


Married and Single
Marriage and Celibacy Contrasted

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CHAPTER 1.

"I wish *Dora Enfield* were not so lovely, or that she did not cross my path so often. I shall get so deeply in love with the girl before long, that there will be no hope for me!"

This was said, half in jest, half in earnest, by *Milford Lane*, a young attorney, to his intimate friend and companion, *Henry Trueman*.

"You could not love one more worthy your best affections," the friend replied. "Dora is —"

"Oh, as to that," Lane said, interrupting him, "the girl would do well enough, no doubt. But, like the apostle Paul, I am of opinion that to *marry* is well enough, but to remain *single* is better."

"Paul wrote many things hard to be understood, which the ignorant and unlearned sometimes twist to their own condemnation. This is no doubt one of them."

"A fair retort; but no very strong argument in the case. If a man wants to make himself *miserable* for life — if he wants a *millstone* about his neck — let him get married. Look at poor Baker. Small income — sick wife — seven children — bad health, and in debt into the bargain. Ugh! It makes me shudder to think of it. I'm afraid, Harry."

"Look at old Pettigrew, creeping about like a shadow. I haven't seen a smile on his face for a year. He has no friend, no companion, no pleasant home. A sour, fretful old bachelor; life has for him but few charms, and they linger faintly about his head. I can imagine no state so lamentable as his. Are you not more afraid of being one day like him?"

"Not half so much afraid as I would be of dying in the almshouse, or starving in jail for debt. A man needn't be sour and crusty because he happens to be old and a bachelor. I can show you a much fairer specimen than Pettigrew. There is Leslie — sixty-five, and still single. I needn't draw his picture; you know him as well as I do."

"Leslie is a remarkable *exception*," replied Henry Trueman. "His *natural disposition* must have been extremely amiable, and his mind calm and evenly balanced, or he never could have attained his present age without his temper becoming soured. But do you suppose, for a moment, that he is as happy as his neighbor Glanding, with his house full of children and grandchildren?"

"As happy as Glanding? Oh dear! yes. But you don't really mean what you say. Glanding is not, and cannot be a happy man."

"Relatively speaking, he is."

"You forget the trouble he has had to get along financially. It has been as much as he could do to keep his head above water for the last ten years. Such a family as he has to support is enough to swamp anyone."

"He still floats safely along, Milford."

"And may go under tomorrow! If I were in his situation, I would go crazy."

"Oh no; you would find that it had in it *pleasures* of which you had never dreamed. When that old man goes home at the close of each day — there are sweet voices full of affectionate words for his ear, and gentle hands whose delight it is to minister to his needs. It was only last evening that I passed his house, and saw him sitting near the window of his parlor. His fine face was in repose, his eye calm, his lips half unclosed, and his head gently inclined in a listening attitude. A low voice was warbling a strain of the olden time — a strain that he had, doubtless, loved in days long since passed away — a strain that first greeted his ears, perchance, from the lips of a dear sister; or, it may be, from her who bore him the lovely daughter whose voice was then sinking sweetly into his soul. Was not that old man happy — happy beyond comparison with the solitary bachelor, whose condition you seem to think so enviable? Surely he was!"

"Henry!" said Milford Lane, speaking with some energy of expression, "can you suppose that old Mr. Glanding could, even at that moment, forget his daughter Mary's unhappy condition? No, that were impossible. Mary was his favorite child. She wedded against his will, and unwisely. I saw her this very day as I passed the house of her brutal husband. Ah! one glance at her pale, sad face, gave me the

heartache. Her father sees her, perhaps, daily. Does not his heart ache for her all the while? It must, Henry, it must!"

Lane spoke with much warmth. It was some moments before Trueman replied. When he did, his voice indicated the effect of his friend's words upon his feelings.

"Your hand jars a *discordant* string," he said, "nevertheless, it is only *one* defective cord among many harmonious ones. To look upon a suffering child must be deeply painful to a father's heart; but mingled with this very pain, is an internal sweetness of feeling, which springs from the tender, yearning love that blesses the heart of every right-minded parent. It is not in the nature of anyone to fix his eyes *always* upon the *dark side* of a picture. Neither the death of a child, nor the unhappiness of one can make a parent's heart permanently wretched while other happy children remain, and he can still gather them to his side. Nay, even if they are all separated from their early home, with heart and pen he may still hold communion with them."

"But if dead?"

"They will still live in his affections, and bless him. I remember a case in point; a case, too, that bears particularly upon the whole subject of our conversation. You know Martin?"

"Yes, a lonely old man. Wife and children all dead; in the short space of five years, five beautiful daughters followed each other to the grave, cut down in the flower of their age by consumption. But what of him?"

"It is scarcely a week since I was present at a brief conversation that passed between Leslie and Martin. They had been young men together; one had married, and the other not. After the passage of forty years, they stood again side by side, each alone in the world as before.

'I am the happiest man,' Leslie said, towards the conclusion of their conversation. 'I have lived a calm, quiet life; and here I stand, in the autumn of my days, without a branch seared by the lightning or broken by the wind!'

'But where is the *fruit*? Every tree bears fruit, the end of its existence, friend Leslie.'

'Fruit!' returned Leslie. 'Ah, Martin! fruit may bless the branch if allowed to remain until ripe; but, if torn too early away, only a bleeding stem will remain. Rich fruit once hung upon your branches, my friend; but where is it now? Rather let me fill up my days in barrenness, than thus be shorn of my pride and joy!'

"I could see the lip of Martin quiver for a moment. But when he replied, his voice was clear and elevated, yet full of power.

'You ask,' he said, 'where that fruit is now? the fruit of this poor body. It is yonder!' pointing a trembling finger upward. 'Is there not a joy,' he added, laying his hand eloquently upon his bosom, 'in the thought that I have given to the blessed company in Heaven five happy angels? Tears were in his eyes as he said this, but they were not the tears of sorrow. His children had been godly, and he knew that they were, as he had said, happy. He was too *unselfish* to wish them back again, and too *wise* to grieve vainly for their absence. Can you not see that, in his case, it was more blessed to have had children born to him, even if they were taken away — than to have passed an unfruitful life?"

"I will not say no," He friend replied gravely. "But the case of Martin is an exception; he is a man of great firmness of spirit, rectitude, and deep religious feeling."

"Just what we *all* should strive to be; without this, we need not hope to find peace in any condition. It is a great mistake to set out with the sole end of securing the highest degree of *personal happiness*; let us rather ask ourselves what are our *duties* in life, and what is the true goal of our existence? If we do this, and leave the event to Him who governs all things for us, we shall act a wise part. The close of life will then be sweet, for in that hour we can look back and see that it has been spent for good."

If Lane felt convinced that there was force in what his friend said, it was against his will. His opinion of marriage was therefore unchanged; his silence, which seemed to Trueman the effect of a half-formed conviction of the truth, caused the latter to say still farther,

"That you will be happier as a married than as a single man, I have no doubt; but this is not the only view you should take of the subject. By marriage will you not make *another* happy?"

"I cannot say. Only time could tell."

“You have already confessed a preference for Dora Enfield?”

“Why, yes, a kind of preference. The fact is, Dora is a charming creature; no one can meet her often without feeling drawn towards her. If I could make up my mind to marry — then Dora would be the girl of my choice.”

“Suppose you had made up your mind to marry, and to offer your hand to Dora Enfield; and suppose that Dora reciprocated your feelings, but deemed it more prudent not to assume the duties and responsibilities of marriage, preferring the *ease and quiet of single life* to the *cares and anxieties* that ever attend the marital and maternal relations — would you not think the *selfishness* that caused her to act from such views and feelings, wrong?”

“I do not think that I would; she would show more wisdom than weakness. I, for one, will never blame a woman for refusing to marry; a man’s lot has in it little that is enviable, a woman’s must be wretched.”

“If *all* acted from such views, what would be the consequence?”

“There is no danger of that. The great mass glide into the *meshes of matrimony* like fish into a net, dreaming not of the consequences, until repentance is too late. But what consequences are to be feared?”

“The human race would perish!”

“Well?”

“Can you see no evil in that?”

“What would be the evil?”

“Do you look upon life as a blessing or a curse?”

“As a blessing, if well improved; as a curse, if otherwise.”

“If offered the alternative, would you retain life, or pass forever into a state of non-existence?”

The idea of being blown out like a candle — of sinking into eternal unconsciousness — presented itself vividly to the mind of Lane, causing a slight involuntary shudder as he replied,

“Give me *life* at any cost.”

“It is, then, good to be born?”

“I suppose so.”

“But had your *father* acted upon the principle you are seeking to confirm — you would never have been born; he would never have given life to one more being, destined to be happy and useful forever.”

“That, you think, is my destiny.”

“All may be happy in Heaven.”

“But all are not *happy* — all do not find *Heaven* — all are not *useful*.”

“The reason is plain. All will not go there — all will not be useful. Too many, like yourself, look more to their *individual ease*, than to the effect their conduct will have upon others. Too much to *self* — and too little to the uses of life.”

“Then you think that I will never get to Heaven unless I marry?”

“I did not say so. Heaven is a state of order and happiness — the latter dependant upon the former. Marriage is an orderly state; for it was instituted by the Creator, and is essential to the continuance of the human race. If I refuse, from mere ends of personal ease, to enter into this orderly state, I cannot be happy. Besides, the love which makes Heaven, must be a *love of doing good to others* outside of ourselves; for that would make us likenesses and images of Him who is the center of Heaven. In what way can we do more good, than in raising up and educating children, who will be useful members in society — men and women who will strive as we have, or ought to have striven, to elevate the world into an appreciation and love of what is good and true, and who shall at last be raised to a heavenly and higher sphere of uses, to love good and do good forever. Who can estimate the *use* to mankind that a single individual may perform? Who can tell the good that your child may do? And good continues in its operations through generations and generations yet unborn. Look at a Washington, look at a Franklin, look at a Howard. The mother who bore with pain, and nourished with tender solicitude, the great and good Washington — did not see to the end of her labors. She was not buoyed up in her duty by the elevating consciousness that her babe would become the savior of his country; that for ages his name would be synonymous with all that was great and good. But as a mother she performed, lovingly, her duty. Was she not right? Does not your heart become chilled at the soul-revolting idea, that all the noble

deeds and good influences of a Washington would have been lost to this nation and to the world, if his father had acted the strange, unnatural, criminal part you propose to yourself?"

"Do you expect your children to be Washingtons, or Franklins, or Howards?"

"I expect them to be *godly* men, and *useful* to their fellows in whatever stations they may be called to fill."

"What guarantee have you for this?"

"Solomon has said, 'Train up a child in the way he should go — and when he is old he will not depart from it.'"

"Solomon was a wise man; but he could not have looked very closely into this matter. Every day's experience contradicts the assertion."

"I do not think so."

"Strange that you should not. Isn't it a thing of constant occurrence, to see the children of the best men, children who have been raised with the most judicious care — often turning out the worst?"

"Seemingly with the most judicious care, I would say," Trueman replied. "For me, no matter what the appearance is, I have settled it in my mind, that where children turn out badly — it is in consequence of some defect in their early education. We know well enough, that such as are exposed to disorderly and wicked influences in childhood, make, as a general thing, the worst men; while, in tracing back to early years the life of the upright man, some particular germ of the good that time has developed and matured, may be found planted in the tender soil of his infantile mind. If the exposure of a child to evil and disorderly influences endangers his moral well-being — then to surround him with orderly and good influences must have an opposite effect. Of this I am so well satisfied, that I should have no fears for my children if I rightly educated, from the earliest moment of existence, their infantile minds."

"If ! — But who has the wisdom and the self-denial to do this?"

"True. There is the drawback. We are weak and imperfect beings, and often our best efforts are not guided by the requisite wisdom. But, my friend, if we will look earnestly to Him who gives us children, and whose they are — then He will enable us to educate them for Heaven. This is my trust. In conscious weakness at this point, lies, my heart tells me, the power to do my duties aright."

CHAPTER 2.

At the very time the conversation given in the last chapter was transpiring, *Dora Enfield*, to whom allusion had been made, was sitting alone in her chamber, pensive and thoughtful. Her years were only twenty. These had matured into more than ordinary loveliness a sweet young face, and given strength to a mind of unusual brilliancy. Those who were attracted to her side by the beauty of her countenance, lingered there — charmed with the order, strength, and beauty of her mind.

For some time she had remained near an open window that looked out upon a flower-garden, which her own hands had tended, lost in thought or dreamy musings that cast a shadow over her fair face. At length, with an effort to throw off this state of mind, she arose and went to a table on which lay several volumes. After taking up first one and then another, and laying all down in turn, she went back to her place by the window, where she seated herself on an ottoman, and resting her cheek upon her hand, gave herself up fully to the thoughts and feelings that were pressing with more than an ordinary weight upon her spirits.

Half an hour had thus passed, when a young friend came in — one with whom she was on terms of close intimacy. Her name was *Edith May*. She had been betrothed to *Henry Trueman* for some months. Their wedding day was fast approaching.

Dora roused herself up when Edith entered, but she could not entirely shake off her pensive feelings. They were too deeply seated.

“You do not look well this morning, Dora,” her young friend said, with some concern in her voice.

“I am well enough in body,” was Dora’s reply, forcing a smile, “but not so well in mind; though why I should droop just now, I can hardly tell. It is strange, is it not? how our feelings will sometimes become overshadowed without our being able clearly to define the cause. Is it not so with you?”

“I cannot say that it is, Dora. My spirits do not sink. I have, in fact, too much to make me happy. A few short months, and my dearest hopes on earth will be realized. Why should not my heart be light?”

Dora replied to this by a sigh, that came up from her bosom unconsciously to herself; a gentle sigh, scarcely perceived by the ear of her friend.

“If anyone has reason to be happy, it is you, Edith,” she said, rallying herself after a moment of abstraction. “Soon to be wedded to a man worthy of your hand — how can your spirits be other than buoyant? And yet, *marriage* is a solemn thing. When I think of it seriously, the idea of taking up its deep responsibilities makes me tremble. But I, perhaps, shall never be called upon to assume them.”

“You? And why not?”

“I doubt very much whether my hand will ever be sought by one to whom I can yield it.”

“But I have no doubts on that subject. It will not be long, I am sure, before I shall see you a happy bride.”

Dora shook her head. The subject seemed to give her pain, and Edith, perceiving this, made no farther allusion to it.

The mood exhibited by Dora was altogether new to her friend. Its cause she could not clearly define. Her first and natural conclusion was, that some matter of the *heart* produced this new state of *mind*. But, as Dora did not seem at liberty to confide anything to her on the subject, delicacy caused her to refrain from making to it any very pointed allusion. They parted, after having spent a couple of hours together, when Dora relapsed into the pensive state from which the visit of her friend had aroused her.

The cause of this, a word will explain. She had been thrown of late much into company with the young man who had expressed to Trueman his preference for her. The first time she met him, her heart was interested. Each subsequent interview confirmed the favorable impression. All this was unacknowledged to herself fully. The pleasure she felt in his society had not yet been contrasted in her thoughts with the lonely, pensive feeling that followed. Still, something of the truth was coming into manifest perception. This disturbed more deeply, instead of having a tranquillizing effect — for *Milford Lane* had not shown towards her any of those attentions which could warrant her in cherishing for him any very particular regard.

For two years she had gone into company, and been quite a *belle* for a large portion of that time. Twice offers of marriage had been made to her; but her views of the marriage relation were such as to prevent her forming that sacred connection, except upon the highest and purest grounds. She was a believer in the doctrine that love, and love alone — should unite in marriage. A union based upon any other ground, she looked upon as only an effigy of marriage; a mere external association — while there existed an *internal disjunction* of hearts. Rather than be thus wedded to anyone, she would have a thousand times preferred to live on through time's brief period in singleness and integrity.

Until she had been thrown, by circumstances, frequently into the society of Milford Lane, the pure waters of affection that were hidden in her heart, had never smiled beneath a sunbeam, or been rippled by a breeze. But his voice caused their surface to tremble, and awoke emotions which were new and *painfully sweet*. There was a constant sense of oppression about her heart, as if a hand were laid upon it. Many times in an hour she would inspire deeply, in order to relieve the oppression. But she could not throw it off. Her mind fell away from its usual cheerful tone, leaving her pensive and thoughtful. But she did not understand the nature of her own feelings. She knew not that the *germ of love* was in her heart, nor that the strange sensations she experienced, were but the effect of a conspiring of all that was in the heart towards the quickening of this germ into life. It was even so. He, of all other men, was the one who could rule in her affection. Him she could love deeply, purely, devotedly — him, and no other living man.

What were *his* views and feelings, has already been seen. No other woman had ever interested him as much as Dora Enfield. He thought of her almost hourly — dreamed of her at nights — and never felt so happy as when, forgetting his false views in relation to marriage, he sat entranced by her side. Beautiful and intelligent, possessing a highly cultivated taste, and governed in all things by correct principles — she was just the companion he would have sought, if he had determined to seek one at all. But his ideas in regard to life had suffered a strange and unnatural perversion; looking upon society in its most external form, and, therefore, seeing but *appearances*, and not realities — he imbibed the most erroneous views of marriage. He saw the *struggles* and *anxieties* of the poor man in his efforts to procure things needful for his family; but he did not see how amply he was *rewarded* for all this at home, in the loving care and devoted tenderness of his wife, and in the innocent prattle of his children, for whom God had given him a love that none but a parent can feel or understand. He saw the *defects* and *vices* of children, but he knew not how these can be borne with, nor how the duty of gradually elevating and perfecting their characters is attended, as all good uses are attended, with a pure inner delight. And more than this, he did not see how, in such a devotion, the parent became a co-worker with God in promoting the end of all creation. He saw children die, and turned away sick from witnessing the intense agony of the parent's stricken heart; but, like him who turns from the trampled flower, grieving that its leaves should be soiled and broken — he knew nothing of the *sweeter perfume* which breathed forth from a wounded spirit; he saw not that a *treasure* had been removed, nor thought upon those significant words of our blessed Savior, "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." He had never dreamed of the high uses of *afflictions*; he knew not how they withdraw the affections from mere sensual things, and open up in the soul deep and quiet places, the very existence of which was undreamed of before. He knew not their *elevating* and *purifying* power. And farther, as a short-sighted philosopher, he did not reflect that the affection in him for companionship, intimate inner companionship with a loving and lovely woman, was, and must continue to be, an unfailing fountain of happiness; and that the waters which ever gushed from this spring would, if pent up, overflow and destroy much good ground that would have brought forth its own harvest in season, while all along the true channel where the waters had been destined to run, the grass would be withered, the flowers fading, and the fruitless trees droop their almost sapless branches.

Could happiness result from such a desolation of the mental earth? How vain the thought? And yet Milford Lane seriously entertained the notion that, by *avoiding* the cares, troubles, and afflictions of the married life — he would secure to himself a peaceful journey, and a calm, contented old age. In getting away from the *evils*, as he supposed them — he had not the most distant conception of the *blessings* he would lose — blessings cheaply won at almost any sacrifice.

Lane was a *selfish* man — and from this selfishness flowed his views of marriage. He thought only of how marriage would affect him externally. He looked only to the means of securing to himself the highest

degree of *personal* happiness. Such an end always defeats itself. Formed for the marriage union, no man can act with an end to individual good alone, and secure the good he seeks. It is incompatible with the very nature of things. In the beginning God made the male and female, and made them for each other. This simple fact should at once settle the matter in any mind that for a moment entertains a question of the *expediency* of marriage. Man is not man, nor woman woman, simply because of some peculiar difference in bodily conformation. The difference is far more radical. It is a difference in spiritual organization — a difference that makes each *complete* only when conjoined to the other.

The false views of Milford Lane were not entertained without much reasoning, and constant struggles with himself. Nature pleaded strongly within him, and with double power when aided by a suddenly-awakening affection for Dora Enfield. Before he was well aware of the nature of the ground upon which he was standing, the maiden's voice had begun to echo in his *heart*, her image to haunt his *dreams*, and her form to present itself in his *mind* very many times in a day. With this, came the desire of being conjoined to her; of having her ever by his side as a *second self*; with the reluctant acknowledgment that he loved her, and must do painful violence to his feelings if he stood firmly by the principles he had laid down for the government of his conduct.

While this struggle was going on, Lane, sometimes by accident and sometimes from choice, was thrown much into the company of Dora. The approaching nuptials of Henry Trueman and Edith May, in which both himself and Dora were to act as attendants, brought them much and familiarly together, fixing the regard which Dora had begun to entertain for him, into a deep and unalterable affection — and drawing out his feelings towards her so fully as to startle him when he became conscious of their true nature.

Dora's state of mind soon showed itself so plainly, that Edith could no longer misunderstand the nature of the change that had at first been perceived, but not comprehended. Sometime before her own marriage took place, she had drawn from her friend a confession of the nature of her feelings towards Lane. Enough of this was communicated by her to Trueman, to make him understand exactly how the matter stood in Dora's mind.

A few days before that on which his marriage took place, he called in to see his friend Lane. He found him more than usually thoughtful, and ventured to allude, playfully, to the supposed cause, which was rightly conjectured to be the impression made upon his heart by Dora Enfield.

"There is no doubt, Trueman," was the serious reply, "that I love the girl better than I have ever loved anyone before. So much the worse for me. I *cannot* marry."

"Do give up that folly, and think and act like a reasonable man," was Trueman's half-impatient response.

"It is like a reasonable man, that I am trying to act, against the almost *irresistible power of a blind impulse*, or shall I call it destiny?"

"Like a madman, rather say, against the true order of human existence, without the maintenance of which happiness itself, nay, all mankind, would perish."

"As to happiness, Trueman, I have never yet seen a man who, in a few years after his marriage, did not become sadly changed."

"How?"

"From a pleasant, cheerful companion — into a thoughtful, sober, care-worn father of a family, whose ideas seemed never to rise above the prices of provisions, or some other matter connected with domestic affairs. Wouldn't I look pretty, now, to be seen with a basket on my arm, or a servant carrying one after me, threading my way through a market-house in search of beef, butter, and potatoes? Ugh! Don't talk about it!"

"You certainly are not serious."

"I certainly never was more so. I cannot conceal from myself that I have, somehow or other, gotten *desperately in love* with Dora. But, at the same time, the *pains and penalties of marriage* are too distinctly seen to allow me for one moment to think of entailing upon myself a lifetime of toil and trouble."

"But think of *Dora*. Are you not prepared to make some sacrifices for one whom you love?"

"Not *that* sacrifice. At any rate, I am not sure that my love is returned."

