

“She said, with a curl of her thin lip, that Mary was only a teacher, and that her sweet performance just now was given as a card. Contemptible!”

“That was rather sharp.”

“It was the mean snarling of a little soul.

Who and what is she, I wonder? A shoemaker's daughter! I've searched out her pedigree. People that put on airs must expect to be sifted to the bottom, as she and hers have been. Her mother bound shoes for a living, when her father, a cobbler, married her. That was their beginning.”

“No disgrace to them,” was answered.

“Nobody said it was; my grandfather was a blacksmith, and my father made barrels in his younger days, but I don't see that I am better in consequence, than the highly accomplished daughter of a highly educated, honorable gentleman, for all that. Miss Perkins! Pah! What is she in herself? She has but little mind; is poorly educated; has no real accomplishments; is vulgar and badly behaved in the street, and in public places; is proud, vain, and self-conceited. Why, she hasn't a claim beyond a certain taking style of beauty—taking, I mean, to a class of young men who cannot see mind and feeling in a face—to any kind of social position.”

SOMEBODY..

"You forgot her father's money."

"Throw that in, if you will, as a make-weight. She needs it, in all conscience!"

"And this is the stylish, handsome, dashing, pretentious Miss Perkins?"

"It is."

"I thought her somebody."

"And you find her just—*nobody*!"

"Alas! how the find gold is dimmed."

"There is no fine gold to dim," replied Miss Casper. "I have only rubbed off the tinsel, and showed you the coarse-grained substance beneath. All is not gold that glitters."

THE END.