“Very sure of it, I am. If ever a maiden’s heart reflected perfectly the image of another — that maiden’s heart is Dora’s, and your image the one that is reflected.”

“You speak knowingly.”

“I have cause.”

A deep pause followed, broken at length by Lane, who said, breathing heavily as he spoke,

“I will not be so unkind to her as to entail upon her the *cares*, the *privations*, the *pains* attendant upon marriage. I love her too well. Ah, my friend! I could never bear to see that sweet young face in shadow, nor those bright eyes lustreless from sickness, sorrow, or disappointment. Yet these are the inevitable attendants on the matrimonial state. Look at Mary Glenroy! It is not three years since you and I saw her stand at the altar, a *happy* bride. I met her not two hours ago, riding out in her husband’s carriage alone. Her face was pale and sunken, her eyes far back in their sockets, and the whole expression of her countenance deeply melancholy. Oh! you cannot tell how sad this sight made me feel. I looked at her, and thought of Dora. My weak heart had almost given up; my love for the maiden had well-nigh conquered; but this *vision* came just in time to save me!”

“And you conclude that Mary Glenroy, or, rather, Mrs. Malcolm, is unhappy.”

“Unhappy! Can anyone mistake the signs of an unhappy heart?”

“It seems that *you* have. Mrs. Malcolm is happy in her marriage relation. Poor health has robbed her cheek of its bloom, and her eye of its brightness — but not her *heart* of its genial warmth. For what she has lost, more than sevenfold has been given. She now lives a true life, the life of a loving wife in that of her husband. The children that have blessed her union are dearer to her than any conceivable gifts that Heaven could bestow. Though her mind has concern and care for them — though giving them birth has shattered her feeble constitution — the immeasurable love, so pure, so unselfish, and therefore so sweet, which God has given her for them, is a reward not to be estimated. Believe me, that the mere external repose, or pleasure, if you so choose to call it, that an exemption from duty and the care which attends it gives — is as nothing in comparison with the inner delight which pervades the soul when duty is done, even if, in the performance of it, there is labor and pain. If we would *truly live* — then we must leave the *smooth plain of indolent ease*, clamber up the mountains, and penetrate the deep, silent valleys; or else we will have no knowledge of the height and depth which are in the soul, nor of the sweeter joys which lie farthest concealed from transient vision. If we fear the prickly burr which covers the chestnut, and shrink from a few slight wounds — we cannot taste the pleasant kernel that lies garnered within. Think of this, my friend.”

“I have thought of it, and am still of opinion that, as a wise man, I ought to let well enough alone. I am quite comfortable as I am, and think it more than probable that I shall deem discretion, in this matter, the better part of valor.”

“By your own deeds you must stand or fall,” Trueman said, gravely. “Every man *makes* or *mars* his own fortune.”

“By them, I am willing to stand. A few years will bring both of us to the end of our journey. Time will prove who is right.”

“Yes; but it will then be too late to *repair the error*, whoever shall have made it.”

“And are you not as likely to be in error as I am?”

“I think not. I take the course pointed out by Nature and Scriptural Revelation — you take another road. I go the way in which all have walked since the beginning — you strike out for yourself a new path, or take one in which only a few venture to tread.”

“Well! be it so. I cannot do worse than to marry, that is certain.”

Seeing that no good was likely to grow out of a continuance of the argument, Trueman introduced a new subject.

CHAPTER 3.

Before the arrival of the time at which her friend was to become the wife of Henry Trueman, Dora, as has been seen, had discovered the nature of her feelings towards Lane. She could not conceal from herself the fact that she loved him, but *maiden delicacy* caused her to struggle against the appearance of this, for the reason that he had made no advances which she could construe into a preference for her above every one else. To Edith, she had betrayed her secret, and would sometimes commune with her on the subject, driven to do so in the hope of relieving her burdened heart. Her friend always encouraged her to hope, and stimulated the love she felt by eloquent allusions to the warmth and joy of her own bosom.

A few months had greatly altered Dora Enfield. Her cheek was, perhaps, not quite so full and glowing — but the new affection awakened in her soul had given to that cheek a loveliness not before seen; her eye had lost some of its sparkling gaiety, but had gained in its stead, a look that caused in everyone upon whom it rested, a momentary change in the heart's even pulsations. Over her whole countenance, in fact, had passed a change. She was *born to love*, and when that tender feeling awoke into activity — she was lovelier to every eye than before.

Lane was not insensible to this change. He felt drawn towards her every day, more and more strongly. But he *resisted* with increased determination, the pleadings of Dora's earnest eyes, and the stronger pleadings of his own heart. The approaching marriage of his friend Trueman, as has been seen, brought him frequently into her company. While with her, he too often so far forgot his resolution as to permit his voice, his eye, and his whole countenance to express what he really felt. This would, as a natural consequence, strengthen the affection that had been formed in her heart, and nourish the hope of a full return that she could not but entertain. As day after day, however, passed, and no act or word of Lane was sufficiently defined to enable her to predicate upon it a rational hope — her spirits, in spite of herself, began to fail.

At length the wedding day of Trueman and the gentle Edith May arrived. Dora was alone with her friend for several hours previous to the time on which the marriage ceremony was to take place. They talked much together of the hopes, the fears, the cares, and joys of *wedded life*.

"I cannot but feel," Edith said, "now that the time has approached so near — an inward tremulousness at the idea of this holy union upon which so much depends. I am about entering upon a new life, about coming into a new and more elevated sphere of action, about assuming the highest and most sacred duties. I am about to become a wife. Shall I, Dora, be able to perform truly a wife's part? Can I fill that place in the mind of him who has chosen me from all other women, that a woman ought to fill in the mind of her husband? I fear not; and it is this fear which makes me tremble. The nearer this event approaches, and the more I think of it — the more painful is my consciousness that I am not truly fitted for the place I am about to fill."

"But, as you enter, with an earnest affection, upon your duties, Edith," was the reply of her friend, "you will find the power to do them."

"Thank you for that encouraging word," returned Edith. "What you say is, doubtless, true. If I sincerely strive to do a wife's duty — then I shall have a wife's perceptions."

"Do not doubt it. It is wonderful how, when our *affection* prompts us to do a right thing — the mind opens with perceptions of true ways for doing it. There must be for every good affection — true thoughts, by which it has power to act. There must be, for every condition in which we are placed by Divine Providence — a way by which, in that condition, we may be able fully to do our duty. The more ardent the affection — the more clearly will be truth by which that affection acts, be seen. This being true, is there not everything to encourage the heart of one who is just about taking upon herself the most holy vows of marriage? She has the sweet assurance that, in *loving* right — she will be fully aided in *doing* right."

"Thank you, over and over again, my dear Dora, for words that sink into my mind, giving it assurance and comfort," Edith said, warmly. "I feel that if I earnestly strive to fill up my measure in life, be my position what it may — that I shall have the true knowledge and the requisite power."

“Yes, and more than that — the sweet peace, passing all understanding, which ever accompanies the performance of duty done from right affections.”

“But, Dora, marriage has its cares, its sorrows, its deep anxieties, as well as its duties. In these, like all others, I shall be tried as in a furnace.”

“The fire shall not hurt you;
‘Tis only designed
Your dross to consume,
And your gold to refine.”

Dora replied, with a smile that beamed through dim eyes.

“Ah, but the *dross*, my friend, the dross,” returned Edith. “Who shall say how much gold will be left after all my *dross* is consumed? Little, very little, I fear!”

“Much, much bright gold, upon which no fire but the pure heavenly fire of unselfish love can act — and which will only melt it in affliction’s crucible, to prepare it for newer and more beautiful forms. I hope much for you, Edith. In the new life you are about to lead. I see you rising higher and higher, and becoming more and more perfected — perfected in a degree in which no woman, who is not a wife and mother, can ever be perfected. You will have your crosses to bear, your griefs, and pains, and anxious cares; but all will be blessed to you.”

“May He who ordained marriage as a holy thing — grant that it be so!” Edith said, in a solemn voice.

“He will grant it. He is the All-powerful. Look to him for help in every trial, for strength in every duty — and they will assuredly be given.”

“Humbly I will trust Him,” was Edith’s steady response.

That was the true spirit in which to give the marriage vow. To such as thus make it, will come all the genuine delights and all the true benefits of marriage, both spiritual and natural.

Few, very few, enter into this holy relation with any views beyond *natural* life. They think that it will add to their happiness, and, therefore, enter upon it. Better is it to marry with even these mere natural ends — than not to marry at all. But far above, or anterior to these, lie the true uses of marriage. Its life is the one by which higher or more inner principles in the mind are enabled to flow down into ultimate activity, and become purified from hereditary sins and stains. Thus purified, they minister to higher and more inner capacities to happiness. In other words, they enable us to perform *higher uses in life*, and, as a consequence, render us happier.

In the gradual declension of mankind from the state of holiness and order to which they were created, down to the lowest depths of evil — every good principle implanted by the Creator has been successively perverted, until not a single good principle remains in its integrity. Man had reached his lowest point in that “fullness of time.” At that time, when the Lord himself came into the world in order to redeem the human race, man was wholly perverted, and, had not a strong arm been outstretched to save him, must have inevitably perished. From that time, a return towards true order was commenced. The way was opened by which every one could be restored to his lost inheritance of good affections. But this return to every one is a slow process. It is only effected by letting each perverted principle come into activity, and there meeting resistance from truth. A *combat* then takes place in the mind. The evil love struggles against truth in the understanding. If truth conquers, then the orderly and good affections, opposed to the evil and disorderly ones, take their place; and so far man is restored to his integrity, so far he has a capacity for being really happy. This is the process by which every evil affection in the mind is renewed.

Now it is plain, that unless a principle of evil, latent in the mind, be awakened, made active and then opposed and conquered by truth — the good opposite to that evil cannot be implanted; and just so far as this is not the case, just so far will man fail in his effort to rise into all the perfection of his original creation.

Marriage being a state essential to the preservation of the human race, being a state for which every one is created, there must be perverted affections, and they of a very interior and vital character, which never can become active, and, therefore, never resisted and regenerated — unless the marriage relations

are formed. How important, then, to every one, is this union! It may, and will, have its trials, its pains, and its temptations; but, without them, its uses would never be fully complete. No spiritual good is born without labor and pain. It must be so in the very nature of things; for it is only by the resistance to, and putting under our feet of mere natural affections — that we rise into the life and delight of pure, unselfish, spiritual affections.

This was the view entertained by both Edith and her friend Dora. They had often spoken together on the subject, and had, both of them, a willingness to become wives — as well from *principle*, as from the unerring instincts of their nature.

Trueman also saw the subject in the same light. But his friend Lane was too fond a *lover of self*, too prone to seek delights in what was merely natural and visible — to care about spiritual views of things. Indeed, to show to him a philosophy so significative of man's true nature and true power, would only have provoked a smile. To his mind, it had no signification.

This defect, Dora did not see; but even if she had seen it, with a woman's expectant and loving heart, she would have felt certain of inspiring him with the truth as it was presented so clearly to her own mind. She loved him with a deep emotion; and, to have made him happy, would have sacrificed much. But the return he made was not of a kind to inspire her with hope; had it been so, her cheek would not have grown pale, nor her eye worn a look of such deep abstraction. She loved, but loved without a well-founded hope of return.

CHAPTER 4.

With very different emotions did Milford Lane and Dora Enfield stand beside the young couple about being joined in wedlock, while the minister was repeating the marriage ceremony. He could not but feel, in spite of his perverted reasonings, that Trueman and his fair young bride were entering a way in which they would find true happiness. Dora's bosom yearned to enter the same way. He struggled against the influences of the scene — but into her heart they sunk with a sweet sadness.

"There is no retreat now, Henry. You have fairly passed the Rubicon," was Lane's remark to Trueman, after the congratulations following the ceremony were over, and he had an opportunity to get a word to his ear.

"Retreat! Why should he retreat?" spoke up Dora, who sat beside Edith.

"There is no reason now," returned Lane. "He has passed, as I said, the Rubicon, and cannot go back. But, before such a step is taken, I think there is good reason to look well to what we are doing. This marrying is a *serious* affair."

"It is, doubtless," Dora said, with more than her usual seriousness. "It involves much — it includes a whole lifetime."

"And the most *serious* part of life. For my part, I think people are *fools* to get married."

"Why, Mr. Lane! what can you mean by saying so?" the young bride remarked, in surprise. Neither she nor her friend had ever heard him speak *against marriage*, and knew nothing of his peculiar views in relation to it.

"I mean just what I say. If the most happiness is to be found in the married life, as everybody will try to make you believe; in it, too, are to be found causes of the greatest unhappiness. It seems to me that, under this view, to get married is to *risk* rather too much."

The circumstances under which they were placed would not permit a conversion of any kind to take more than the form of a few passing remarks. This was about all that was then said on this subject. But the words, and the manner in which they were said, produced in the mind of Dora a sensation of uneasiness — caused her heart to labor heavily in her bosom.

Although thus affected, the atmosphere in which Dora was moving, and with which her lungs were expanding, was one so mirthful and glad-hearted, that she could not but feel the general delight. Her pulse quickened, her cheek grew warmer, and her eye brighter. Never before had she seemed to Milford Lane so beautiful, so love-inspiring; his heart was drawn towards her as by a strong hand. Often he would find his eye resting upon her face with a look so earnest, that it required a strong effort for him to withdraw it.

"If I could be happy with any woman," he said to himself that night, as he lay sleepless upon his bed, "I could be happy with Dora. She was born to be loved. Why is it that marriage has so many drawbacks? Why is it that side by side with joy — stalk gloomily onward, pain and sorrow? That with the *highest blessing* life has to give, is associated the *deepest misery*? Accursed union! Yes *accursed* say I, in very bitterness of spirit! Were it not for this, I might take to my arms this lovely being, and both of us glide sweetly and tranquilly down life's pleasant stream. But to be dashed over cataracts, hurried along amid rapids, and only for moments at a time to see glimpses of a sun-bright sky, is a condition of things that I, for one, shrink from. Give me a smooth stream, meandering through fruitful meadows — even if I have no *companion* in my *journey*. I shall be far happier."

With this conclusion, he turned upon his pillow and sought the favor of *gentle sleep*. But the *goddess* came not at his call. Another being visited him. It was the image of her towards whom his heart had yielded involuntary homage. She stood before him, and wooed him with smiles that were irresistible.

"Oh, that I had never seen the girl — or that she were not half so lovely!" he exclaimed, rising up and seating himself near a window. It was the hour of midnight; all was hushed into a deep stillness; the moon was bathing spire, and roof, and tree in a soft light; the stars looked down from their places in Heaven, some with a sparkling luster, some with gentle radiance, and some with beams of intelligence like eyes of angel-watchers.

The scene and the hour reflected itself on the mind of Lane. It was *voiceless*, but *eloquent nature*. It spoke to his heart, but in a strange language. And yet he felt that this language was full of meaning. He desired an interpreter. He yearned for a *companion* — for one who could look with him upon this loveliness, and speak of its deep mysteries. Like the needle to the pole — turned his thoughts to Dora. She was the *companion* his heart desired. Through her eyes, he felt that he could see beyond the sky, the moon, the stars, the whole face of nature — into the world from which they were born; could see how and why these natural things caused his heart to heave beneath them like the uprising waters of the great ocean. He felt that he was but *half a being*, that his perceptions of things were all imperfect; that he needed his *counterpart* in order to *see* aright, *learn* aright, *feel* aright, and truly *live* aright.

“Ah! sweet being!” he murmured, as with these thoughts rose before his mind the image of Dora, “how can I turn away from your lovely form? How can I put you away from me?”

Rising, and turning from the window, in the effort to shut out mental images — he commenced walking the floor of his chamber. But change of *place*, did not make with him change of *state*. He could not put from before his mental eyes, the sweet face of the maiden — nor from his mental ears the love-inspiring tones of her voice.

At the same hour, looking out upon a similar scene — sat by the window of her chamber, Dora Enfield. The manner of Lane towards her during the evening had been of a mixed character, inconsistent, and difficult to interpret. Sometimes, in speaking to her, his voice would seem full of tenderness; at another time it was cold, and, to her ear, repulsive. Sometimes he would be all life, and sometimes quiet and thoughtful. At times he would linger by her side, and hang upon her words; and then, again, he would appear to avoid her. All this troubled her spirit; but, more than all, did she feel troubled at the *strange words* he had uttered in regard to *marriage*. They had fallen upon her ears harshly. They seemed like the words of an *insane* man.

These things had left her mind in a painful state. When all was over, and she retired, with a lonely feeling, to her chamber, she turned from the bed that invited her to repose, and sat down by an open window, leaning her head upon her hand and looking up into the sky, with a heart pensive, even to sadness. All the thoughts that passed through her mind, we will not attempt to imagine. They kept her head from its pillow and her eyes from sleep, until near on to the morning hour.

Nor did Lane find quiet for body or mind much before this late period; and then, not until he had silenced the earnest pleadings of his heart, by picturing in long array before his mind — the thousand miseries attendant upon marriage. These he *exaggerated* to the utmost, and then turned from the revolting scene he had created, saying, as he did so,

“No, no, no! *Tempter*, begone! While reason and resolution remain, I will be true to myself and to you, sweet girl! Both of us will be happier in *single* life.”

CHAPTER 5.

Milford Lane continued firm in his resolution. Soon after the marriage of his friend, he found it necessary to be less frequent in his visits, and less marked in his attentions to Dora Enfield. It would not be good, he saw, for either her or himself. He loved her society, and was never so really happy as when with her. The necessity for withdrawing himself from it, he felt to be a very painful necessity; but, in his view, this was a lesser evil than marriage, and so he bore it as well as he could. The *solitude* to which he was frequently self-doomed — for, in giving up the society of Dora, he had no relish for other society — chafed him a good deal, and soured him with life, which was, at best, he would sometimes say, *a delusive, troubled dream*.

In this way passed a whole year, the most unhappy year the young man had ever spent. On Dora it wrought a serious change. Through Edith she had learned the views of marriage that were entertained by Lane. They differed so from her own, and involved, as she could clearly see, so much of a *selfish spirit*, that she strove to dismiss from her mind all hope of ever becoming his wife. But this was not a thing to be easily done. It cost her many a long and painful struggle. Clearly seeing the cause of his manner towards her, and understanding fully how much it involved, she did not wish to become his wife while his present views remained. But she had heard of this declaration that he had made, “If ever a man loved a woman — I love Dora Enfield. If I were ever to marry — it would be her,” and this awakened a hope that he might think differently. Were such to be the case, the indication of which would be the offer of his hand, she felt that she could not say no.

Instead of this fond hope being realized, Lane gradually withdrew from her the attentions he had at first bestowed. When with her, he was not so free and cheerful as formerly. He frequently visited Trueman and his wife, and saw that they were happy in each other. Sometimes his friend would allude playfully to the fact.

“Oh yes,” he would reply, “it is all *springtime* yet. But the scorching heats of *summer* are yet to come — and the dreariness and desolation of *winter*.”

“True. But do you not know that there will be in this summer-time, the shadow of a great rock in our weary land? Do you not know that we shall have in the winter season a warm fireside around which to gather? You think only of the scorching heat, the desolating blasts, and the icy coldness — you forget that there are cool places, and coverts from the storm. Do not these more than compensate for all the discomforts the change of seasons brings? Would you give up the blessings of harvest — the year’s fruit-time — in order to have only the bright skies, green fields, and buds and blossoms of spring? These will all fail to bless the soul. But in the ripe fruits of autumn are contained the year’s best gifts. All else are as nothing compared to these.”

“Very pretty and very poetic. But I think a bird in the hand, is worth two in the bush. I know the good I have. I can calculate the sum of life’s blessings as a bachelor. But if I once launch my bark in the *stream of matrimony* — there is no telling where its troubled waters will carry me! There will be *scorching heats* enough, and *storms* enough — but I cannot be so sure of the great rock, and the covert. The winter will come as certain as fate. But whether there will be heat enough in the house to warm the cold air that rushes in through many a chink in the walls, is not so certain.”

“I have never yet seen in the house of those who have married from true affection, anything approaching a preponderance of evil over good, but always the reverse.”

“I have, then, often and often.”

“We see with different eyes, friend Lane.”

“So I would think, if we see such different things in the same place.”

“You see *appearances* — and I *realities*.”

“No, the fact is just the reverse.”

“No doubt you think so.”

“I am sure of it. But *time* will prove which is right. You are married, and can’t help yourself. I am still single, thank Heaven! and intend remaining so. A few years will test the question.”

"I have no fears in regard to the solution of that question," Edith said, looking into her husband's face with love-beaming eyes, after Lane had departed.

"You need have none," returned the husband. "*Every* condition of life has its trials — and *marriage* those peculiar to itself. But, in all orderly conditions, the trials are only for the development of good. They prepare the way for more *inner delights* to come forth into activity. But in disorderly states, such as celibacy, especially where it is voluntary and *selfish* — pain is usually the result of the effort of inner things to find an ultimate place of action; but no such place being found in the life, they never come forth to bless, but remain struggling in perpetual imprisonment, and *wounding*, like fluttering birds, their wings against the iron bars that restrain them."

When Lane returned home, he sighed involuntarily as he sat down in his silent, lonely chamber. He had not failed to see that between Trueman and his wife, existed a communion of thought and feeling, just such as his heart longed to have with one of the gentler gender — with, in fact, one towards whom his thoughts often turned — Dora Enfield. "If life would remain ever in its spring-time — if cares would not thicken as years went by, the married life would be full of blessedness," he said, half aloud. "Yes, yes, you have, doubtless, the advantage of me now. But wait a few years, and then see. The change will come — it must come. Grief, pain, care, sorrow, disappointment, bereavement — yes, these, all these, accompany such as enter this toilsome road. Ill-favored crew! I cannot make you fellow-passengers."

Not long after, Edith gave to her husband, a babe. Before, they had been happy, up, it seemed to them, to their capacity for enjoying happiness. Now a warmer ray of light streamed into their dwelling.

"Come and see me, Lane; I want to show you my boy," said the delighted father, a few weeks after he had received the precious gift of a child.

"He is something wonderful, no doubt," returned Lane, smiling to see the earnestness with which Trueman spoke.

"He is the dearest little fellow I ever saw!"

"No doubt of it."

"You must come and see us."

"See your *boy*, you mean."

"Yes, see him, if you will have it so. I'm sure you never saw a sweeter babe."

"They're all alike to me, Trueman; and, as to their being so very interesting, I have not yet been able to see in what it lies."

"So most of you unmarried men say. But come and see my boy, and I'll show you something that will interest even you."

"Very well, I'll come. But you mustn't be disappointed if I shouldn't happen to perceive all the *attractions* that are so plain to your eyes. Every crow loves its own!"

"Oh yes, I understand. But I do not see why, if a canary bird thinks her young ones beautiful, that should make them crows — do you?"

"But the crow thinks her young most beautiful of any. It is not the parents' biased estimation which gives loveliness to offspring. It is all right, no doubt, that parents should love their own children best; but they must not expect everybody else to see all the beauties that are exhibited before their partial eyes."

"No, of course not," returned Trueman, his words half choking him.

"Mr. Lane will be here tonight," Henry said, as he sat at the tea-table with his wife, about ten days after this little interview. "I saw him this afternoon, and he says he will make us a call."

"He has never seen the baby yet."

"No."

"I hope the little dear will be good."

"He is always good."

"Yes, when he is well. But today he has not seemed quite well. He has fretted a good deal. He cried for nearly an hour before you came in."

"What can be the matter with him?" This was asked with a look of concern.

"I do not know. But he seems better now, and is sleeping sounder than he has slept all day."

"Dear little thing! I hope it's nothing serious."

“I hope not.”

At that moment the babe cried out as if in pain, and Edith instantly arose, and lifting him from his cradle, drew him tenderly to her bosom. The soothing murmur of her voice soon hushed him again into repose. Although Henry had not eaten more than half what was usually taken by him at the evening meal, he felt no farther inclination for food. He had arisen at the same time with Edith, and stood beside her when she lifted the babe from his cradle. He now drew a chair close to where she was sitting, and bent over, and looked fondly down into the face of the child, as it lay nestling upon its mother’s bosom.

“You haven’t finished your supper yet,” Edith said, after a little while, turning her eyes from her babe to her husband’s face.

“Me? Oh yes! I hadn’t much appetite. You don’t think anything *serious* ails him?”

“No, dear. He may have taken a little cold; but he will be well enough by tomorrow, I hope.”

Henry laid his hand upon the child’s head, but removed it quickly, with a look of alarm.

“Just feel, Edith, how *hot* it is! And his hand too — he has a high fever!”

“It doesn’t feel very hot to me,” Edith said, after placing her hand upon his head. “Feel my hand — is it hot.”

“Yes, almost as hot as the baby’s.”

“I don’t think I have any fever. I have felt as well as usual all day. Your skin is cold, and that’s the reason why both mine and *little Henry’s* feel so hot.”

“Perhaps so,” returned Trueman, in a less anxious voice.

In about half an hour, Mr. Lane called in, according to promise, to spend the evening. He was not seated long before the little stranger, who had been disturbed from his quiet repose on his mother’s bosom, that he might be exhibited to the visitor, who did not care a fig about seeing him, began to fret and cry.

“Poor little thing! he is not at all well,” Henry said. “I am really afraid something serious is the matter with him.”

“I hope not,” returned the mother, holding the child close to her bosom, and endeavoring to soothe it with a low, murmuring sound. But it cried out continually, and seemed to be in much pain.

“What can be the matter with him, Edith?” Henry said, his anxiety causing him almost to forget the presence of his friend.

“Nothing of consequence, I hope,” was the wife’s reply, who seemed least anxious of the two.

“Thank Heaven!” was Lane’s silent ejaculation, “I have nothing like *that* to worry my mind.”

The babe continued fretful. Very soon after Lane came in, Edith took it out of the sitting-room, and left her husband and their visitor alone. But Henry entertained his friend badly. He could think of little else, and, therefore, talked of little else, besides his child.

“I never could bear in the world,” he remarked during the evening, “to lose that child. I believe it would put me, for a time, beside myself.”

“I don’t think there is anything like danger to be apprehended,” Lane replied. “All children are sick more or less. You will have to get used to these things.”

“But that child is *very* ill, I am sure. His skin is hot; fevers are always dangerous, and, in children, apt to go to the head.”

Thus an hour was passed, when Lane, who saw that his friend was anxious to be with his child, and who felt desirous of getting away from such uncongenial company, retired.

“There comes *trouble*,” he said to himself, as he walked thoughtfully homeward. “Poor Trueman! I pity him. He loves that child with his whole heart. He can think of little else, and talk of little else. It is sick — suppose it should die? It will almost kill him. No, no, you don’t catch me in that hard spot! A wise man foresees the evil and hides himself — but the simple pass on and are punished.”

CHAPTER 6.

As soon as Henry had parted with his friend at the door, he hurried up to the chamber where Edith had retired, his heart trembling with anxiety. Their child was asleep upon her bosom.

“How is he?” was asked with eagerness.

“He is not well,” the mother replied, in a low, sad voice. “Just feel his little head — it is very hot.”

“I will go for the doctor this moment,” Trueman said, as soon as he had ascertained for himself the fact just stated by his wife.

“Perhaps there is no necessity for doing so tonight,” returned Edith. “Suppose we wait until morning; he may be much better by that time.”

“But if he should be worse — how much time would be lost! I will go at once. *Delays* are dangerous!”

And so the doctor was brought. He treated the matter lightly; said it was often the case that infants were feverish for a few hours, and then as well again as ever. A prescription, however, was left, to satisfy the parents. It did not call for a very powerful dose. On the next morning the child’s skin was cool and moist, and he, to all appearance, as well as ever. The parents breathed more freely, but still remained anxious. During the day, Trueman and Lane met.

“How is your child?” asked the latter.

“He is better, thank you. But I still feel very uneasy about him.”

“It’s nothing serious, I hope.”

“I hope not. But still, I can’t help being troubled.”

The friends parted.

“Can’t help being *troubled*. Humph!” said Lane to himself, as he walked away. “Is that to be wondered at? Was there ever a married man who didn’t feel *troubled*? This is only a little beginning. You’ll have your heart full by-and-by. I told you so, but you wouldn’t believe me.”

At dinner-time, Trueman hurried home, feeling still anxious. Happily, no more unfavorable symptoms had shown themselves. The babe slept peacefully in his cradle, over which the father bent with a thankful heart. When evening came, the young parents felt relieved from all concern about their child. Its pulse was as calm and its skin as cool as ever. But the suddenly-awakened fear of losing it had caused a tenderer feeling to pervade their bosoms. They loved it with increased affection.

“Dear, innocent creature!” Trueman would say, over and over again, as he turned from the page he was reading, or paused in some conversation with Edith to look at it long and earnestly as it lay in its cradle. “Heaven grant that our *treasure* may be spared to us!”

Time passed. Days, weeks, and months were added to the babe. From a mere passive emblem of innocence — a bud of beautiful promise, its young mind began gradually to open, as its bodily powers were developed. The smiles that wreathed about its lips had in them more of intelligent affection — the light of its eye was kindled by thought. Twelve moons had waxed and waned since it saw the light of this beautiful world, when it became dangerously ill. A well-developed brain, while it gave quicker perceptions of external things, and made the child doubly interesting to those who were with it constantly — involved a dangerous predisposition towards problems of the head. The slightest bodily derangement was almost always attended with a disturbance of the cerebral region. The parents had often noticed this, but did not know the real cause. Had the physician given them a hint to this effect, they would never have had a moment’s peace. As far as they were concerned, it might well be said, “Where ignorance is bliss, ‘tis folly to be wise.”

But mere *ignorance* of a danger does not *ward* it off. Their child was now dangerously ill with an illness so resembling dropsy of the brain, that the doctor seriously feared for his life. The parents were, of course, in terrible alarm. Little Henry had grown, in a year, to a beautiful boy. There was everything about him to interest their hearts. To see him in great suffering, and to have, at the same time, the dreadful fear of losing him — took from them nearly all rational control over themselves. It seemed to them that they could not bear to have him taken away — that it would kill them. But *death* does not *pause*, when his

bow is bent, to let the fatal arrow fly, because hearts may bleed. The most tenderly loved, as well as those for whom no tears will fall — are alike his victims.

After a week of great suffering, the disease terminated in *convulsions* of a most distressing character. These continued for hours, until the father's heart so bled at witnessing the anguish of his boy, that he prayed wildly for God to give him rest, even if it were in death.

Into that sleep which knows no waking in this life, the child at last sunk. Heart-sick at witnessing its painful writhings and bodily contortions, and in listening to its unnatural cries when a *convulsion* seized it, Trueman had left the chamber for a few moments and lain himself upon a bed in an adjoining room. He had been there about ten minutes when Edith came rushing in, half frantically.

"He is *gone*, Henry!" she sobbed, throwing herself beside him upon the bed and burying her tearful face in his bosom.

"Thank God!" murmured Trueman fervently. "No more anguish, no more suffering. Our loss is his great gain. I would not now recall the angel-child."

The father's voice was firm when he ejaculated, "thank God!" After the first few words it began to tremble. The last sentence was *sobbed*, rather than spoken. For a long time, the tears of the bereaved parents flowed freely. Then they grew calmer. It was night. They had not slept for many hours. A quiet stole over their spirits; they sunk into a deep slumber, and remained unconscious of all external things for many hours. When they awoke, a bright sun was pouring his beams into their chamber. All in the house was hushed into a stillness that was only broken occasionally by a softly-gliding footstep, a whispered word, or the faint sound of a door closed gently by some careful hand. There was *death* in the dwelling!

"Such a dream as I have had, Edith!" Trueman said, as he arose from the bed, and half turning, looked earnestly into the face of his wife, which had never worn so sad a look as now.

"What was it, dear?" murmured Edith, scarcely daring to trust herself to speak.

"I saw *our sweet one* with the angels."

"Oh, Henry!" and Edith clasped her hands together. Tears were slowly falling from her eyes.

"Yes, we know that he is with them. And I saw him as plainly as I ever saw him with my bodily eyes. At first there were two angels alone, who seemed of the female gender. I looked into their faces, that beamed with the tenderest affection. They were evidently waiting with delighted eagerness for the arrival of someone. In a little while one of them drew her hands tenderly to her bosom, as if receiving and infolding an infant. In the next moment my heart thrilled with joy. Our dear child lay upon her bosom. Oh, the sweet, holy, tender, loving smile that beamed from her beautiful face as she clasped the cherub in her arms! Not less delighted seemed her companion-angel. She, too, bent over our little one, and smiled a smile of heavenly affection. Then it seemed as if we were all rising up, up, up, for a long time, I still at a distance and unobserved by them, yet seeing all most distinctly. At last they came to a beautiful green lawn, surrounded by flower-beds, where bloomed flowers of brighter hues and sweeter perfume than are ever seen upon the earth. There were trees also around this lawn, amid the branches of which birds sung the most enchanting strains. On the grass were resting snow-white lambs, many of their necks adorned with flower-wreaths. But the loveliest sight of all was a company of little children with their attendant angels, beautiful beings, that looked like forms of heavenly love. As the angels who had first received our little Henry entered the happy company, one of the attendant angels separated herself from the little group and came forward to meet them. In no mortal face did I ever see pictured a mother's tender, joyful love, so perfectly as upon hers. The child was resigned to her care, and those who brought it turned and passed gradually far off, until I could see them no more. Then was sung a song of welcome, in which innumerable voices seemed to blend, each expressive of some modification of filial or maternal love. The song ceased. Little groups of children gathered around their angel-mothers, all happier than I ever saw children upon the earth. Among these I saw our dear little boy. But, while many sported in circles around their attendants, he clung to the side of the angel who had received him, ever and always gazing up into her love-beaming face with a happy smile. While I stood looking on, one came to me and said,

"These are those who, when they lived upon earth, most tenderly loved infants and children. Rejoice, then, rather than mourn, that your child has been removed to this happy company. It is beyond the reach of danger — beyond the reach of sin, and pain, and sorrow. It is guarded, and guided, and loved as no

earthly parent can guard, and guide, and love their offspring. Mourn not its loss. Lift rather your heart up to that Heaven where your treasure has been removed. This will sustain you; this will make what seems grievous and hard — to be borne a blessing.”

“Just then the angel-mother, to whose care our dear one had been consigned, approached me with looks of the tenderest maternal affection. She bore our loved child in her arms. He smiled sweetly as he saw me, but leaned closer to his new-found friend. My heart was touched at this. It seemed that I could not bear to have him love a *stranger* better than he had loved me. The feeling caused all to become dark as midnight around me. Then I awoke, and found that it was a dream!”

Who could chide the tears that mingled freely as the bereaved father closed his narration? But who will say that in their grief, there was not a sweet compensation? There was! Far down in their heart of hearts a hidden fountain had been revealed by the light of a star never before seen in their firmament, that mirrored itself in the gushing waters. Were they less happy, even then, than the childless? Go ask them if they regret that ever a child was born to them, and hear their eloquent, half-indignant reply.

Not they who move quietly along on the cold, passionless surface — are the happiest. No! There are regions of the mind opened by painful trials, griefs, sorrows, bereavements, from whence flow down into manifest perception delights that, to those in whom such regions remain closed, are inconceivable. Ah! while that young mother’s heart was bleeding at every pore for the loss of her child — she was sustained by a deep inner joy, springing from the consciousness that she had given one to the company of angelic hosts; one who, rising higher and higher in the reception of intelligence and wisdom, would be growing wiser, and better, and happier forever. In such a delight — unselfish as it must be — the soul is strengthened, and in a degree perfected. It receives a positive good; it is inspired with the Godlike love of seeing others outside of itself happy; of rejoicing at another’s good — even though it suffers as the means of the other’s exaltation.

While their *treasure* still remained in their clinging grasp, while there was still *hope* of retaining it, they knew no other feeling than one of bitter anguish. But now the *struggle* was over. Hope had plumed her wings and flown away. Their child was dead. The sun had gone down, and all was darkness and gloom. Over this darkness, another heavenly expanse was extended; a morning-star arose — then came a mild auroral precursor of day, and finally the sun came up from the chambers of light. It was a new day. There had been a tempest of feeling, and its ravages were yet fresh, and its wounds painful. But the air was clearer and brighter — the sun shone with an intenser light, even though it lit up many a sparkling tear-drop which hung from rifled flower and fallen leaf.

Friends who had witnessed the anguish which tore the parents’ hearts while death stood over their little one with his poised weapon — wondered when they came forth in the morning, with calm, elevated countenances. Wild and passionate grief had been looked for when the mother should bend for the first time over the pale, sweet image of her child, and touch with her lips its cold, marble cheek. But it was not so. She held tightly the hand of her husband, while she looked down upon the lovely form, and smiled through blinding tears — while her poor mother’s heart was trembling and fluttering, and almost gushing over with anguish — at the thought that her babe was now far beyond the reach of disease and pain, in company with the blessed angels.

When Milford Lane returned to his lodgings on the evening of that day, he found in his room an invitation to attend the funeral of his friend’s child. It was the first intimation he had received of its *death*.

“Good God!” was his painfully-surprised exclamation, as he threw down the note and commenced pacing his room with agitated steps. “Poor Trueman! It will drive him beside himself.”

So affected was Lane by the news of the sad event, that he did not descend to the tea-table when the bell was rung — he had no appetite for food. He had intended making a visit that evening to some pleasant friends, but he had not the heart to go. He could not get out of his mind the *sad affliction* that had befallen his friend.

Lane came with the rest who were invited to the funeral. He had been in the habit of frequently calling in to see Trueman and his wife, and had so often met their little boy, who was a very interesting and intelligent child, that he had become *quite attached* to him. Death always makes tender, our feelings towards the departed one. Lane felt this tenderness when he thought of the bright boy now no more in this

world. As he stood looking down upon his face, sweet still, though the beauty of his countenance had been marred, his eyes grew dim with tears.

“If *I* feel it thus,” he said to himself, as he pensively retired from the open coffin, “what must *they* suffer? What must be the anguish of *their* hearts! Ah! children are precious gifts. But who could desire them on such an uncertain tenure? Surely not I. If that were my child, I believe it would kill me!”

While such thoughts were passing through his mind, there was a movement near the door. He turned his head; the mourners were entering, clad in sable attire. He scarcely dared lift his eyes to the faces of the bereaved parents. When he did so, he saw that they were very pale; but he missed that expression of abandoned grief that, it seemed to him, must accompany this painful dispensation. He saw that, while suffering deeply, they were yet sustained.

The solemn services preceding the removal of the body from the house were repeated by the minister, and then Trueman and his wife were led forward to look their last, long, lingering look upon the face of their beloved treasure. It was a moment of absorbing interest to all. A deathlike stillness pervaded the room. Everyone felt his heart beating heavily in his bosom. Everyone waited in painful suspense for the loud, long, frantic wail of grief from the mother, and half shuddered in anticipation. But no such *wail of sorrow* arose upon the still air.

For nearly a minute, Edith stood gazing down upon the face of her dead boy, until the *tears* blinded her, and began to fall fast into the coffin. Then a *tremor* passed through her frame, which, in a moment after, shook with convulsive sobs, as she bent down and laid her cheek upon the icy cheek of the child. Those who looked at Trueman could see that he was struggling with emotions that well-near overmastered him. But he bore up with a manful spirit. Gently drawing away his almost paralyzed wife, who yielded passively, he left the spot where he had gazed his last upon his boy, and retired with her from the room.

They did not accompany the body to the grave. Trueman felt that his wife had already suffered as much as she could bear; and as for himself, he did not wish to be present when the clods of the valley sounded upon the coffin-lid of his first-born.

Lane went to the grave, and looked down into it. He heard the dreary rattling of the earth on the *child's narrow house*, and turned away sick at heart. He went home, and sat down in his chamber, feeling gloomy and wretched.

“If *I* am so miserable — what must be *their* feelings!” he said to himself. “Poor souls! I wonder how they bore it as they did. I wonder that Edith's heart did not break.”

While he mused thus, the father and mother, who had been rendered childless, sat alone in their chamber, where every object reminded them of their *loss*. But their grief, though deep and heart-searching, did not paralyze them. They saw, in the painful dispensation of Providence, already the *hand of mercy*. They saw that, in looking into the future for their child, they had thought only of *natural* life — only of the good things the *world* had in store. They had forgotten that the child had been born to be in Heaven. In beginning its education, this had not once occurred to them. Natural good was their highest consideration. They not only thought thus, but they talked together of their fault, and acknowledged the mercy that tempered while it gave the blow.

“Had our dear Henry been left in our hands, with our views in regard to him unchanged,” Trueman said, “it would doubtless have been worse for both parents and child. Now he is safe, and we can see our error. Let us, then, bless the *hand that smote us* — the deed was done in *mercy*.”

“I feel and I acknowledge that,” Edith murmured, leaning her head against her husband's bosom. Tears gushed from her eyes as she spoke. “But it is a *hard affliction* to bear.”

“Yet, He who sends the *storm*, will temper the wind to the shorn lamb.”

“I know it — I feel it. He has already tempered the keen blast.”

“He has, Edith, mercifully tempered it. And He will temper it more and more, if we acknowledge fully, from the heart, His *divine goodness* in this visitation.”

“May He help me thus to acknowledge it,” Edith said, fervently.

“May He help us both to do so daily, hourly, momentarily. Then shall this loss prove to us a great gain, as it has already proved to our child.”

CHAPTER 7.

Thus closed the first important period of Trueman's married life. It had changed him perceptibly; but to none was this change more apparent than to the eyes of his friend Lane. To him, he seemed sad and gloomy. He was certainly more *thoughtful* and *serious*, and had often a look of *quiet abstraction* that was not natural to him. This was no cause of wonder, when the events of that period were considered. The loss of a first-born and only child, never leaves the heart altogether *unscathed*. It did not do so in Trueman's case. However willingly he might bow to the *mandate of bereavement*, however merciful might appear the dispensation which took his child from him — acute pain had attended the affliction, and there was still an aching void in his heart. No one but himself and the tender being who clung now more closely and fondly to his side, understood fully the nature and value of the compensating thoughts and feelings that sustained him. But he *was* sustained, and by a strong internal power.

What of *Lane* during this period? He has chosen his lot of *single blessedness*; let us see how far his end has been attained even in this first stage of life's journey. He has not been altogether happy. He has had many hours of pain, of severe struggles of nature against arbitrary restraints, of loneliness, and *weariness of self*. Shortly after the marriage of Trueman, he became fully aware of the state both of his own and Dora Enfield's mind. Before, he had felt and confessed an admiration of and preference for Dora. He did not, however, dream that he had for her the deep-seated love which afterward became apparent to his mind; nor had he ever thought about the danger there was of her affections being called out. The whole truth was opened up to him by Trueman, whose wife had made him acquainted with the state of Dora's mind, and who, knowing his views of marriage, felt it to be his duty to represent to him, the effect of his continued attentions towards Dora.

"You, of course, intend marrying Dora Enfield," Trueman said to him, abruptly, one day, in a serious voice.

"I, of course, intend *no* such thing — and you know it," was promptly answered.

"But you have kept her company, and paid her marked attentions, until the girl's affections are all poured out for you like water."

"Impossible!"

"It is true, Milford, as I have said it."

"But it cannot be so. Why should the girl think of *loving* me?"

"I speak only of what I know. As to the *cause* — that may or may not be fully seen. She loves you with a pure heart, tenderly and fervently. Of that, there is no doubt. And there is, farther, no doubt of the fact that she will make just the companion you need to walk by your side through life!"

Lane compressed his lips tightly and shook his head.

"You have already confessed to me a strong liking for Dora."

"I confessed only the truth. I feel a deep regard for her; but that is one thing — and *marrying* another. You know that I do not intend on marrying."

"I know you have often said so. But I have never really believed that you would finally adhere to a resolution to which every law of God and man is in opposition."

"As you think."

"As I think *justly*."

"But we will not discuss over again, this moot point," Lane said. "I think I have fully settled the question of marriage, as far as I am concerned. If Dora is in the state of mind you describe her, I can only deeply regret it for her sake. I like her as a companion; I could love her as a wife; but the latter is out of the question. I have associated with her as a friend who admires both her person and character. I still wish to meet her often and familiarly. Such a privilege I would highly prize; but, if the effect upon her mind is so unfortunate — then I must cut myself off from the pleasure of looking upon her lovely face and listening to her admirable conversation. To me, this will be a great privation. Still, I must submit; there is no other alternative."

“I tell you there is another alternative,” Trueman said, half impatiently. “*Marry* her, and make both yourself and one every way worthy to be your wife, happy.”

“It is no use for you to urge that matter,” the young man replied, in a voice that Trueman thought had in it a sad sound. “It can do no good. My determination is unalterable.”

“Even though its consequences are *wretchedness* to both yourself and one who deeply loves you.”

“Why will you speak thus, Trueman? You know that it is to escape this very penalty, that I force upon myself a state of celibacy — while all my inclinations lead me to marriage.”

“But you are in an error — an error fatal to your happiness — fatal to the happiness of one who would lay her life down at your feet.”

“Why do you use such strong language when speaking of Dora’s state of mind towards me?” Lane asked, looking sternly into the face of his friend.

“Because strong *feelings* require strong *language* for their expression.”

“You really think her love so strong, that life itself would be sacrificed for me?”

“I do.”

“I can only say, then, that I am sorry for it. I must see her no more. Time will soon efface all impression that I have made upon her.”

“Hope not that. A woman’s heart loses not easily, so deep an impression.”

“Then she will go down through life in *quiet maidenhood*. Far better this, than the *terrible trials* through which every wife is called to pass.”

“You speak wildly. You are arguing against a *fiction* of your own imagination.”

“The time will come when even you will think me right.”

“No, Milford Lane, no; that day will never come.”

“We will see.”

“True, we will see.”

A long pause followed, broken, at last, by this remark from Lane:

“Hereafter, as much as I may regret doing so — as much as it may cost me — I will carefully avoid Dora Enfield. It is better for both of us, that we meet as little as possible.”

“In this you are decided?”

“I am, fully and firmly.”

“Then I have nothing more to say,” Trueman briefly replied.

In thus fixing so positively his rule of action, Lane suffered a most painful conflict. The declaration made by Trueman of Dora’s strong attachment, met with an instantaneous response in his own heart. He did not know until then, how deeply-rooted was the regard he felt for her; but with this knowledge, came a fixed resolution to struggle against and conquer the weakness. To effect this was found, however, not so easy a task as he had supposed. In the effort, he found that reason was powerless in opposition to love. He was free to determine a course of action; but that course of action would produce happiness or pain, as it favored or opposed affection.

Often, in the strong conflict that followed the communication to him of Dora’s state of mind, he felt like yielding in the struggle; but *reason* would come quickly, with *fallacious reasonings*, to his aid.

About a week after the interview with Trueman, just mentioned, as he was walking slowly along the street, thinking of Dora, he lifted his eyes from the pavement, where they had been resting, and looked up involuntarily. Only a few paces distant from, and approaching him, was the object of his thoughts. Each became conscious of the other’s proximity, only when their eyes met. The hearts of both beat with a suddenly-quicken motion, the color rose to their faces, and their eyes betrayed what each of them wished to conceal. If Lane could have had time for reflection, he would merely have bowed and passed on; but both paused as they approached — stopped — shook hands. It was a moment of trial and embarrassment to the young man. His whole mind was in too much confusion to see anything very clearly: it is no wonder that he was unable to determine whether he should leave Dora abruptly, or, as he had done many times before, walk with her home. The promptings of *inclination* and *habit* prevailed. He turned and accompanied her to her house, and then, bowing formally, retired. During the walk he said but little, and that was of a mere general and commonplace character.

To Dora, he seemed strangely cold, abstracted in manner, and distant. When she parted from him, she went directly to her chamber and sat down near a window, without laying aside either bonnet or shawl. There she remained, almost motionless, for nearly an hour. With a heavily-drawn sigh, she at length arose, quietly laid aside her bonnet and shawl, and commenced busying herself in various little matters about the room. It seemed as if, in doing this, she were seeking, without scarcely knowing it, a mechanical mode of *relief* from feelings which had disquieted her. Her face looked pale, and the expression of her eyes, and, indeed, of her whole countenance, showed that her mind was deeply indrawn, and fixed upon images of thought alone.

As for Lane, on parting with Dora — he turned and walked away with rapid steps. His mind became agitated, and his thoughts more than ever confused.

“*I am a fool!*” he at length said, with an emphatic gesture. “And ten chances to one if I don’t run my head into a net before I’m done, like the rest of mankind. Plague take the girl! I wish I had never seen her! Why did she ever cross my quiet path? All was pleasant and bright as a May-day morning — until she must needs be thrust in my way!”

But all this was not going to efface from his mind, the image of Dora Enfield. It remained so distinct, that he felt it to be a real presence.

For that day, at least, Milford Lane was unfitted for everything. He went to his office, and attempted to examine the merits of a case which had been given into his hands. But in the documents spread out before him, he could see *words*, but no *ideas*. He read over page after page without finding even a clue by which to unravel the cause. In despair, he threw all the papers into his desk, and himself upon a sofa, where, with his eyes closed, he lay for more than half an hour. Rising then as a refuge from haunting images and disturbing thoughts, he took up an unfinished novel in which he had become much interested. But this interest was not reawakened. The book was thrown aside in despair, and the young attorney sought relief in walking outside. That even this did not quiet his feelings, need hardly be said.

It took Lane nearly a week to get over the effect of this meeting; that is, its exciting effects. After that, he laid down for himself, a rule of action. It was, to pass Dora with merely a polite salutation whenever and wherever he might in future meet her. This rule soon after came into force. He met her on the day after it was made, and passed her just as he had determined to do. It was not done without *cost* to him, nor without *exquisite pain* to her.

In this course, Lane persevered. When thrown into Dora’s company, he was *coldly polite* to her. As to visiting her specially — that was no more done. The effect of this marked conduct on the part of Lane, was clearly understood by Dora. She knew that he did not object to *her* personally, but to *marriage*; and that he avoided her intentionally. This was no antidote to the love she bore him. It only made its fire hotter in her bosom, because it could not blaze out. It was an altar-fire, consuming the *altar* itself, instead of rising in holy sacrifice. There were few of her friends who had not marked the change which the whole face and air of Dora manifested by the end of a year from the date of Trueman’s marriage. She went into company but rarely, and then took little pleasure in social fellowship.

When the child of Trueman died, she was with it; in fact, its last breath was given forth upon her bosom. She loved little Henry tenderly. Much with her friend Edith — she had been also much with the child. Daily interaction had inspired her with a tender affection for it. She could, therefore, sympathize deeply with them. When both looked upon the face of their lost one for the last time — Dora stood by Edith’s side. As she retired with them from the room, never again to see their dear child, she passed close to Lane, and was conscious, as she did so, of his presence. Even the afflictive scene in which she was an actor, in which she felt acutely, had not power to hush into passiveness, a heart that had been sorely tried. As she sat down in Edith’s chamber alone with the mourners, but a little apart from them, her own bosom had in it such an aching void that she could hardly restrain herself from uttering an audible moan. In very bitterness of spirit, she envied the bereaved parents. They would love each other more purely, more tenderly, more fervently than ever; and this would compensate for their loss, or take from the affliction its acutest pang — while Dora had nothing that in any way filled the void in her bosom.

And was Lane happy? It is hardly necessary to tell the reader — no. He could not be. In his bosom there was, likewise, an *aching void* which nothing would fill. He sought pleasure in many ways, and, at

times, believed he had found it. But the weariness that accompanied his lonely hours, told too plainly that something was yet lacking to make his happiness complete.

CHAPTER 8.

Fifteen years from the time in which happened the events detailed in the last chapter, we again introduce the personages of our story; and, first, we will look in upon our friend Trueman and his wife Edith.

It is an evening in summer. Near the suburbs of the city stands a moderate-sized, but very neat house, to which is attached a small garden, mainly used for the cultivation of flowers. A grape-vine, loaded with ripening clusters, rises upon a tastefully-formed arbor, and thence clammers up the side of the house, where it wreathes itself about the windows, presenting its fruit with tempting show. Everything around evinces the hand of taste and cultivation. In front of the house is a small yard, or enclosure, filled with shrubbery and flowers. From each side of the door rises a honeysuckle, whose leaves and blossoms almost hide the single window that looks upon the street. At this window, in the cool and quiet of the sunset time, may be seen *Henry* Trueman. Fifteen years have made some change in his appearance: he looks twenty years older than when his first child died. His dark hair glistens with many white lines, and here and there gray masses seem to bear a preponderance. His face has become thinner, and shows many marks of *care*.

He is alone and thoughtful. A book lies on a table near him which has been laid aside after a vain attempt to read. Something weighs upon his mind so heavily as to press out all interest in other subjects. Just then, a second person enters the room; it is *Edith*. She, too, is changed. Her face is thin, and shows too plainly that she has had her share of suffering, both of body and mind; her eye, still soft and mild, moves languidly; but over all, and softening beautifully the whole tone of her face, is an expression of *tender maternal love*, blended with sweet *marital affection*. At a glance, it can be seen that more children have blessed her, and that they are her *jewels* — that years have only tended to unite her more and more to her husband.

“You look serious this evening, Henry,” she said, in a voice of tender interest, as she came up and stood by her husband, laying her hand upon him as she spoke.

“Do I?” he replied, half evasively, and with a smile that he meant to be an indifferent one. But Edith knew her husband’s face too well to be deceived in its expression.

“You certainly do,” she replied; “and more than that, I don’t think you have been as *cheerful* for several days, as you are usually.”

Trueman’s eyes fell to the floor, and he remained silent. He continued so only for a short time; then he looked up steadily into his wife’s face, and said,

“Edith, I do feel serious, and have felt so for several days. Our family is large. Five children to provide for and to educate, taxes me heavily. Business is dull — for the last three weeks I haven’t cleared the rent of my store. If there is not some change for the better, I do not see what will be the consequence.”

“It is a dull season,” Edith remarked.

“True.”

“Are any of your neighbors doing much better?”

“Very few, I believe.”

“Of course, business will revive again.”

“Yes.”

“Then why feel dispirited, Henry?”

“I can’t help it, somehow or other. The fact is, I don’t seem to be getting along financially. It has been *hand to mouth*, as they say, ever since we were married.”

“And the hand has always had a full supply for the mouth,” was the smiling reply.

“I know it; but suppose I were to be taken down sick — suppose anything should happen to me — the family could not possibly hold together.”

“But you are not sick: nothing has happened to you yet. Why take on trouble in advance? Have you forgotten to put your trust in Him who feeds the ravens?”

“I forget Him too often, Edith,” Trueman replied, looking into his wife’s face steadily. “Thankful am I, that He has given me one who can recall my thoughts back to their *stay* in trouble. He will not forsake us — I know that He will not, even though we are called upon to pass through the fire; but weak nature shrinks away; it fears to encounter every purifying ordeal, even while conscious that it is for good.”

“Why anticipate, at this particular time, any new ordeal?”

“A *dark cloud* gathering in the sky, portends a storm.”

“Many a cloud comes up from the horizon with threatening aspect, in whose bosom no lightning lies concealed, from which descends no rain. Have not many such *clouds* swept harmlessly over our sky?”

“Many, very many; and from some, have fallen upon us fierce tempests.”

“*Purifying* our atmosphere, and giving us, on the morrow, a brighter sun.”

“Yet sometimes marking their way with desolation. Our hearts bear some *scars*.”

Edith was silent. Life had not been to them *all sunshine* — it had not passed on smoothly as a boat upon a summer sea. Her own duties had been arduous, and her trials severe. She had borne *eight* children — and three of them slept in the grave. These *afflictions* were, to her, very grievous, for she loved her children; it was touching the very apple of her eye, to touch them. But in each dark night of sorrow, her glance had been steadily upward. She had suffered, and she had likewise been blessed — doubly blessed, it sometimes seemed to her. Her voice was slightly tremulous, as after a long pause, she said,

“They are *deep scars*, Henry; but can either of us say now, from the heart, as we look back upon life, that we would rather not have been *wounded* as we were?”

It was some moments before Trueman replied, his eyes were inwardly turned during the time. At length, speaking with a sudden warmth of manner, he said,

“No, Edith, no! I do not regret a single *care* or *sorrow* that is past. All have been for our good. We are really happier in consequence of them.”

“And will be, in consequence of all that may come.”

“Yes, I believe it,”

“Then let us not be troubled in our minds. Let us not distrust His goodness whose love is unbounded. He will bring all out *right* in the end.”

Just at that moment, the keys of a piano in the adjoining room were touched lightly and skillfully. Then a soft sweet voice sung Mrs. Hemans’ beautiful, “Evening Song of the Tyrolese Peasants.”

It was the voice of their own child that warbled low and distinctly the sweet air and soothing words of this song — their *Edith* — now just at the tender age of fourteen. She was more beautiful than her mother had been, whose *virtues* were reproduced in her child, with added luster. Towards her parents, she had ever exhibited the most devoted love. Gentle, wise above her years, discreet, and firm — she had truly been an elder sister to her younger brothers and sisters, all of whom loved her, and were ever willing to submit to her their little difficulties, and abide her arbitration. To tell how much her father loved her, would be impossible. She was his *idol*. No sound was to him as sweet as the sound of her voice, singing some simple ballad, or lingering on some soothing melody.

Like oil poured upon troubled waters were words, voice, and melody to his feelings. He listened with enrapt attention to every word, every peculiar grace in the air, every variation of affection in her voice. When the last sound died upon his ear, he looked up, and smiling in the face of his wife, said,

“Did you ever hear anything sweeter than that?”

“It was the very soul of music which breathed from her lips.”

“It’s very sweet,” returned the mother. “Edith is a *treasure* that cannot be valued. If ever parents were blessed in a child — we are blessed in her.”

The door opened, and Edith entered. She was tall, slender, and graceful, yet simple in her manner. She walked up to where her mother stood, with her hand still resting upon her husband, and, crowding in between them and the window, half reclined against her father, with an air of childlike affection. Trueman laid his hand fondly upon her head, and gently smoothed her hair, at the same time that he pressed his lips to her cheek.

No word was spoken for many minutes. The group remained as motionless during the time as if under the eye of a painter; but each heart was beating high with pure and happy feelings. From the father’s

mind, all anxious care had fled. He loved his family. Each member had a place in his heart, and that place was kept sacred.

“You sang that evening song just at the right moment, Edith.” This was said by her father, after she had stood by his side for several minutes. “You knew I was sitting here?”

“Yes.”

“And sang for me my favorite song?”

“Yes, it was for your ears, father.”

“Thank you, dear. My mind was not as calm as usual; but that song, and your voice, have tranquillized my spirits. I am Saul, and you are to me as David.”

“No, no, father; I cannot admit that comparison to be true,” Edith replied, taking hold of his hand and gently pressing it. The twilight had deepened into obscurity, and hidden each face from the other’s eyes. “You are not Saul, possessed of an evil spirit. Oh no, no!”

“Distrust of Providence is an evil spirit, my child.”

“But you cannot distrust a kind Providence. You know Who it is that governs all things in wisdom.” This was said with something of surprise, that her father, who had so carefully taught her to believe in the *unfailing goodness and wisdom of God*, should himself feel distrust.

“It is not always, my child,” he replied, “that we can keep, while subjected to this world’s trials and disappointments, our minds evenly balanced, our confidence unwavering. But He who *sees, loves, and pities* us — ever provides *antidotes* for these states. We are not allowed to remain long under the cloud. To me, your voice alone, as you sang some favorite song, has many a time dispelled the gloom that has settled on my mind — has chased away the evil spirit.”

“How glad I am that the voice given me is pleasant to my father’s ear. But hark! little Charley is crying; I must run and see what ails him.”

And away she sprang from the room. The sound of little Charley’s voice — he was the youngest child — had suddenly arisen from a chamber above. It was still, almost in a moment after Edith’s step was heard at the door of his room. Her father’s troubled spirit was not the only one which grew tranquil under the sound of her voice. There was not one in the house who did not feel its *magical influence*.

“If we had no other blessing, we would still be richly endowed,” the father remarked, as soon as the voice of little Charley was hushed.

“Yes; but we have, besides her, many good things. If ever disposed to repine or murmur — we are much to blame.”

“To that I freely assent. But sometimes, Edith, weak, ignorant, short-sighted human nature, cannot see beyond a very narrow circle. We look ahead, and our pathway bends suddenly out of sight. There is a high mountain before us, with black clouds mantling its summit. Is it any wonder that sometimes the heart will fail?”

“Perhaps not. But let us not fix our minds too steadily upon the mountain barrier and its mysterious threatening clouds — but think of the many quiet paths that have opened to us, and wound pleasantly along by cooling stream and smiling meadow, when we had trembled at the sight of a rugged acclivity, and shrunk from attempting the ascent. As our *day* is — so shall our *strength* be. While that blessed promise remains — what have we to fear? Nothing, certainly, which this world can threaten. If we have to climb a steep ascent — the strength to do so will be given; if called to pass through a dark, gloomy valley — a light from some star will fall upon our path, and show us clearly the way in which it is safe to tread.”

Thus, whenever Trueman too much inclined to despond, gave way to distrustful fears — Edith always sought to encourage him. Her own example of *patient resignation in suffering and in bereavement*, had in it equal power with her words. Both united had many and many a time proved all-sufficient to lift his head, that he had allowed to fall despondingly upon his bosom.

CHAPTER 9.

Trueman was in business as a retail trader. From the first, the profits of his store had not been large. But they had, for sixteen years, owing to the prudent management of his wife, sufficed for the needs of his family. As his *family* increased, his *business* had increased likewise — never beyond his needs, but ever up to what was deemed right for him to procure. This close relation between demand and supply had always been a source of great uneasiness to him. He was anxious to get ahead — anxious to see safely invested the means upon which he could fall back in case of failing health or the decline of business. One of his fondest wishes was the possession of a house. He wanted a place for his family that could really be called *home*.

Three years before his introduction to the reader, in middle age, he had been tempted to purchase the pleasant little house and garden in which he is found residing. Its cost was four thousand dollars; one thousand dollars to be paid in cash, and one thousand dollars a year for three years; a clear title to be given after the last note should be taken up. Three thousand dollars of this money had been paid; but, in doing this, Trueman had so far crippled his business as to be compelled to borrow money to meet his regular payments. Indeed, for two years, he had been compelled to do what is known among business men by the term “financiering,” which very frequently means, borrowing today to meet a note, and on the next day to meet the borrowed money, and so on until it is almost impossible for a man to tell whether he is really making a profit in his business, or going behindhand. The growing despondency evinced by Trueman arose from this cause. Frequently, when he closed his store in the evening and came home, he did so with his mind occupied by only one idea: how it was possible for him to meet the obligations that would fall due on the next day. He would, in consequence, be absent and thoughtful, as he appeared when last introduced to the reader.

His true position, after the lapse of nearly three years from the date of his purchase, was this: In the effort to make the different payments required, he had been compelled to borrow up to nearly their full amount, thus greatly embarrassing his business, and causing him to neglect giving it the attention it required, in order that he might think about and devise means for raising money. A note of a thousand dollars, the last of those given, would fall due in about three weeks. Already he was burdened in his payments far beyond what he felt able to bear. He might well fear the consequence of attempting to take up an additional weight.

It can hardly be a matter of wonder that the music of his daughter’s voice, and the encouraging words of his wife, alike failed to restore permanently a quiet mind. When he retired for the night — he found that he could not sleep. Far more vividly than in the daytime, and while he engaged voluntarily in thinking about his affairs, were they presented, in all their startling relations, to his mind. He saw, as a unit, the whole. It was as plain to him as the plainest object he had ever seen — that *ruin* must inevitably come; or, rather, that the home he had struggled so long to make sure of for his family would have to pass out of his hands, perhaps at a heavy sacrifice, and thus leave him worse off than he was before he purchased it. Sad thoughts haunted him until long after midnight.

The *morning* came at last. Trueman had slept but little, and arose unrefreshed, and more dispirited than he had been on the night before. Edith saw this, and it troubled her. Usually, sleep had been to her husband a tranquillizer. The morning generally found his countenance in repose and his voice placid. The morning meal was usually one pleasant to all. But on this occasion, his brow showed a slight contraction; his eye was fixed in thought, and his lips more compressed than usual. He did not converse at the table, but ate quickly and very sparingly, and then arose and went away. His wife sighed as he did so, and Edith looked thoughtfully after him as he left the room.

Trueman’s steps were turned directly to his store, where he proceeded at a quick pace. The newspaper was opened, and a few articles glanced at under the head of “Commercial Record.” Nothing else in it had for him, at that time, any interest. A whole hour was then spent in examining the state of affairs for the day, and in devising means for meeting two or three business notes, and various items of borrowed money. At first, it seemed to him that it would be impossible to get through; but, as he thought longer and

more intently, light began to appear. He could see a way here and a way there, which, entered into, would lead to good results. At ten o'clock he went out of his store, leaving his two clerks to attend to the business, and was occupied in "financiering" until twelve. By that time he had succeeded in raising all the funds required for the day's payments.

His mind was easier when he returned home at dinner-time, and, as a consequence, his countenance was more cheerful. This was noticed by the mother and daughter the moment he came in. It was to them a great relief. Light payments for a week left his mind in a quieter state. During that period, his home feelings were permitted again to come fully into activity. He saw and appreciated the many blessings that were bestowed upon him — a tender, devoted wife and loving children, with all the external comforts necessary for their happiness.

But, as the time drew nearer and nearer for the payment of the last note given in the purchase of his house, and he saw the utter impossibility of being able to meet it, or even much longer to sustain himself in business. With nearly three thousand dollars in borrowed money to provide for weekly, his spirits sank again, and still lower. His wife strove to cheer him, but her efforts were less successful than before. She knew not the real nature of the disease, and could not, therefore, administer an antidote. Trueman could not bear to tell her the real state of affairs. He knew how much she loved the pleasant spot they occupied. Her own hands had beautified it much in the culture of flowers and vines, and other tasteful arrangements both within and without. How could he tell her of the danger that threatened their lovely home? He shrunk from the thought. And Edith, too, his sweet child, there were few places within doors or without, where traces of her hands might not be seen. How could he break to her, his too justly-grounded fears?

Time hurried rapidly on, and the crisis he so much feared was only two days off. Still all was dark. There was not a single opening in the heavy clouds which descended low over his head, showing that there was a clear, bright sky beyond. The difficulties of his business had increased, independently of this extra payment; there was not, therefore, the most remote possibility of his being able to lift the note, the possession of which would give him a clear title to his little homestead.

"All, all must go to ruin!" he exclaimed, in an impassioned tone, after having sat pondering for a long time on the prospect before him. "What can I do? I feel like a man chained hand and foot, whose spirit is struggling and panting for liberty. How can I give up that pleasant spot, which Edith and the children love so well? For myself, I care little; any other place with them would be to me beautiful. Their faces, their tones, their smiles, their dear affections — these are all I ask, these would cause the *desert* to rejoice and blossom like the rose."

While in this frame of mind, a calm-faced, contented-looking middle-aged man entered his store, and came up to where he was sitting. Evidently, no great trial or affliction had ever contracted a muscle, and yet he did not bear in his countenance a happy look. There was something in it that marked him as a *lover of self* — and a lover of self is never *happy*. He was scrupulously neat in his attire, and had that "just-out-of-a-box look" which few married men exhibit, even if they have good wives to take care of them.

"Good-morning, *Lane*," said Trueman, rising and extending his hand as the visitor came towards him.

"Good-morning, old friend," returned Lane, smiling with real pleasure. "It's so long since I have had the pleasure of laying my eyes upon you, that I thought I would drop in and see how you looked. How are you? and how are all in your little *nest* at home?"

"Well, I thank you! How do you get along nowadays?"

"O, bravely enough. Life goes on with me in the old way, calm and evenly. But I think you begin to fail, Trueman, isn't it so?" This was said in a serious tone. "Your hair is changing fast. Why, how *gray* you are getting! And your face is thinner, and the lines upon it far too deeply sunken for a man of your age."

"Your head would become sprinkled, and your face lined — if you had us much care and anxiety as I have. A family of five children taxes a man's utmost ability to provide all that is needful."

"So I would think. Thank fortune, I have no such encumbrance! But you appear really troubled Trueman. Is anything more than usual the matter? or has your face got really *fixed* into a look of painfully anxious care?"

"I am, just at this time, suffering more than usual anxiety."

“From what cause? Nothing that is serious, I hope?”

“To me and mine it is very serious. You know our beautiful little cottage and garden?”

“Yes.”

“I bought it, as you are aware, about three years ago. All the payments have been met but one. That is about falling due, and I see no possible way of meeting it. Of course, I cannot get a clear title to the property, which will have to be sold to pay off this encumbrance upon it.”

“How much is the amount of this last payment?”

“One thousand dollars.”

“Can’t you borrow that sum?”

“I have already been borrowing for at least two years, and now am in debt, on this account, just about what I have paid on the purchase of my house.”

“That is bad. You were, then, really not able to buy this property?”

“It seems so. I was anxious to possess a house that my wife and children might call their own, if I were taken away from them. I believed that in three years I could certainly pay for it; but business has fallen off instead of increasing in that time, and now the attempt to secure such a home for them has brought me into serious trouble. I am in a great strait, and it worries me almost to death. I really do not know what to do, or which way to turn.”

“Won’t the holder of your note extend the time of payment? He is fully secured.”

“He might; but I do not know. I have not asked him.”

“Has the note been discounted?”

“I will see in a moment.”

Trueman referred to the bank notice, and found that his note was held by the bank as discounted paper.

“The original holder has either passed it away, or had it discounted,” he said. “There is, therefore, but little hope of getting it renewed; and, as a matter of business prudence, I had rather not ask a renewal of my paper — it might impair my credit. Were that done, ruin would be inevitable.”

Lane sat and mused some time before he replied. At length he remarked,

“I do not see any other prudent course for you to pursue but to sell your house, and relieve yourself of your difficulties.”

“But how can I give up that pleasant place, so dear to my wife and children? Their hands have beautified it in every spot. There is not a tree, or shrub, or vine, or flower that does not show their taste and care. Every nook and corner brings up a home feeling. Lane, you cannot imagine how the thought *distresses* me.”

“You were not able really to make the purchase?”

“True.”

“Then are you right in so eagerly desiring to possess it?”

Trueman was silent. There was point in the question. After musing for some time, he said, as if thinking aloud,

“You shall not covet your neighbor’s house.”

Then he was silent again, while thought was still active. He went away back in his mind, and reviewed the whole transaction involving the purchase. The more steadily he looked at it — the less was he satisfied with what he had done, and the more apparent was it that Lane’s suggestion about selling the property was the best that could be followed.

“Perhaps you are right,” he at length said. “This *knot* must be cut; it cannot be untied. Unquestionably I shall never be able, with present prospects, to bear up under the purchase of the house.”

“Then to attempt to do so is not the act of a prudent man.”

“I see that clearly; but it is to me a very painful conclusion to come to, that I must part with this little property — it is so much to my taste, and so much to the taste of my family. They feel it to be their permanent abiding-place, and are hourly letting their home feelings entwine more and more around every object. They dream nothing of all this. How can I break it to them? I would lay down life itself to secure their happiness, and yet I cannot serve them even in so apparently small a matter.”

Trueman’s voice trembled with struggling emotion, and Lane was deeply touched.

“There is a way,” the latter said, after a thoughtful pause, and speaking with some hesitation, “by which *I* could help you to stave off this crisis for at least a year, in order to give you more time.”

“Would it be just to the holder of my bond?”

“He might not think it so.”

“Would it violate the spirit of the original contract?” Trueman spoke in a firm voice.

“It would,” was the reply.

“Enough! If I die, yet will I maintain my integrity. Only right courses of action bring peace of mind. That house would cost me too dear at the price of a troubled conscience.”

“Doubtless it would. As a wise man, your best course is one that is plain and straightforward. Sacrifices which come in this orderly way prove, as a general thing, benefits instead of calamities.”

“I believe you. Be the pain ever so acute, this gangrenous limb must be cut off, and it shall be cut off!”

CHAPTER 10.

After Lane had left Trueman, he turned his thoughts resolutely to the consideration of the subject proposed — the sale of his house. The more closely he looked at the matter, viewing it in all its lights and shadows — the more clearly did he see that there was no other alternative for him. To struggle on in the attempt to keep it, would be to destroy his peace of mind; and he well knew that none could be happy at home, while he was wretched.

But the thought of breaking the matter to his wife, and to Edith, his oldest child — caused a chill to pass from his head to his feet.

He went home at dinner-time, but could eat only what he forced himself to take. His troubled air did not escape the eye of his wife and daughter; and even the younger children wondered where the *smile* that ever beamed for them, had fled. The evening found him in no more tranquil state. The whole afternoon had been spent in a rigid examination of his affairs, and a rational decision of his course for the future. He saw only one right way, and that was to sell the house. The settling of this gave quiet to his mind so far as himself was concerned, but disturbed him deeply when he thought of his loved ones at home.

When he at last closed up his business for the day, and directed his steps homeward, his *head* seemed dizzy and his *heart* was faint. The truth must be told at once; it would be wrong to delay a moment longer. When he entered his house, the first sound that met his ear was Edith's voice, singing an evening hymn, while a few light touches of her fingers brought from the piano a fine accompaniment. This soothed and quieted his disturbed feelings. He seated himself by the window where the reader has before seen him, and gave himself up to the *spell* which her voice and song threw over him. Two or three other pieces were sung, and then Edith left the instrument, and came into the room where he was sitting.

"Why, father," she said, pressing up to his side, "I didn't know you were here. How long have you been home?"

"Only a few minutes. You were singing when I came in, and I sat down to listen. I was troubled. But the evil spirit is gone; your voice has expelled him."

"Do not talk so, dear father! You know not how strangely it makes me feel," Edith replied, with a serious face.

"I will not, if it disturbs you. But there is the tea-bell. Come, let us join your mother and the children."

At the tea-table, Trueman made a strong effort to appear cheerful; but it was hard work. When they all arose, he passed into their little parlor and sat again alone at the window, while the mother and daughter put the younger children to bed. This done, first Edith, and then her mother, came in, and sat down close by his side. They felt towards him a *tenderness* that was unusual. He had not been able to conceal for many weeks the uneasiness he felt, and they had seen that something more than common disturbed him. His wife knew that *anxiety for the future* had much to do with his state of mind, but she had no idea of the real position of affairs. He had never yet spoken out on the subject.

For some time all were silent. Trueman felt that the time had come for him to speak freely; still, he had a most unconquerable *reluctance* to doing so. After thinking over various ways to begin, he at length said, laying his hand upon that of his wife,

"Do you remember, about five years ago, the pleasant walks we used sometimes to take past this cottage and garden, and how often we paused to admire it?"

"Oh yes, I remember it well," the wife returned.

"And how often we used to wish that the cottage and garden were ours?"

"Yes. And we had our wish granted; it soon became ours; and we still abide on the same sweet spot."

Trueman sighed, was silent, and then resumed: "Many a time, as I then passed this place, and saw children playing before the door, and a happy father and mother looking out and smiling upon them from the window, I *envied* them the possession of their quiet nook. I *coveted* my neighbor's house."

"Henry!"

"It is true. You know how much I talked about it? How I set my heart upon having it for months before I made the purchase?"

“Yes.”

“And how indifferent, I told you, the owner was about selling?”

“Yes.”

“He said to me, over and over again, that he had no particular wish to part with the property, and that he felt especially reluctant to compel the excellent family then his tenants to remove. They had been in it ever since it was built, and had taken much pains to beautify and improve its appearance. But I wanted the house so badly, that I constantly importuned him to sell; at last he consented. He did not care about money, and gave me my own terms.”

“And the family had to move,” Edith, the daughter, said, with something of regret in her voice.

“Yes, dear; they had to move, and it went hard with them, the owner told me. He said that he was half sorry he had consented to let me have the house, when he found they were so attached to it.”

“Didn’t we do wrong,” asked Mrs. Trueman, “in depriving them of a house they loved? Were we not moved by a covetous spirit?”

“That is one point I wished to make appear. That is what I have just alleged. There is a commandment which says, You shall not *covet* your neighbor’s *house*. I see clearly now that, in regard to this property, I coveted my neighbor’s house. Would it be any matter of surprise if He who sees and knows all things, were to disturb us in our quiet possession?”

The room was dark. Trueman could not see the effect of this question upon his wife — and she only understood what lay deeper than the words, by the peculiar tones of his voice. His hand closed upon that of his wife’s with a gentle pressure as he spoke.

“Speak plainer, Henry,” she returned, after a short silence; “Am I not your wife?”

This unexpected reply opened the way for Trueman to say what he desired. He saw that Edith was beginning to understand him.

“God is about disturbing us in our possession,” he said, his voice partaking slightly of the agitation within.

“Plainer still, Henry.” The tones of his wife were perfectly calm.

There was another hesitating pause. Then he looked the whole matter resolutely in the face.

“I will tell you all, Edith,” he began; “I can trust you. I know all the love, all the patience, all the firmness that dwells in your bosom; but I did not wish to put these virtues to the trial.”

There was another pause.

“Say on, Henry.”

“I will. When I bought this property, my business was in a healthy condition. Proceeds of sales bore a just relation to maturing payments and expenses. It was but rarely that I was compelled to borrow when a note fell due. But the thousand dollars that I paid down in cash crippled me. In the course of a short time thereafter, I owed just one thousand dollars borrowed money. All through the next year I was compelled to remain on the borrowing list. At its termination, a thousand dollars more had to be paid. It cost me a great effort to borrow that sum. The next was a still harder year. The constant necessity there was for raising money kept me all the time busy in devising ways and means, to the serious neglect of my business. Another thousand dollar note, with two years’ interest added, fell due at the expiration of this year. It had to be paid. How I managed to get the money, I can hardly tell. It was *borrowed*. The whole amount paid for the house up to this time, had all been borrowed. I owed, therefore, three thousand dollars, independent of my business, and that yielded only a profit about equal to our expenses. Still, I lived in the vain hope of being able to get through. I could never allow myself for a moment to entertain the idea of giving up our house. But all would not do. Amid hard struggles, I have passed another year; my business seriously diminished, in consequence, I suppose, mainly, of my lack of proper attention to it. The day after tomorrow, the last payment is to be made; I cannot meet it; it would be vain to try.”

“Why attempt to do so?” Mrs. Trueman asked, in a firm voice.

“If it is not met, you can guess the consequence.”

“We shall lose this house?”

“Yes.”

“And would you regret it?”

“Not on my own account.”

“You need not on mine. I shall never feel *contented* until it is sold, and we are out of it.”

“Nor on mine, father,” Edith said, drawing closer to him, and taking his hand affectionately. “To know that it has cost you so much, robs it of all beauty. Why have you concealed all this from us so long? Did you doubt our love for you? Did you think we would weigh any mere external good for a moment against your peace of mind?”

“No, my child; I doubted not, for an instant, your true hearts. But the pleasure I found in seeing you all so happy here, more than compensated for all the anxiety I felt.”

“You were wrong, my husband,” Mrs. Trueman said; “that is not the way to make those we love, truly happy. We should weep together, as well as rejoice. We should mutually take up every burden. What would bear one to the earth — two may carry with ease. Had you made me acquainted with the real nature of the tenure by which we held this house, I would long ago have urged you to give it up. Now we cannot do it too quickly.”

“You can leave here, then, without a regret?”

“Father, how can you doubt it?” The daughter spoke in a quick voice. Its tones expressed surprise and pain.

“I do not doubt it, my child,” he returned; “my words were meant as an affirmation. I know you will stand by me bravely. I know that, beyond my ability to provide, you have no needs.”

“No, no, none,” returned both wife and daughter, with feeling.

A *mountain* seemed to have been suddenly removed from Trueman’s feelings. When he began to speak, his mind was so oppressed that, acting upon his body, it caused his heart to labor heavily, and constricted his chest so that his breathing was audible. Now the motion of his heart was even, and his respiration free. To give up the cottage did not seem so painful a thing. The tried affection of his wife and child, was more to him than could have been the palace of a prince. Without it, the stateliest mansion would have had no attractions; with it, the lowliest dwelling-place would have possessed an inexpressible charm.

That night Trueman slept sounder than he had done for many months.

CHAPTER 11.

It was with a feeling of anxiety which he could not subdue that Trueman looked into the face of his wife and daughter on the next morning. He had no cause for fear or distrust. The only change his eye could detect was a look of tenderer interest. They were both more cheerful than he had seen them for some time, and seemed to vie with each other in their attentions to him. This strengthened his mind.

On the following day, the long-dreaded note would fall due. He could not meet it; that was a settled point in his mind, and he made no effort to do so. But something must be done. If it were suffered to lie over and be protested, there was no telling how it might affect his credit, and thus tend to the destruction of his business. The true course to pursue he found it very hard to determine. At length, with a feeling of reluctance that was almost unconquerable, he called upon the holder of the note, or, rather, upon the individual from whom he had purchased the property for which the note had been given.

After sitting with him for a little while, and conversing about ordinary topics, he said,

“I have called today upon rather unpleasant business.”

“What is it?” asked the man, looking grave.

“The last note given on the purchase of that little piece of property I bought from you, falls due tomorrow.”

“Does it? I did not know. I passed it away some months since.”

“Have you no control over it?”

“None at all.”

“I am sorry for that. I am reluctantly compelled to say that it will be utterly out of my power to meet it.”

“It will? Why, how comes that, Mr. Trueman? I thought you were getting along about as pleasantly as anybody. You lifted the other notes.”

“Yes, but it was hard work. The fact is, I was not able to make that purchase. It has cramped me in my business, and given me more trouble than it is worth.”

“You were very anxious to get it.”

“So I was; but I didn’t really know what I was about. I liked the place so well that I persuaded myself I could easily pay for it. But the result proves that I was mistaken. I have paid three thousand dollars on it, and crippled my business just that sum; and now it is altogether out of the question for me to attempt to lift the last note. I am thus frank with you, because it is right that you should understand exactly how I am situated.”

“What is to be done?”

“It is for you to say.”

“Oh no.”

“I cannot complete my payments on the purchase.”

“And cannot, therefore, secure your title to the property?”

“No.”

“What then?”

“Yes, that is the question — What then? Who is to answer it?”

“You or I?”

“You, doubtless,” said Trueman.

“The note will not be lifted?”

“It is impossible for me to do it. I wish it were not.”

“Do you want to retain the cottage?”

“No, not for an hour.”

“Oh, well, that puts a new face on the matter. Suppose I buy it back again?”

“From my heart I wish you would.”

“On what terms?”

“Such as will best suit yourself.”

“But, if I take it again, I cannot rent it to you; its *old tenant* will want again to come into possession. It was only yesterday that he was scolding me for having sold a place that I had no need of selling, just to gratify your desire to have it. His wife has never been contented since their removal.”

“Let him have it. I am sorry the desire to possess what another was enjoying, became so active in my mind as to utterly blind me.”

“But how will such a change affect your family?”

“As it does me. We are never divided in opinion or feeling. They will give it up without a sigh.”

“If I repurchase on the same terms that I sold, you will not object?”

“Oh no. How could I?”

“Then I must lift that note of yours tomorrow as the cash payment; and, on the relinquishment by you of the provisional title, give you three notes for a thousand dollars each, payable in one, two, and three years.”

Trueman grasped the hand of the individual who had so generously released him from his obligation, and said, “You know not what a *mountain* has been removed from my heart. All will be well with me again. If ever am betrayed into another action so indiscreet, may I suffer a tenfold penalty.”

When all this was related at home, both wife and daughter were overjoyed at the happy termination of an affair that had, all unsuspected by them, caused Trueman so much trouble. There were no selfish regrets at the prospect of leaving the pleasant spot — no looking back and lingering — but rather an eagerness to get away from a place, the possession of which had been held at so dear a cost. In the course of a week, a recession of the property into the hands of its original owner took place, and Trueman received three notes of one thousand dollars each, payable in one, two, and three years. These notes, as the drawer was a man of wealth and known integrity, he found no difficulty in getting discounted at the regular rate of interest. At once he was enabled to restore his business to a much more healthy basis, by putting back into it the funds he had used in paying for his house. His borrowed money account was balanced, an account that had given him more trouble than everything else put together.

A comfortable house in the city was rented, and there he moved with his family. A week after their departure from the cottage, and when they had become something like settled, Trueman found himself, one evening after tea, sitting, with a quiet mind, between his wife and daughter. Up to that time, since their removal, the fatigues attendant upon rearranging their furniture and putting their house in order, had left them in no spirits for social fellowship.

“My heart is at ease again,” he said, with a tone and smile that could not be mistaken.

“And so is mine,” replied Mrs. Trueman. “Notwithstanding our external condition has been, for three years, all my heart could wish — yet never, during that time, have I been without a concern of mind unfelt before. I now understand the reason. You were troubled, and I felt the disturbance, though I knew not certainly whence it came. In something I perceived that you were changed, but wherein that change lay, I could not tell. For months past you have been desponding, and have frequently spoken in a desponding manner. I tried to encourage you to look up and trust in Him whose promises are sure; but my words had little, or only temporary effect. The certain knowledge I now possess, and the changes which that knowledge has produced, are nothing compared to the internal disquiet I daily suffered.”

“I would not be back again in that cottage, for all the world could offer,” Edith said, warmly. “Whenever I think about our having displaced a family anxious to remain, it gives me much pain. I am truly thankful that they have already returned to the so-much-desired spot. We can be happy anywhere.”

“Truly said, Edith. This is a lesson that will do us all good, and me especially. It has taught us practically this fundamental truth, that we are not to seek *happiness* in *mere external* good things. Whatever natural blessings we are prepared to enjoy, will come in an orderly way; to receive more than these is like possessing goodly vessels, without the wine which they were made to contain. They may please the *eye* for a time, but can never satisfy the *spirit*. How wise that law of spiritual life which says, ‘You shall not covet.’ If obeyed, it protects not only others in the possession of what they have received, as suited to their state and condition — but it prevents each individual who makes it a rule of action, from grasping at that which, if gained, would only make him miserable. Going still farther in its action, it

restrains one of those direful forms of selfishness which, if allowed to become active, destroys the soul. For my part, I am satisfied that in this disappointment, resides a merciful Providence.”

“I am sure of it,” Mrs. Trueman returned. “Every providence is a merciful one which leads us to see and correct our errors.”

“Truly said. And the pain we experienced during these severe conflicts is beneficial. It leaves our *minds* calmer, our *perceptions* clearer, and our *affections* less bound down to things of earth with the cords of self-love; at least, this is my experience. Before I bought that cottage, it seemed to me, that if I were only able to own it, I would be perfectly happy. The mere possession of a dwelling suited to my taste, was to satisfy all the aspirations of a heaven-born spirit. In that quiet spot, with those I loved around me, I was to find perpetual peace — springs of water in which to slake immortal thirst — rest for a soul wandering far from its congenial home. But this could not be. And is it not strange that I needed all the *severe trials* which I have experienced, before I could see this truth clearly? How deeply seated are our false views of life! With what a strange folly do we turn our eyes downward, when bright and beautiful worlds are glittering in the sky above us!”

CHAPTER 12.

A few days after Trueman had resold his cottage and moved to his new residence, Milford Lane was stopped by a friend, as he was walking along the street thoughtfully, or, rather, in a pensive mood. He had just passed *Dora Enfield*, his old love, and was contrasting in his mind her appearance *fifteen years* before with what it was now. The change made him feel sad. How had the bright flower faded — the spring run dry — the leaf withered! Like himself, she had never married.

“Is it true, Lane,” said the friend, with some concern, as he took the hand of the lawyer, “that Trueman is going broke? I heard this morning that he had been compelled to part with that little gem of a cottage in which he has been so snugly quartered for some years.”

“It is too true, poor fellow!” replied Lane. “He has sold it back to the old owner, and left it.”

“How in the world has that come to pass?”

“Wife and five children! that accounts for any disaster to which a man may be subjected.” This was said in rather a carping tone, and with a slight curl of the lip.

“But I know many men with as large families as Trueman’s, who get along very comfortably.”

“No doubt; but they have their *heartaches* in some other way. They can’t escape that. Poor Trueman! I saw him a little while before the crisis of his affairs arrived which compelled him to sell his house. I declare the wretched state he was in, made me feel miserable for a week, whenever I thought of him. He loves his family with an intense affection. They were all so happy in their *little Paradise*. The thought of seeing them driven forth almost maddened him.”

“It is a hard case, truly. But will he now be able to keep his head above water?”

“I doubt it. When a man, with a wife and five children clinging to him, gets into deep places — he generally goes down. There is not much hope for him, I fear.”

“I am really sorry to hear it. Trueman is a worthy fellow, and deserves a better fate. How it must crush the spirits of a man of right feelings to find himself, after years of hard struggling, and at a time when he has most reason to desire success — going down, and the dread prospect staring him in the face of a dismemberment of his family, or poverty and privation if they cling together.”

“Ugh! Horrible! It would kill me outright. Thank Heaven! I am not a married man.”

“No, you have escaped thus far.”

“I have, and thankful enough am I for it.”

“By the way, I met an *old flame* of yours a few evenings since, in company.”

“Indeed! Who was she?”

“Miss Enfield.”

“Ah!”

“Yes, and had an hour’s chat with her.”

“Well, how does the old girl do?”

“She is not what she used to be. I think her mind has become a little warped. Still, she is an intelligent, and quite an interesting woman, though somewhat depressed.”

“I saw her myself only a few minutes ago.”

“Don’t you think her much changed since you knew her some fifteen years ago?”

“Oh yes. She does not look like the same person. There is no feminine softness about her face; it is hard and cold; and, worse than all, there are deep lines running down her forehead. These always *mar*, to me, most sadly, a woman’s face. I cannot bear to see them.”

“There are no such lines on the forehead of Trueman’s wife,” the friend remarked.

“No, there certainly are not,” Lane said, thoughtfully, “and there is a warmth and sweet feminine softness in her face, notwithstanding she has borne much and suffered much. As pale and thin as she looks, you do not turn away your eyes in pain from her countenance.”

“Can you tell the reason?” asked the friend.

There was a pause.

“No,” was at length uttered. “Can you?”

“The face of a woman who is a wife and mother,” replied the friend, “I mean a woman of good principles, whose husband does not neglect her — has always about it something that we can look upon with pleasure. It is rarely so, with the face of one who has never married. In it there is something always lacking — something which repels rather than attracts you. Is not this your own experience?”

“I think it is. Certainly, Edith Trueman’s face has not changed so much for the worse as has Dora Enfield’s; and yet, to my eye, the latter had, fifteen years ago, more real feminine beauty than the former.”

“It is more than she has now.”

“I will not gainsay your *words*, for I cannot,” Lane said, half abstractedly.

“Nor will you my *conclusion*, I think.”

“What is it?”

“That marriage makes the difference in favor of Mrs. Trueman.”

“I shall not so readily admit that. There must have been some radical difference in their dispositions.”

“Isn’t it a little curious that this radical difference exists to the disparagement of all old maids?”

returned the friend, smiling.

“I don’t admit that it does,” Lane replied.

“You do not! Oh! I thought you did. Well, refer me to a single one of your female acquaintances, who has passed the prime of life without marrying, whose face will compare with that of Mrs. Trueman, or the face of any other wife and mother.”

“Let me see.- There is — hum! There is — I know there are plenty, but I can’t call them to mind now.”

“Nor ever will, let me tell you. There is in the eye of a married woman, a light of affection, and generous warmth towards everyone, that I have looked for in vain in the eyes of elderly maiden ladies. The nearest approach to it is found only in those who have been a great deal with children, and have felt almost as much interest in them as if they were their own. The maiden aunt, if she is naturally a lover of children, is domesticated in the family, and has charge of the bright little youngsters — forms the broadest exception to the rule. But even she is not as happy as she would have been had the wife and *mother’s lot* been upon her — as hard as the burden is, often, to bear. Are not her peculiarities often the subject of remark by her friends — even those who love her best and most prize her virtues?”

“I am not, by any means, prepared to admit that the quiet old maiden aunt, with face so calm and bosom so peaceful, would have been happier as a married woman. She *might* have been, but the chances would have stood ten to one against it.”

After Lane parted from his friend, he returned to his office, where he remained undisturbed for a whole hour. The conversation had given a new direction to his thoughts, and they flowed steadily on in their particular channel, but not in a very peaceful current. The change in *Dora* disturbed him. He could not put from his mind, the thought that *his neglect of her*, like a worm at the bud — had preyed upon her damask cheek. As much as he strove to get away from his friend’s conclusions in regard to the effect of a single life upon the mind of a woman, he could not do so. There was a force about them, because they were drawn from facts, which was almost irresistible.

The image of *Dora*, as she looked that morning when he encountered her in the street, and the image of Trueman’s wife, were constantly before his mind, in strong contrast. Involuntarily he could not but admit that Edith was far the happiest.

And this conclusion was a just one. She was *incomparably* happier. For three years after *Dora* had become fully aware of Lane’s views of marriage, and had been made to feel beyond a doubt that, in his resolution to act up to them, he was in earnest — she suffered all the *pangs of hopeless love*, whose impulses could not be subdued. The *thought* of him would quicken her pulse, the mention of his *name* cause her heart to throb, and the *sight* of him pale her cheek and thrill her whole frame. And yet she struggled hard against her feelings, and prayed earnestly that they might subside, even if upon her heart were to fall a waveless calm. Thus she lived on, until the surface of her feelings began to harden. She could think and speak of Lane, and meet him without a quick throb of the heart, or the betrayal of any emotion.

But all noticed that she was less amiable in disposition than before, and manifested, on some occasions, an unfitting levity, while at other times she was silent, and inclined to moroseness. Then again she was cynical, and disposed to find fault with everything around her. Her early companions all married, and became absorbed in the duties of their new relations, thus robbing her of bosom friends in whose society she had found great delight. New friends she could not draw around her, because she presented few attractive points.

Thus time, with her, passed on. Occasionally she would fall into company with the calm, contented-looking bachelor who had in early years won her heart, and whose image was still the only one its tablet retained, as perfect as ever, though the dust had accumulated thickly upon it. She met him with a quiet, half-reserved courtesy; though he never felt perfectly at ease by her side. He could not divest himself of the feeling that he had *wronged her*, argue as he would from his assumed positions in regard to marriage.

It was mentioned, in the early part of this story, that Dora had a *brilliant mind*. Not having any domestic cares or duties to divert her attention, and being fond of books, which had afforded her great relief during the first years of her acute disappointment, her affections were turned into literary channels. She read and studied a great deal, and thus acquired a knowledge of books and the opinions of the learned, far more general and extensive than is usually found in the ordinary walks of life, either among men or women. The fact that, in almost any society where she was thrown, she found herself *superior*, at least so far as *book knowledge* was concerned — tended to make her *vain* of her acquirements. She might have been proud of a brilliantly endowed husband, without injury to herself; but to love her own intelligence, or to love herself for her intelligence — was to destroy a well-balanced, highly gifted mind. Knowledge was gained for the end of *display* and *triumph* alone — not with the end of making it subserve some *practical use* in society. This is never done, without the end defeating itself. It was so in the case of Dora. Everyone could see that she aimed only at *display* — and no one either *admired* her for her intelligence, or was *benefitted* by it.

Take her all in all, she presented *a sad wreck of a loving, gifted woman*. Her affections found no channels in which to flow. She was formed for a wife and mother. But she had no husband, no children — nothing that her heart could truly love — nothing but *herself*; and the more fully she loved herself — the more miserable she became.

But to return to Lane. He sat immersed in rebuking and troubled thought for a whole hour. He remembered how sweet a girl Dora had been, and how fondly she had loved him. (This fact Trueman had taken care that she should know.) And how evident was the effect of his neglect upon her! She had gradually changed until she presented a painful contrast to what she had been. He tried, but in vain, to remember the elderly maiden ladies whose countenances were as full of womanly beauty as that of Mrs. Trueman, and several other married women he could think of. All his most interesting female friends — and he was fond of the company of the gentler gender — he found, when he began to think about it, were married, and some of them had passed through trials of a deeply searching character. In fact, he could think of no woman for whose society he had any particular regard, who was not married.

This was altogether new to him. The *fact* had existed, but he had not *seen* it. What could it mean? Was it an accidental thing, or did marriage really perfect a woman's true character? Here was a problem, seen to be such in the light of his own mind. Years before, when Trueman had declared such to be the fact, he met it with opposing declarations at once and boldly. Now he was not able to see why there was such a difference in the middle-aged, married, and maiden ladies of his acquaintance.

This state of mind continued through the day. On that evening, as he sat down in his lonely room, he felt unhappy. Why, he did not know. But he was unhappy. He was lonesome, and wearied with himself. He had no thoughts that were pleasant. He was living on — but without a goal in life. He felt that he was doing good to no one. Such reflections made him feel more and more dissatisfied. Then he began to think of Trueman, and his late unfortunate affair.

"Poor fellow!" he said, half aloud, "I think I ought to call in and see him. He may feel that I am neglectful."

The *act* quickly followed the *thought*. In half an hour he stood at Trueman's door. He could not help feeling a kind of reluctance to meeting the family under the circumstances. He had not seen Mrs.

Trueman since their removal. Their first meeting after that event, he was sure, would awaken unpleasant feelings. It could not, he thought, be otherwise.

Most agreeably was he surprised to find the face of Mrs. Trueman brighter than he had seen it for a long time. Her husband, too, looked like a different man. His countenance was cheerful, and his flow of spirits unusually good. He was puzzled. How could all this be? Was it real? or were they only *acting*? No, it was not acting; that was soon fully apparent. They looked, and thought, and spoke just as they felt. They were happy — and so they appeared.

“It must have been a hard trial for you to leave your dear little cottage,” Lane remarked to Mrs. Trueman during the evening, and after he found that it would excite no very unpleasant feelings to make such an allusion.

“Oh no,” she replied, with a smile, “I never did anything with more pleasure in my life. I didn’t wish to stay in the cottage a day after I found that we had no right there.”

“But how could you leave without regret, a spot so congenial to your taste? You cannot surely be thinking of what you say when you speak as you do.”

“You have yet to learn, Milford,” said Trueman, “one of the *secrets of true happiness*.”

“Will you impart to me that knowledge?”

“I will. But I am not sure that you will fully understand me. Happiness flows from *within* outward, and not in a reverse direction. The heart must be right, before the greatest earthly good can prove a blessing. With a right heart, the gifts our heavenly Father sends, be they ever so small, will be received with thankfulness, and bring contentment.”

The eyes of Mrs. Trueman were turned affectionately towards her husband while he was speaking. They sparkled with sweet assent to his words. Lane saw the expression of her face. He thought she had never looked so beautiful, even though her eyes had receded deeply into their sockets, and her cheeks had lost their glow. Just at this moment, the image of Dora, as he had last seen her, came up before him.

“Who is happiest?” was the involuntary question asked in his mind.

“The wife and mother,” was replied.

“Can you understand me?” asked Trueman, breaking in upon his abstraction.

“How?” This was said in an absent manner.

“Do you perceive the *true secret of happiness* to which I alluded?”

“Oh yes, very clearly.”

“There lies the source of Edith’s unreluctant acquiescence in a change that had to be made. Her happiness would have been based upon a sandy foundation, had that cottage been its support; but, having been built upon a rock, a mere change in *external things* could not affect it. The winds blew, and beat upon her house, but it fell not.”

“And you? How do you bear the change?” asked Lane, looking Trueman steadily in the face. “When I talked with you last, the thought of giving up that property pained you beyond measure. Your state of mind made me feel unhappy for a week.”

“I was then in doubt and darkness; but the morning has broken, and, seeing all things clearly — I perceive that what, as it approached, I thought to be a great affliction — was only a *blessing in disguise*. I stand on higher ground, and in a clearer atmosphere. My vision is far-more extended. I take in, at a glance, a prospect greatly enlarged; I see the relation of events to each other; I see now more clearly into *causes*, and can, in consequence, estimate *events* more correctly. Now that the pain of parting with my earthly possession is past, I would not have it back again. The *trial* has been good for us all — it has bound us more firmly to each other, and caused us to be more deeply thankful to the Giver of all good, for his manifold blessings.”

When Lane returned home, he felt puzzled. He could not doubt the fact that Trueman and his wife were happy, that is, relatively so — certainly *far happier* than either himself or Dora Enfield. He called himself a quiet, contented man; but it was a mere external quiet, and a cold inner passiveness. In Trueman’s happiness, he saw something vital. It was not negative, like his own, but a positive quality. This he could clearly see, and it made him feel uneasy.

“Wait a while,” he at length said to himself, starting up from the chair where he had seated himself on returning home; “the end is not yet. There are many rugged *mountains*, and dark, gloomy *valleys* for him to pass through. That he loves his wife most tenderly is easily seen, and she is worthy of his love. She is, evidently, the prop upon which he leans. Wait until that is removed, and see. No matter when it comes, in five years, or when he is an old, old man — it will crush him to the earth — it will break his heart; and besides this, he has five children. Edith is a lovely blossom from a lovely stem. Suppose a sudden *frost* should cause that *flower* to wither, or a *blight* soil its pure leaves? Ugh! it makes me sick to think of it. And his boys. Ah! Boys are heart-sores, often, to parents. Well, well! *time* — that proves all things, will solve this problem. Thus far, I believe, he has the advantage of me; still, I do not think I would willingly go through all he has encountered for his reward. He deserves all his blessings — he has earned them. Let me be content with mine. But Dora, poor Dora! Ah me! I wish she were not so changed. Her face haunts and reproaches me continually.”

CHAPTER 13.

Ten years more have passed. What is their history? Who has now the advantage — Trueman or Lane — the *married* or the *single* man? They are both past fifty. Fifty years! Depend upon it, the problem is solved. But, alas! there is no going back to work it over again, should there be an error in the result, as error there must be in one case or the other — both cannot be right. Either *marriage* or *celibacy* is the true order of man's existence; and only so far as he lives in the true order of his being, can he be happy.

Again we will introduce *Trueman and his wife*, for both still tread the path of human life, and tread it side by side, hand to hand, and heart to heart.

Their sky has not been an unclouded one, during the past ten years, nor have the clouds only portended storms. The fierce tempests have come down upon their heads with desolating wrath. Leaves have not only fallen from their branches, but branches themselves have been torn away. They have not only seen the *lightning*, and heard the *thunders* — but felt the searing current on their bosoms; still they have pressed onward, with eyes steadfastly fixed on the polar star above, for well they knew in *whom* they had trusted.

Their deepest trouble has been on account of Edith, their oldest daughter. Before at all conscious of danger, a handsome young man, of good family, won her young love — a love of which he was not worthy. The gentle girl was only seventeen when her heart softened to the touch of the great *enchanter's wand*.

Alfred Corbin, he who had gained her affections, was the son of a merchant of standing and wealth. Many parents would have thought him an eligible match for their daughter; but Trueman and his wife saw *deeper* than most people, into *character*. About Corbin there had always been something repulsive to them. A few facts which came to their knowledge, bearing upon his conduct in life, satisfied them that he was not possessed of a sound *moral* sense. This was enough for them.

Edith had bloomed forth into a lovely young woman, even exceeding the promise so favorably interpreted by her father and mother. She had been well educated. Her mind was stored, and her taste highly cultivated; nor had any of the true accomplishments, which so heighten the loveliness of woman, been neglected. Into whatever society she was introduced, she formed a kind of *central attraction*. Young men vied with each other for her hand in the dance, and were emulous in their attentions to her on all occasions. At the same time that Trueman and his wife experienced a *natural pride* in seeing Edith so admired and caressed wherever she went — they could not but feel a sensation of uneasiness. So many had made shipwreck — so many a *joy-freighted bark* had suddenly gone down — so many loving, innocent hearts had been won by the unworthy, and sacrificed at the shrine where they ardently worshiped. They saw, in the *exceeding loveliness* of their child — her great danger. She was a *prize* for which many would contend.

And many did seek her favor, but none so much pleased and interested her as young Corbin. Of one so *handsome* and manly in exterior — one whose *mind* had been so well stored, and whose *taste* had been so highly cultivated — she could only think with favor. Innocent herself, and ignorant of the world — she knew nothing of suspicion; it was a stranger to her bosom. When, therefore, Corbin showed her more than ordinary attentions, and seemed ever so much gratified as when by her side — she experienced an inward pleasure that was new to her. Before her father or mother had the slightest suspicion of the fact, the young man's image was reflected on her heart.

A *mother's eye* quickly notes any change in the state of a daughter's mind, just at that peculiar age when first and most susceptible of tender emotions. It was with a feeling of concern, that Mrs. Trueman observed Edith growing more quiet and thoughtful. She had been with her whenever she went into company, but had seen nothing that led her to believe the attentions to her daughter, as flattering though they were, had in them anything more than the gentlemanly courtesy that every intelligent, agreeable young woman receives in society. It is true that there was more familiarity in the manner of Corbin than pleased her; but this she was willing to set to the account of her dislike to the young man. Such a thought

as his seriously addressing her, or of the possibility of his being able to interest her affections — did not cross her mind.

But a resolution to be more watchful than ever, was instantly taken. On the same evening, much to the surprise, and not at all to the pleasure of either Mr. or Mrs. Trueman — young Corbin called and asked for Edith.

“Who is it, dear?” asked her mother, as Edith passed her door to go down into the parlor, after having been told by the servant that a *visitor* was below.

“Alfred Corbin,” was the unhesitating answer.

“Alfred Corbin!” returned Mrs. Trueman, with an expression of surprise which she would have concealed, had she not been thrown off her guard.

“Yes, mamma, it is Mr. Corbin,” Edith said, looking up into her mother’s face.

“Oh, very well,” the mother remarked, in a tone of indifference, having recovered herself, and retired to her chamber.

As Edith walked slowly downstairs, she could not but wonder at the strange manner of her mother, nor help feeling disturbed by it. It was evident to her mind, that the fact of Alfred Corbin’s calling to see her was not altogether pleasing to her mother. If it had been so, her face would not have worn exactly the expression that it did when she mentioned his name, nor would her voice have had the peculiar tone of surprise that had startled her ear. But why should this be? There was not a single male acquaintance on her list, who was as agreeable to her — not one that she was more pleased to meet. It seemed to the mind of Edith, very strange.

These thoughts, united with the effect produced on her by her mother’s manner, slightly disturbed her when she entered the parlor. The warmer tint that rested on her cheek, and the sweet confusion apparent in her whole manner, were perceived by Corbin, and interpreted to favor his own wishes. In his mind, it was an evidence that the announcement of his name had quickened the pulsations of her heart — a thing that could not occur, were she altogether indifferent towards him.

The evening passed very pleasantly to Edith — indeed, she could not remember one that had passed more pleasantly. It was equally so to her young admirer. But her father and mother were not so happy. They sat and talked together of their child, and of all they knew and felt in regard to Corbin, with a *troubled feeling* about their hearts.

From that time, Mrs. Trueman kept her eye closely upon her daughter. She saw much more to produce unquiet feelings, than she had supposed existed. Sometimes she would purposely make an allusion, apparently indifferent in its nature, to the young man, and mark the effect. Invariably she could see a change in Edith, and her woman’s heart instinctively perceived its source.

Now the day of doubt, and fear, and trial came to the parents. What was to be done? If Corbin were really attached to Edith, and intended to act from the sentiment he felt — it would be next to impossible for them to prevent his seeing her, and making known his feelings. *Bolts and bars* keep not out *love*. Love enters, no one knows how or when. Love laughs at the opposition of parents. The whole extent of the difficulty was fully perceived by Trueman and his wife. They were people of good sense and clear perceptions, and, therefore, saw the folly of any *open* opposition to the young man on their part, just at that particular crisis, unless they could bring strongly to their daughter’s mind, evidence of conduct clearly wrong. But this they could not do. His *habits*, so far as Mr. Trueman could judge, were not good, nor had he any faith in his *principles*; but he could allege nothing positively against him.

Everything was progressing quietly. Corbin sought frequent opportunities of seeing Edith. They met mostly in company, and then the mother’s eye was upon them. Each new meeting only confirmed her fears.

“I am sadly afraid,” she said to her husband, about four weeks after Corbin had called to see Edith for the first time, “that our worst fears are in danger of being realized. If I am not much mistaken, Edith’s feelings are already deeply interested in that young man.”

“It cannot, certainly, have gone that far,” Mr. Trueman said, looking alarmed.

“I believe it has. Every time I have seen Edith and Corbin meet for some weeks past, I have watched them with an anxious eye. Moreover, I have taken pains to allude to him in her presence several times. The effect I could not mistake. She regards him with more than usual interest.”

“Then we must at once prevent their meeting. I know of no young man for whom I feel a greater repugnance.”

“But what good effect will that have?”

Trueman mused for some time on this question, the force of which grew more and more apparent the longer he dwelt upon it.

“There is yet nothing very *serious* between them, I hope,” he at length replied. “If kept out of each other’s way for a little while — may they not grow indifferent towards each other?”

“Not if they have even the most remote suspicion that we keep them apart *intentionally*. Nothing would more certainly fix the incipient regard now felt for each other, into a passion that it would be folly in us to oppose.”

Thus they deliberated in doubt and fear. The result was a determination on the part of Trueman to make such an investigation of the young man’s character, as would enable him to bring before the mind of Edith conclusive proofs of his *unworthiness*. This task he found a hard one. Enough came to light to make him more than ever opposed to Corbin as a son-in-law, but there was nothing of that positive and conclusive character which, when presented to the mind of one inclined to favor him, might not easily be differently construed. The attempt to prejudice Edith against him, utterly failed

“I know that you have mistaken him. He is not what you believe him to be,” were the only replies she made.

But Edith loved her parents too well to do anything that gave them pain. She saw that their opposition to Alfred Corbin was of a serious character; that the fact of her feeling a preference for him and keeping his company, gave them pain. She could deny herself the pleasure of seeing him, if she could not suppress her feelings; and this, her pure filial affection prompted her to do. From the time she became fully aware of her father and mother’s sentiments, she avoided Corbin’s company. If he met her abroad, she repulsed him by a rigid coldness of manner; if he called at her father’s house, she declined seeing him.

For a time, Mr. and Mrs. Trueman’s hearts beat more lightly. But a few weeks revealed the sad truth that Edith was sinking into a state of pensive abstraction, verging on melancholy. She sang no more as she went through the house, gayly as a bird; she did not smile as formerly whenever she spoke to her mother or father. Her cheek was beginning to lose its color, and her eye its luster. The cause of this was no mystery. Mr. and Mrs. Trueman did not attempt to conceal the truth from themselves, but looked it full in the face.

As hard as Edith struggled to suppress her feelings, as hard as she strove, for her parents’ sake, to efface the image of Corbin from her heart — she found herself unequal to the task. It still remained there, undimmed even by the tears that wet her pillow through many, many sleepless hours of the lonely nights.

Edith’s state of mind produced first in her parents, most acute distress. Then they began to look at Corbin with different eyes, and to seek for good points in his character. Finally, they consented, as the better choice of two evils — to waive all objections to him, and let him visit Edith freely.

Six months afterward, they were married. A sweeter bride than Edith never murmured her marriage vows. But she was not altogether happy. She knew that the consent of her parents was not full and free. It grieved her deeply, to think that they should not have entire confidence in one so deeply loved and confided in by her — in one whose *heart* was so good, and whose *principles* were so pure.

In the years that had passed since their marriage, both Trueman and his wife had suffered much — had been so wrung with sorrow, that bitter tears had flowed freely, and that many times. Children had died and been buried out of their sight; and, worse than this, their oldest boy, a lad of fine promise, had fallen suddenly among evil associates, and been led away into evil practices! This was to both of them a terrible trial. For years, they had looked forward with pride and pleasure to the time when *William* would enter upon life, as a man of high moral worth and energy of character. Alas! their dearest hopes for him were suddenly blasted. Still, in the *death of their babes* — they had much to console them; and in the

aberration of their boy — they had a dearly-cherished hope that the scales would one day fall from his eyes.

But in giving *Edith* to a man in whom, though they tried hard, they could have no true confidence — they had nothing to fall back upon. There was nothing beyond to hope, and there was no retracing the step then taken. The sweet child they had loved so deeply — she who had been to them all that a dutiful, affectionate child could be — she who had been so tenderly cared for — was going out from under the home-tree and its sheltering branches, to tread a new, and, perhaps, treacherous path, where, no matter what the danger and suffering to which she might be exposed — they would have little power to defend or comfort her.

Feeling thus about *Edith*, it is no wonder that, in seeing her wedded, they experienced a *hopelessness* that had never before settled coldly about their hearts. All this was the more painful, from the fact that it had to be kept out of sight. Their child must not see it; it must not become apparent to any eye. Here was their severest trial. This disturbed them more than any event that had yet occurred, because it touched them in the tenderest part

CHAPTER 14.

For a year or two after the marriage of Edith, neither her father nor mother could really tell whether she were happy or not. Sometimes they would think her unchanged; but no sooner had this conclusion been settled, and their minds allowed to rest upon it, than something would occur to agitate again their doubts. As to her husband, there was something about him that they never could understand. He was a kind of enigma. He had been established in business by his father, but it was easily seen that success could not and would not attend him, and for the simple reason that he did not *devote himself* properly to his business. To almost any other man bearing to him the relation that Corbin did, Trueman would have talked freely. But there was about him something so *cold* and *distant* that he could never speak to him except with formal courtesy, and about general topics.

After the second year, both the father and mother saw the truth they had long dreaded to know — *Edith* was not happy. More than once had Mrs. Trueman found her in tears, and agitated. But no persuasion could induce her to tell the cause; it was steadily evaded. This mystery made them wretched at times. There was not an hour in the day that they did not think of her, and scarcely an hour through the night that she did not stand vividly before them as an actor in some dream.

To add another bitter ingredient to their cup, just at this time *William*, their oldest boy, who had attained his eighteenth year, left the store in which he had been employed, and went off to the South with an adventurer, who had seen in him certain mental qualities that he was assured he could turn to account. For two years, the boy had been a constant source of anxiety. The remonstrances of his father against his *dissolute course* had not been, in any case, kindly received, but met with ill-nature, and sometimes downright insolence. When he went away, he made known his purpose to no one, and did not even send a verbal message to his father or mother, who only gained intelligence of him in an indirect way.

The conduct of this boy almost broke his mother's heart. It was a cruel recompense for all she had suffered for him, for all the unselfish love which burned upon her heart with a never-dying flame. One day, when somewhat recovered from the first paralyzing effects of this event, Mrs. Trueman called to see Edith. The servant admitted her, and she passed upstairs. She went into the back chamber where she usually found her daughter, but it was vacant. Just as she was about placing her hand upon the closed door that communicated with the two chambers, with the intention of seeking Edith in the adjoining room — she was almost petrified at hearing Corbin say, loud and sternly, as if replying to something spoken so low that she could not hear even the sound of the voice,

"It is true; I do not love you; and the quicker you know it, the better. Go home to your father, and tell him to take care of you! I shall do it no longer. It's enough for me to take care of myself, and it's all that I'm going to do."

"Oh, Alfred!" Mrs. Trueman could hear Edith say, in a hoarse, supplicating voice, "do not say so. You love me — I know you do — you must love me. I will live anywhere, anyhow, submit to anything — only don't say that you do not love me. It will kill me if you repeat it again!"

"Hush! will you!" was the impatient, angry, brutal reply to this. "I am sick to death of your *whining*. I tell you that I do *not* love you, and don't believe I *ever* did!"

As Corbin said this, Mrs. Trueman heard him take two or three steps across the room, when the door was shut with a loud jar, and the incensed husband strode heavily downstairs and left the house. The moment he went out of her daughter's chamber, the mother entered. She found that Edith had fallen across the foot of her bed, and was already *insensible*. Her babe was lying in its cradle, sweetly sleeping, all unconscious of the *storm* that had been raging around it. For a while Mrs. Trueman stood bewildered, and in expectation, each moment, of awaking from a terrible dream; but the body of her child remained before her — a fearful confirmation of the truth of all she had just heard. At length her resolution was taken. She rang for a servant, and directed a carriage to be immediately called. Into this, she had the body of Edith lifted, and removed to her house, where it was laid upon her own bed. The family physician, who had been sent for, and also Mr. Trueman, both entered together, and both were informed, in a few words, of the cause of Edith's alarming condition. The father staggered back, and sank into a chair with a groan

of anguish, while the physician calmly proceeded to the adoption of such a course of treatment as the case required.

An hour elapsed, and Edith showed signs of life. Her father and mother stood over her in breathless anxiety. For a time, they feared that her heart would never renew its healthful motion. Now that it beat on again, sending its warm currents to every relaxed fibre of her body, they trembled lest returning *animation* would not bring returning *reason*. But in this they were mistaken. At first she moaned sadly, then she seemed in a dream.

“I won’t speak of it again, Alfred,” she said, as a flush passed quickly over her face. “You may go in and come just as you please, only look at me kindly, and speak to me as you used to do. Oh, it is so long since I have heard you say *Edith, dear*. Why don’t you say it now? Aren’t I your own Edith — the mother of your babe? and don’t I love you better than all the world beside? What can I do to make you love me as at first?”

To this followed sobs and moans. Then, still with closed eyes, she went on:

“Hark! two o’clock! and Alfred isn’t here yet! I wish he would come home. Where can he be? He doesn’t love me — or he wouldn’t keep away from me so long. Oh! oh! oh!” in a sudden, heart-piercing cry, “don’t do it, Alfred! Don’t! don’t! don’t!”

A violent shudder passed through her frame. Her face was disfigured by a look of *terror*. In the midst of this, she opened her eyes, started up in bed, and looked eagerly into the faces of the three who stood beside it — father, mother, and physician. Then closing her eyes, she sunk back upon her pillow, and lay panting like a deer just escaped from the hunters. Her mother took her hand and pressed it within hers, but the pressure was not returned. At this time, the physician whispered some directions into the ear of Mr. Trueman, and quietly retired, leaving the parents alone with their child.

“Edith!” whispered the mother, bending close to her ear.

Edith looked up into her face. At first there was an absence of thought; this was quickly followed by a look of earnest inquiry, that passed off and rested upon her father.

“Where is my husband?” she asked.

“He is not here.”

“Not here! Where am I?”

“At home — in your own old home.”

She startled up and looked around the room and then fell back again with a sigh.

“Where is little Henry? Oh, where is my dear little babe?” and again she rose up, and cast her eyes anxiously around.

“Here he lies, sleeping close by you.”

Mrs. Trueman lifted the babe from the bed, and placed it in Edith’s arms. The young mother drew it tightly to her bosom, kissed it, and murmuring, “Precious darling!” lay down again, and, closing her eyes, seemed striving to collect her scattered senses. Gradually, deep lines began to sink in her brow, her lips slowly compressed, and a heavy sigh struggled up from her bosom.

“Edith!” whispered her mother.

The sufferer opened her eyes.

“Edith, you are again in your old home. Will you not remain here? We love you with an undying love. No *time*, no *change*; no *circumstances* can affect our love.”

Eagerly did Edith look into her mother’s face. There was in her countenance, a blended expression of inquiry, alarm, and surprise.

“Why am I here, mother?” she at length asked.

“I brought you here. I found you in a fainting fit, and had you removed.”

Edith looked earnestly at her while she said this, sighed, closed her eyes, and turned her face to the wall.

“Say no more to her on this subject than can be helped,” Mr. Trueman whispered in his wife’s ear. “Keep her quiet both in mind and body.”

“I will do the best in my power; but how to act wisely in this crisis, I know not. My mind seems like a whirlpool.”

“Look up! look up!” returned the father, in the same low whisper. “If wisdom to guide aright comes at all, it will come from no earthly source.”

As Trueman went quietly from the room, his wife’s eyes, filled with tears, were turned imploringly upward.

CHAPTER 15.

Mr. Trueman, on leaving the house, after the restoration of his daughter, walked slowly and thoughtfully in the direction of Mr. Corbin (the elder's) store. There he found the old gentleman, and related to him what his wife had heard, and described the condition of Edith. Corbin's face grew almost black with anger.

"*Wretch!*" he exclaimed, rising, and walking the floor with agitated step, "I disown him! No son of mine could act so base a part!"

When more composed in mind, he sat down, and, taking Trueman's hand, said, in an altered voice,

"My dear sir! what can I do? I love your sweet child; I have always loved her, and been proud of her. I would do anything in my power to save her even a moment's pain. But here I am helpless. My unhappy boy has almost killed me by his conduct. He is throwing himself away with a strange kind of madness. As far as I know his *habits* and *associates* — they are of the worst kind. His business has become thoroughly involved. I shall have to take it out of his hands and settle it up, at a loss of, perhaps, twenty thousand dollars. Yesterday he came to me for money to lift two or three notes, but I refused him. I thought the crisis had better come at once. He obtained the money somewhere, but he won't sustain himself for a month. He must go down. Edith is under your roof — keep her there. It will be in opposition to my wishes and my judgment — if she ever lives with him again. It is a hard case for the dear child, but it is the least of two evils."

"So I think," Trueman replied. "She shall never leave my house to go to him, unless she does it under my strong disapprobation."

But such resolutions were never put to the trial. Edith asked no explanations, expressed no wish, seemed a great part of the time but half conscious of where and what she was. For nearly two weeks she remained in bed, mournfully calm. Her mother sat constantly by her side, for the moment she rose to leave the room, Edith's eyes would turn to her with a slightly-troubled look. After that she sat up, and took charge of her babe, in which her mind had not lost its interest for a moment. But no one could look into her young face without a sad feeling. It told too plainly of a crushed and bleeding heart.

As for Corbin, he never sought his wife. He learned from the servants in the house, that she had been taken away by her mother, and that sufficed for him. For a few months after his marriage he had felt much attached to Edith, but his love for her was not strong enough to make him abandon *wicked habits of life* that she could not for a moment bear in her husband. For a short period, his irregularities were hidden from her — but a wife cannot be long deceived. Her first mild remonstrance was met by a stern annunciation of this law: she must not attempt to interfere with his pleasures, or expect him to be governed by any will but his own.

Coldness on his part followed this — a coldness which never entirely passed away. Giving himself up now more freely to his own evil inclinations, he sought the company that was most agreeable to him, and neglected Edith shamefully. Night after night he was away until one, two, and three o'clock; and when at home, he was silent and reserved in his manner, for he was conscious of having wronged his wife, and could neither feel nor act without constraint in her presence.

Home, as the natural result, grew less and less agreeable to him, and he stayed at home as little as possible. Smiles of welcome greeted him from wicked associates, and these were more attractive to him than the sad or tearful face of a loving, virtuous wife. Feeling and inclination, instead of principle, being his guide — he sought only to gratify himself. No thought of others ever crossed his mind. *Self* was, with him, the great *center* — and self-gratification was the great end of his life.

Such a man and such a woman could not be long happy together. There was nothing to conjoin them. What she loved — he despised, and from what he loved — she shrank with instinctive horror. No wonder that the young wife gradually changed; no wonder that they were so soon driven asunder.

Enough in detail has now been given to awaken in the mind of the *reader*, an interest for the young wife, so soon cast aside by a man utterly unworthy to possess a *gem* of such priceless value; enough to

enlist his sympathies in the parents, and to enable him to appreciate the nature of the trial through which they had to pass.

Of William, their wandering child, they could hear nothing. Not a word came from him, and no effort of Mr. Trueman's, in trying to search him out, was successful. Years passed, and he was still dead to them, and so actually to all the world, as far as they knew. Indeed, both father and mother usually thought of him as no longer an inhabitant of the visible world. Yet there were times when his image would come up with more than usual distinctness — times, when they could not keep the thought of him out of their minds. Then awoke, the yearning hope that he was still alive, and would some day, as a returning prodigal, come back to the home he had forsaken.

A few months after the separation had taken place between Edith and her husband, the latter failed in business, throwing his father into heavy losses. Immediately following this, certain disclosures in regard to his *evil conduct* came suddenly to light, and were rumored about in the newspapers. These passed under the eye of Edith. What she suffered, no human eye ever saw. She mentioned not his name, even to her mother, nor made even the smallest allusion to the facts that had been published against him. It could easily be seen, however, that she more than half believed the disgraceful exposition. In a little while, public opinion drove him from the city, and no word of him came to disturb the heart of his wife for five years. Then his *death* was announced. Its real effect upon her, no one saw; externally, all was calm.

The love that was in the heart of the forsaken wife for her child, sustained her in the great trial she had to bear. From the first paralyzing effects of the shock she had received, she gradually revived under the influence of this maternal feeling, which quickened daily into more vigorous life. The duty she owed to the innocent being she had borne, and the duty she owed to parents deeply and justly beloved — caused Edith to struggle with her feelings, and keep them as much as possible out of sight, and from influencing her actions. The earnest struggles of a mind like hers, based, as it was, upon *true principles* — is always more or less successful. She was far more successful than her parents supposed she would be. They knew, from the first, that she would have a hard struggle, but they hoped much for the *principles of truth* which had been implanted in her mind from earliest years, and they did not hope in vain. These *sustained* her. These enabled her to lift her head above the waters which threatened to overwhelm her.

By the end of the first year of her worse than widowhood, although she had not been outside the walls of her father's house, and had been seen only by a few, and they very intimate friends — she was so quiet and cheerful, when in the presence of her father and mother, that they felt no longer afflicted on her account. Her little boy was becoming every day more and more the *light* of the house. In him, the grandfather and mother were living over some of the sweetest seasons of their early life.

Thus time passed on, until the expiration of the period mentioned at the opening of a chapter a few pages back. Trueman has now reached his *fiftieth* year, and Lane is an old bachelor, about the same age. The question naturally comes up, Who is happiest? the married man — with all his care, affliction, and anxiety; or the bachelor — who has not taken a single draught from his bitter cup? Two brief scenes, one in the life of each, will, probably, set this question in its clearest light. We will give them in the next two chapters.

CHAPTER 16

“Thunder and lightning, Tom! why don’t you come when I ring for you?” This was said impatiently by a portly, middle-aged man, who was confined to his room with a gouty foot, to a colored servant who had just entered. His face was sensual to a disgusting degree.

“I did come, sir, the moment I heard the bell,” the servant replied, in a respectful tone.

“No you didn’t. I had to ring three times.”

“But I didn’t — ”

“Silence, Tom! You’re getting to be good for nothing. You’re not worth the powder it would take to shoot you. Here! take this note over to Mercer’s, and don’t stay till night, if you please.”

The servant took the note and went slowly downstairs, muttering to himself as he did so.

“Blast the whole tribe of servants! I don’t believe there is one to be found worth a penny! I never saw one yet for whom I would give a sixpence extra.”

“Oh! there! I forgot. Tom! Tom!”

But Tom did not or would not hear. The bell was rung violently, but with no better effect.

“Confound it all!” ejaculated the invalid, sinking back in his chair, with a contracted brow, and an impatient, unhappy face. “The rascal heard me, I know. But what does he care for me? Nothing! Nobody cares for me, I believe. Here I’ve been shut up for a week, and not a soul have I seen except the doctor, with his nauseous stuff; and Harry Bispam, who cares a devilish sight more for my wine, than he does for me. He comes as regular as clockwork, drinks my best wine, to which he coolly helps himself, and then bores me with his eternal tittle-tattle about dogs and horses. But even *his* face is better than none.”

As this was said, the invalid’s eyes were lifted to the wall involuntarily, and rested upon a fine female head, the work of an artist of no ordinary talents. After he had regarded the lovely face, evidently without designing to do so, for some moments, he sighed, and let his eyes fall to the floor. A lonely, dissatisfied feeling followed his impatient spirit. While indulging this, someone knocked at his door, and then walked in.

“Why, how are you, Lane? What in the world is the matter?” asked the visitor, familiarly. “Ah! I see. Been living rather too high. Gout?”

“Yes, so the doctor says.”

“And, of course, cuts off the supplies; reduces the feed, to say nothing of the wine and brandy.”

“Exactly it — confound him!”

“Who attends you?”

“Old Doctor Gruel.”

“He’ll starve you to death!”

“I believe he will.”

“Why don’t you dismiss him, and send for Doctor Arbuckle? He’ll cure you, I’ll guaranty, and allow you to indulge a little into the bargain. But what ails you, man, besides the gout? Your face is as long as my arm.”

“I sometimes wish myself dead!”

“Nonsense! Don’t! don’t! Live while you can live, and be thankful for good food and drink.”

“There’s little else worth living for, as I see.”

“And aren’t they enough?”

“Not if one must pay for them at this rate. Look at my foot! Here I’ve been confined to my room for a week, to say nothing of the pain I have suffered. Cut off from society, cared for by nobody, and shamefully neglected by a *lazy rascal* who pretends to be my servant. Isn’t that life for you, with a vengeance? I am now fifty years old, and am beginning to go downward on the path of existence. I sometimes ask myself if I have lived to any *good purpose* — and am compelled to say *no*. I am neither rich nor happy, that is certain! Is there anything else in life worth having? If there is, I don’t know of it. But it’s now too late to look for any other good, if such the world have to offer. I thought once that I was going to secure a splendid fortune in a few years. Fool-like, I risked in about twenty thousand dollars a

wild speculation, that I had made in my practice at the bar — and lost it all. Now I have about sufficient to live on comfortably with what my practice yields. But when I get too old to attend to business I shall, likely enough, be in a bad way. Oh, dear! I mustn't think of these things, they worry me to death."

"You should have *married*, Lane. A kind old *wife* or a *gentle* daughter would be invaluable now."

"I wonder what they'd live on. I haven't more than enough for myself."

"You know the old adage: A hen that can scratch for one — can scratch for ten!"

"Yes; but I scratch just as much as I care about scratching. I don't want any more mouths to provide for, nor any *troubles* to bear besides my own. Wives and daughters are, you know, very troublesome kind of property sometimes."

"Yes, at least some people's wives and daughters. But I don't see why you should complain. You have enough to live on, no one to care for but yourself, and can lead as quiet a life as you choose. A week with the gout now and then is nothing."

"If you had it, perhaps you'd think a little differently. And as to a quiet life, why, I have it quiet enough, no doubt. But so tired do I often get of this quiet, or, rather, *loneliness* — that it would be a relief to hear the thunder of Niagara — anything, in fact."

"Even the cries of half a dozen children, or the barking of ten puppies?"

"No, no, spare me, if you please! If there are any two things in the world for which I have a perfect horror, those two are dogs and children. The squalling of one, or the yelping of the others, will disturb at any time my whole nervous system. A neighbor of mine has a cur that barks through half of every night. It almost sets me crazy at times."

"You don't sleep well, then?"

"No, I lay awake for hours after I go to bed."

"Not as a usual thing?"

"Yes, I don't think I have slept soundly through a whole night for five years."

"Indeed! How is that?"

"I get to *thinking* — and can't sleep."

"You? What have you to think about that's serious enough to keep you awake?"

"I can hardly tell myself. But one cursed thing or another comes into my mind, and sticks there, in spite of all that I can do."

"The spirit of some broken-hearted maiden, perhaps, who died twenty or thirty years ago of love. I begin to think you have some *sin* of this kind on your conscience."

This was said jestingly, but it was evidently not relished by Lane.

"Ho, ho!" exclaimed the visitor, who had not much delicacy of feeling.

"I have hit the nail on the head, I perceive. Come, then, confess, and make clean work of it. I will grant you absolution."

Lane still showed a disrelish for such allusions, and they were dropped. After remaining for fifteen or twenty minutes, and drinking a glass of wine, the friend departed. For a long time after he left, Lane sat deeply absorbed, with his head resting upon his hand. What his reflections were, cannot be known, but something of their character may be guessed from the fact of his taking from a drawer in the table near which he sat, a *letter* that was unfolded, and reading it over with evident madness of spirits. The writer was *Dora Enfield* — she had been dead one year. Lane had almost forgotten her, when he was startled by the receipt of her picture and the letter just mentioned.

Dora had grown old rapidly in the ten years which preceded her death. During the last five years of her life, her disposition had become, in a degree, modified. *Extorted admiration* of fine talents and extensive reading, no longer sufficed. It could not satisfy a spirit like hers. From a hard, ill-natured, censorious old maid — she gradually softened in her character, and became more like a woman. But she was not happy. She could not look back with pleasure. It seemed to her as if she had led a *useless life*, as if she had not filled the place *designed* for her, and in which she would have been happier far than she had been.

In the perusal of religious books, and in frequent attendance upon religious services, united with the performance of uses in benevolent associations, she spent several years. Then she sunk into the grave. Among her effects was found a letter for Lane, and also directions to have it, and her portrait,

immediately sent to him. This was done. The portrait was hung up after a few weeks in his room. The letter ran as follows:

“TO MILFORD LANE, When this is placed in your hands, the writer of it will be in the eternal world. After having lived, for nearly thirty of the best years in her life, a useless, unhappy creature, in view of her approaching change — she finds herself strangely impelled to open up to the only one she ever truly loved, the secrets of an over-tried and over-burdened heart.

“Milford Lane! think back for some twenty-five years or more. Call up vividly, if you can, the days when our hearts were fresh and young; when, in the spring-time of existence, we stood side by side in many a happy company — side by side in quiet places — side by side in the calm morning hour, and in the deep stillness of eventide. Call up those seasons. Bring them into all but actual presence, and then question your heart closely. See whose *image* is most deeply impressed there.

“Milford Lane! I know what you will find. I know whose *image* was stamped upon the tablet of your young heart. I know all your desperate efforts to *obliterate* that image. But they were vain. You could *hide* it, for a time, from your own eye, but not *efface* it. And now I sweep off the dust that has accumulated upon it, and, lo! it stands fully revealed.

“Think! was it not a *cruel wrong* to the tender, loving spirit, whose eyes now look into your own, to turn away from her as you did? to cast off the tendrils that were beginning to entwine around you, and leave the vine unsupported — to grovel along the earth, with soiled, misshapen leaves, and fruitless branches? It was a *cruel wrong*, Milford Lane!

“For three years after you had won my heart, and then steadily *avoided* me, on the ground, as I was informed, of a *strange aversion to marriage* — I struggled hard to forget you. But my effort was vain. I could no more forget you, than I could forget myself. Consciousness was inseparably connected with the thought of you. Other young men, in every way worthy, sought my favor — but I had no love for any but you. Oh, the remembrance of those hopeless years! I would not live them over again for millions of worlds. Yet, in that dark midnight, there was one star, and, but for the feeble ray that came from it, I must have died in despair. You said to a mutual friend, that you *loved* me. That love I fondly hoped would change, sooner or later, your views of marriage. But you did not change. Years went slowly by, leaving *deep scars* upon me. I was conscious that I was changing very fast. When, at last, I gave up all hope of gaining my heart’s desire, the *pure streams of tender regard* that I had felt for everyone, began to be poisoned. I found pleasure in thinking unkindly of your gender. It was my delight to show the *lords of creation* their inferiority. I read extensively, and stored my mind with varied knowledge, to the end that I might prove *woman’s superiority*. To others, I was pedantic, but to you, whenever we met, I was reserved and gentle. In this difference there was no design on my part. I could not help acting as I did. Other men I could despise, but not you.

“As time wore on, my feelings hardened. I could think of you without emotion, and meet you without a quicker throb of the heart. Still, I was conscious that *my whole character had been warped*; that I had not filled *my true place* as a woman; that I had *cumbered the ground*. This made me, at last, begin to think more humbly of myself. I saw that mere *brilliancy of intellect* was not a woman’s true boast. By this time, my years had fallen in the ‘sere and yellow leaf.’ It was *autumn* — to me, a fruitless autumn.

“Vigor of thought and rigidness of determination — gave way to a softer, gentler state of mind. Old states of tenderness came back upon me. My woman’s heart was restored. Again I could think of you, and sit for hours with your image before my mental eyes; not, as before, with agitation, and an earnest yearning to be conjoined to you as my *second self*, but with a quiet and pleasing emotion. This has continued up to this time. I am now within a few weeks of my *journey’s end*. A few more pulsations — and I shall lay aside this mortal body, and rise into another and eternal state of being. I look not with fear beyond the grave.

“Still, I am deeply conscious of one thing, that, had I lived as a *wife and mother* — as *your* wife and the mother of your children — my character would have been more perfected — the inner of my mind more opened. As a consequence, in the new life I am about to live, I would rise much higher, be more useful, and far happier. As the tree *falls* — so it *lies*. Here the spiritual mind is opened — there it is perfected. But only what is opened can be perfected. To open up and regenerate all the principles of the

mind, we must enter into and live through all orderly states, and bear the trials and pains attendant upon them. This I have not done. I need not tell you why. But I do not mean to chide. I am only uttering the truth, and that, something within is impelling me to do.

“I have directed my picture to be sent to you. I ask of you nothing in regard to it.

“And now, *farewell*. Think of me as one whose life would have been happily spent, could she have walked its winding paths by your side; denied that blessed privilege, she has lived *uselessly*, and drank daily from a *bitter cup*. Again I say that I do not mean to chide; I write only the truth, and this it may be good for you to know. Farewell! From the spirit-land to which I go, I may sometimes return to you; but I know not. Farewell! Dora Enfield.”

After reading this letter over slowly (perhaps for the hundredth time), under the circumstances just mentioned, Lane folded it, replaced it in the drawer, and carefully locked it. Then, with a deeply drawn sigh, he sank back in his chair, and thought over every touching sentiment of this strange epistle. Thus he remained for more than an hour, when some want reminded him of his absent servant, who was staying away from him much longer than the errand he was on would justify. An impatient expression flitted over his face, his body moved with an impatient gesture, and an imprecation on the head of Tom, fell from his lips. But it availed nothing.

Though advanced in life and helpless from sickness, there was no gentle hand, made gentler by affection, to minister to his needs; no voice, sweeter than music, to soothe his weariness. All he received was reluctant, mercenary service.

But now for the other scene — a brief, quiet, and unimposing one. Let the reader look at it, and then decide which, at fifty, is happiest — the *married* or the *single* man.

CHAPTER 17.

On the evening of the same day on which Lane has been introduced to the reader, Mr. Trueman came home from his store, feeling rather more care weighing upon his mind than usual. All his life, it had required close attention to business and strict economy at home, to make, as it is said, "both ends meet." For the past ten years, his expenses had increased rather than diminished. In that period it had cost him most, for the education of his children, in which he had spared no expense that could possibly be afforded. The two youngest — Ellen, just sixteen, and Mary, but ten years old — were still at school. John, a fine young man of twenty, was clerk in a wholesale store. William, the reader knows, has left home and hearth-fire to wander in the world; whether dead or alive, those who loved him most could not tell. Edith, and her little boy, now six years old, with the quiet-faced mother of his household treasures, make up the family of Trueman.

On that day he had been making some estimates in regard to his business, and found that, for three years, his profits had been gradually diminishing. New stores had sprung into existence, and new modes of conducting business prevailed. He had become too old to change his quiet, methodical habits — into the dashing, boasting, go-ahead fashion of the day. His sign, too, had become old and dimmed, his fixtures worn, and the whole appearance of his store quite unattractive when put in contrast with the newer establishments that were flourishing all around him. It is no matter of surprise, that he was gradually losing business. He did not see the cause; or, if it were presented to his mind, he felt that he was too old to change; he could not do business upon the new plan.

A knowledge of the fact that he was gradually losing his business, and that it was even now barely productive enough to meet the expenses of his family, naturally caused his mind to fall into a sober mood. In this state he came home.

During the time passed at the tea-table but little was said. The father usually led the conversation, or participated in it freely; but as he did neither, it was plain to all that something weighed upon his mind. This made each one feel disinclined to talk. After tea, Trueman retired to the family sitting-room, and, taking his usual place in a large, old-fashioned chair, gave himself up to unpleasing thoughts connected with the declension of his business. No one came into the sitting-room but John. Edith and her mother had duties to perform, and the two younger daughters left the tea-table to study their lessons.

The young man, who had noticed, with the rest, his father's thoughtful mood, and half guessed the reason (for, engaged in a somewhat similar branch of trade, though on a larger scale, he saw the defects in his father's mode of doing business), sat down near him, hoping that some remark would be made by which he could lead his father to talk of his affairs; but he showed no inclination to do so.

"How is business now?" the young man at length asked.

"Not very good," was replied. "There are too many going into the same branch. It is all cut up."

There was something desponding in the tone of Trueman's voice. John was silent for some time.

"I had a talk with the head of our firm today," he broke this silence by saying, "about my future position. You know I have been with them for five years, and, up to this time, have received but four hundred dollars a year."

"Yes. Well, what was the result?"

"All that I could wish. I have one year more to stay; for that I am to get eight hundred dollars."

"You are?"

"Yes, sir. And I shall claim the privilege of devoting just four hundred dollars as my proportion of the expenses of the family for the coming year. After I become of age, a farther advance is promised. Beyond that, plain hints were given that I would be cared for. The principal partner in the firm has a brother, a few years older than myself, who has a capital of forty thousand dollars. He has been in the store for several months, gaining a knowledge of the business. In about two years he expects to commence for himself and it has been intimated to me that I shall be needed to join with him as the business partner. Of course I shall not object."

“No,” returned the father, with an animated smile, all his anxieties scattered to the winds, “I presume not. Really, you have cheering news to set off against my despondency.”

“I hope you will never permit yourself again to despond, father,” John said, with affectionate seriousness. “I believe you have confidence in me. I know you would have. I am now twenty years of age, with a salary from which I can easily and most cheerfully spare four or five hundred dollars, to make up any deficit in your business; and I claim the right of doing this. I claim the right of aiding in the support and education of my sisters. After this year I shall stand on firmer ground, and be able to do more, should more be required.”

After saying this, the noble-spirited young man dexterously sought to change the subject of conversation, in which he succeeded. Not long after, his mother and three sisters came in, and gathered around a table, some with needlework, and others with books. All perceived instantly that the father was in a more cheerful frame of mind. The cause, they did not know; but that was a matter of indifference; it was to the effect they looked. As for Mr. Trueman, the news given him by his son, had brought up his mind to a cheerful tone. He did not think of the aid offered him — the lightening of his burdens in the support of a large family — he only thought of the good fortune and bright prospect opening before his boy, whose manly character, intelligence, and moral worth had long afforded him a pleasure that only a parent’s heart can estimate.

As his children gathered together, engaging in agreeable conversation for a time, and then becoming occupied with book or work, as taste, duty, or inclination prompted — the father’s eye glistened as it rested upon them.

“For these, my household treasures, Father, I thank you!” he said, in silent gratitude, lifting his heart upward. “May no *beast of prey* enter this peaceful fold; no *evil thing* harm its gentle inhabitants; no *tempter* betray them to wrong.”

Edith sat sewing just opposite to her father. The light fell strongly upon her face. Since the news of her husband’s death, she was gradually gaining a more cheerful tone of mind, although she had not yet gone abroad into society. Her unhappy condition had been a source of much pain of mind to Trueman. Now, as he looked steadily into her calm face, he saw little that indicated a troubled heart. The marks of suffering were indeed there, but they were evidences of what had been, not of anything existing in the present.

“Dear child! over whom the wild winds have swept with desolating fury,” he added, in silent speech, “how thankful am I that the *storm* is past. May not even the shadow of a portending cloud again darken on your path of life!”

As he said this, Edith, as if conscious of what was passing in the mind of her father, lifted her head, and looked him in the face for a moment or two with a glance of pure affection. Then she resumed her work. The mother, too, turned her eyes towards him, and then Ellen, closing her book as she spoke, said, “Really, this is selfish. We are all either reading or sewing, and not caring for father, who sits there with no one to say a word to him.”

“No, no, don’t think of me. Read on and sew on, just as you were. I am not lonely. Pleasant thoughts are my companions.”

But Ellen’s remark caused John to say,

“True enough, sister; and it isn’t just right. Suppose I read aloud for an hour — I have a very entertaining book — and then you can give us some music.”

This met the approbation of all. John read for an hour. But whether the father thought more of the contents of the book than of his loving, dutiful children — we cannot say. The evening was closed by some fine music by Ellen, who had already attained great proficiency, and then all separated for the night. It was a happy family, and Trueman was happiest of all; happiest, because in him were becoming manifest the results of *a life spent in the faithful performance of all known duties*. He had no great errors to look back upon when too late to correct them. He had chosen wisely his lot in life, and his reward was sweet.

Two scenes more, and our history is complete. We shall pass over *fifteen* additional years, and see what they have done for the married man and the bachelor. At *sixty-five*, the account of life is pretty well made up, and the result certain. First, then, Milford Lane will appear before us. It will not require long to

decide whether he has realized all his selfish hopes in life — whether he has found the calm and peaceful old age he anticipated.

CHAPTER 18.

Reader, be our companion in a visit to the *old man Lane*. You consent. Come, then. We shall not find all, I fear, even as comfortable as when last we saw him. On the way, let us open to you a little more of his history. After the death of Dora, and the reception of her picture and accompanying letter, the old gentleman showed less of that cheerfulness of manner with which he had ever met his friends. He was more absent and thoughtful, even in company. The loss of nearly everything he had accumulated, in the failure of a single speculation, joined with moral causes to bring on a *permanent depression* of spirits.

To this state he had but one antidote, convivial companions and sensual gratification. He indulged freely in good eating and drinking, and from an *epicure* became something of a *gourmand*. Thus, at that mature age, when every man who has lived right begins to rise into the innocence of wisdom — Lane commenced sinking into the *sensuality of the brute*. Whenever thought and feeling resumed their empire in his mind, they ruled with no mild and soothing sway. Gladly did he seek to dethrone them.

As he grew older, and became less and less companionable in his habits, he was left more and more alone. The few friends with whom he had been conjoined by the associations of earlier years, were all separated from him by death or distance. Even *parasites*, he had none; for, with increase of years and a diminution of monetary resources, he had grown penurious, and this divided him and even false friends. None sought his company from a fellow feeling, and none from interest. Left to himself, the old man felt his life to be a heavy burden.

But, while life lasts, every man will be urged on by some predominating love, good or evil. There is no such thing as sitting down in absolute listlessness. The fear of final poverty caused Lane to become *miserly* in his feelings. His practice was very light, and yielded but a small return. The great business of his life resolved itself into a provision for physical existence. This gave a new energy to his mind, and endowed it with quick perceptions wherever the making or saving of a penny was concerned. At sixty, he dispensed with what had before been considered indispensable — his servant. His meals were taken at a refectory, and the room in which he slept, kept in order by his own hands. To preserve appearances, a man was employed to open his office every morning, and make the fire in winter. But even stronger than his penuriousness, was his love of *eating and drinking*; with a quick, restless eye — were therefore united a full, sensual face, and obesity of person.

Five years more were passed, the old man gradually declining, and losing each day more and more of those noble qualities that distinguish an intellectual and moral being. At this period we are about to visit him. Come, then, let us see him for the last time. We shall not find him pleasantly domiciled in the house of a friend, nor yet, a step lower in the scale of comfort, at a good hotel, nor even at one a fourth or fifth remove from the best; no, but occupying the only habitable room in an old house, long ago deserted. It is up this alley, so choked with dirt that a vehicle rarely ventures through it; a pedestrian never, unless specially called upon to do so.

Come! the old man is sick, so do not hesitate. Here we are at last. How cheerless a place! You doubt if a living soul can dwell here; we shall see. This is the entrance. The old door turns harshly upon its single rusty hinge. We are within. No sound, no trace of a human being. How drearily our footsteps come echoed back to us, as we ascend the creaking stairs, which have not been swept for years! The air is close and suffocating.

We are on the second floor. Not here! These rooms are only inhabited by vermin. Here the worm gnaws steadily on through its brief existence; and here the mildew, and dry-rot, and the various fungi that are brought into existence in damp, close apartments, join in destroying the handiwork of man. He builds up with hurried skill; they slowly, but surely, return all again to the earth.

But we must not stop to moralize. Up still farther. How very still! The air is oppressed with silence. Now we are at his door. Listen! No sound. Can the old man be away? Surely not, for he has been sick and in bed for a week. Let us knock. No answer! Strange! He cannot, surely, be out. We will try the latch. The door opens, but all is still. There is no one here.

Yes! there he lies on that miserable bed. Does he yet breathe? No — yes! he moves. Hark! that groan! How unearthly it sounds. *Lane! Lane!* No answer. Raise him up; he is suffocating! There! now he breathes more freely. Hark! what does he say?

“Good wine — good dinner — and all that — plenty of friends. Don’t let him go near that trunk — he’ll take it, and then — ugh! the poor-house. I wish I were dead. Hush! Look! Don’t you see him now after that trunk? He’ll rob me. Aha! did I catch you?”

It is but a momentary struggle of the mind to come into outward perception. Now he sinks down exhausted. Evidently his time has come. He has filled up the measure of his days, and here, alone, in this wretched place — the last sands of his existence are falling. No wife — no child — no friend. For him, no one feels a movement of sympathy. He has *lived for himself* — and *dies* without being thought of or cared for by anyone.

A groan — a long, deep, shuddering groan — a quivering of the limbs — a convulsive twitching of the muscles about his neck and face — a gasp, and all is over. The *writing in his book of life* is ended, and the volume sealed! When opened in that world to which we all are tending — will its record show a general current of good or of evil? Not for us is it to say. Enough that we shall strive to live to better purpose.

In this *chamber of death*, we will not remain, reader. Its atmosphere is too oppressive. It has no object to attract. Yes, one; there, upon the discolored wall, hangs the portrait of Dora Enfield, as she looked in early womanhood. What a lovely face! How it must have haunted that miserable old man, even to the last. We gaze on it for a moment, and then go forth, leaving Milford Lane with his God.

And now, what of *Henry Trueman*?

CHAPTER 19.

Late in the afternoon of an autumn day, a passenger on board of a steamboat which was rapidly approaching one of our Atlantic cities, stood gazing eagerly upon the spires and clustering houses that were coming nearer and nearer every moment. He was in the prime of life. His face wore the dark hue given by a southern sun, and had upon it some lines that strong passions, too freely indulged, had impressed. But over the whole was cast a softened shadow, showing that there were gentler feelings ruling in his heart. As he leaned upon the railing of the boat, his eye upon the distant city, a man came near and leaned likewise against the railing. At first the stranger felt inclined to look upon the new comer as an intruder; but, in a little while after, he said to him,

“Do you live in this city?”

“Yes. I have lived here all my life.”

A pause.

“You are well acquainted with its business-men?”

“I am.”

Another pause.

“Do you know Henry Trueman?”

“The old man? Oh yes, very well.”

The face of the stranger flushed.

“Is he still in business?” was next asked.

“Oh no. He has been out of business for at least five years.”

“Did he retire with a comfortable support?”

“He paid off all his debts, and then came out even with the world, for which he was, no doubt, thankful, as he ought to have been, after having raised and educated a large family.”

“But how has he since lived?” inquired the stranger, with an interest he could scarcely conceal.

“With his son John, one of our most prosperous merchants and most estimable citizens.”

“He had a daughter, Edith, who married badly, I believe?”

“Yes. She is with her brother John, and devotes all her time to her father, who has grown old and feeble.”

“But his wife — Mrs. Trueman? What of her?”

“She has been dead for two years.”

“Dead!” ejaculated the stranger, half to himself, in a tone that caused the individual he had been questioning to look into his face with surprise.

“Yes, she died, and left the old man quite lonely. He has seemed to droop ever since, although from his children he receives the kindest attentions. Edith, in fact, lives only for her father.”

“You seem well-acquainted with the family,” was remarked, after some thoughtful moments.

“I ought to be,” replied the citizen. “I married one of his daughters.”

“Which one?”

“Ellen.”

“And Mary? What of her?”

“She was married two years ago to a physician.”

“Happily married?”

“You would think so if you were to see her. But, in turn, I must remark that *you* seem well acquainted with the family.”

No reply was made to this. After a little, as if to change the subject, the stranger said,

“Have you been absent long?”

“For about three weeks,” was replied.

He then sunk into a deep revery, and showing a disinclination for farther conversation, the individual who had answered his interrogatories walked away to another part of the boat. Just as they were about touching the shore, he felt a hand upon his arm; turning, he saw the stranger by his side.

“May I trouble you for the address of John Trueman?” he said.

It was given verbally. The crowd separated them, and although the husband of Ellen Trueman sought with curious interest the individual who had inquired so particularly after the family into which he had married — he could not find him.

At the time the above conversation was passing, old Mr. Trueman was on his death-bed, surrounded by his children. A sudden illness had prostrated him. When the disease abated, it was found that his feeble frame would not survive the shock. He was declining rapidly. None expected him to live over a few hours. But his mind was calm and clear, and he shrunk not from the trial that awaited him. None felt the approaching separation so keenly as Edith. Since her mother’s removal, she had given herself up to her father, and ministered to all his needs with the tenderest care. In thus living for him, he had become almost necessary to her life. The prospect of his sudden departure, made her heart tremble and sink in her bosom. She felt as if she could not bear to lose the old man who had leaned so confidently on her for two years. Anxiously did she bend over him, and watch every change in his time-worn face. But there was little to inspire her with hope.

“Edith, child,” he said, as his end drew near, and he saw the tears glistening on her cheek, “I want my children to give me up willingly. Let there be no weeping and mourning for the *weary old man* who gladly lays down his burdens. Life has passed with me as with other men: there has been storm and sunshine, doubt and fear, hope and disappointment. But, as the day has drawn near its close, the clouds have separated, and all passed from the sky, except one dark spot. A bright sunset, the fair promise of a clear day-dawning in the world beyond the tomb — now smiles on me.”

“What dark spot — ”

But, before Edith had finished the sentence, the door was quietly opened, and a *stranger* entered. He was tall, of a dark complexion, and apparently about forty years of age. He walked slowly up to the bed on which lay the dying man, supported by pillows, and seeming not to notice the little group that surrounded him. For a moment he looked steadily into the old man’s face, then leaning forward, and clasping, with a sudden emotion, the thin hand which lay upon the coverlet, and carrying it to his lips, he said, in a tremulous voice,

“*My father!*”

The dying man rose up in bed, and gazed eagerly into the face of him who had called him by so dear a name.

“Is it — can it be — my *William*? my long lost, long mourned child?” he at length said.

“It is — it is — your long absent, erring child,” sobbed the stranger.

“The Lord be praised for this last best token of his goodness!” was fervently uttered by the dying man, as he lifted his almost sightless eyes upward, while he grasped tightly the hand of William. “All is bright now. The *dark spot* in my sunset sky has disappeared. I can lay me down in peace and sleep sweetly.”

Closing his eyes and sinking back upon his pillow, old Mr. Trueman fell off into what seemed a quiet slumber; but it was *nature’s final repose*. When the voice of Edith, which first broke the deep stillness of the death-chamber, called his name, he heard it not.

What more need be said? Can anything further be written in elucidation of our subject? Nothing, we believe. Some may feel an interest in the *wandering son*, unsatisfied by the brief notice of his return. Suffice it to say of him, that he had led, for far too long a period, a life of evil. Two years previous to the time of his return, on the very day and at the very hour of his mother’s death, as he learned afterward, he was sitting alone, just about sunset, when, on lifting his head, without thinking why, he perceived her standing before him, and regarding him with a look of the most tender solicitude. The vision was so perfect that, with an exclamation, he rose to his feet. But all vanished instantly. He was alone. The impression then made upon his mind, could not be obliterated. That sad, earnest, tender face was ever before him.

The constant thought of his mother, brought back states of childhood. He was affected by the innocent thoughts that then ruled in his mind. The prayers he then said at his mother’s knee were remembered, and sometimes repeated without his being aware of what he was doing. Then came a struggle against these good impressions; a strong, determined struggle of the *evil principles* he had made his own, by actual life.

This went on month after month, good gradually gaining the predominance, until finally he returned, as has been seen, to those he had so long a time before, forsaken. To do this, and thus bend his haughty spirit, was a hard struggle. He came just at the right moment. The death of his father, fixed all his good impressions. It was the great turning point in his life, when the *current* that had been evil, changed its course and became good.

After the burial of his father, he remained a short time with his brother and sisters, and then went back to the South, where business, and ties nearer and dearer than even fraternal bonds, claimed him. He went back with a heart lighter than when he came, for *good principles* had been confirmed, and he felt more strength, and a more confident assurance of being able to overcome every evil thing which strove to hinder him from walking in right paths; and he did overcome, even to the end of life.

THE END.