


The Temptation!

by
Timothy Shay Arthur, 1851

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CHAPTER 1.

Mr. and Mrs. Algeron had resolved to give the first large “party of the season.” They were rich, and could afford to lead off in splendid style — and this they intended to do.

“It is time our *invitations* were out,” said Mrs. Algeron to her husband, about ten days before the evening fixed for the brilliant affair, “someone may get in advance of us.”

“Very true. Well, suppose we make out a list at once, and have our cards ready to send by tomorrow afternoon.”

“I think we should delay no longer. First, then, comes Mr. and Mrs. Turner, their son and beautiful daughter Grace.”

“Of course. They give a new interest to the social circle this winter. Grace I think is one of the loveliest young creatures I have ever seen.”

“She is indeed a sweet girl. So modest, yet so free from weakness. So accomplished and intelligent, and yet so gracefully retiring. I look upon her as a *model* for our daughters.”

“I have thought, sometimes, when I have seen her more than usually animated in conversation, that she resembled Margaretta,” said the father, alluding to his oldest child, a gentle girl of eighteen summers.

“I have also thought the same,” replied Mrs. Algeron, while a fond maternal smile passed over her face. “Our Margaretta is a dear, good girl, and everyone thinks her beautiful.”

“If as *good* as she is *beautiful*.”

“As a child, she has ever been to me all I could wish,” Mrs. Algeron returned, while her voice trembled, and her eyes grew dim with affection’s tears. A brief silence followed this remark, and then she added, with a smile, though a bright drop glistened on her eyelash as she spoke —

“We cannot hope always to *keep* the dear girl with us. She will be wooed and won in the bloom and beauty of early womanhood, and taken from us at the moment our love has grown deeper and purer than ever.”

“I think of that daily,” said Mr. Algeron, in a voice of tender interest. “We cannot hope, as you say, long to keep her with us. She will be wooed and won — but by *whom*? That is the doubtful question! Of all the young men I have seen, there is but one to whom I could resign that sweet child without a sigh — and that one is *Henry Turner*. He is worthy of her hand.”

“And she of his,” added the fond and partial mother.

“I believe so.”

“We must only hope for the best. They will be thrown much into each other’s company this winter, and be drawn together, I trust, by mutual attraction. But who shall we invite next? Let me see.”

“The Marklands.”

“Oh, yes — they must come next.”

“But what about Sidney Markland? You know he has acted very badly during the summer?”

“True — but we cannot pass him by. It would be a direct offence to the family,” said Mrs. Algeron, thoughtfully.

“It would, no doubt. But his *character* is so bad, and his *principles* so loose, that I feel a most unconquerable *reluctance* to inviting him.”

“But you know he is so handsome and accomplished, and adds so much to the life and enjoyment of a company. I really don’t see how he could be spared, under any circumstances. Apart, however, from that, I could not think of wounding his sister and mother by so marked a reference to his recent *bad conduct*. It must be galling enough to them as it is.”

“Yes, galling enough. But,” resumed Mr. Algeron, “it is a question in my mind how far we are justified in admitting a person like Sidney Markland into the social circle. Conduct like his should meet the penalty of *instant exclusion from virtuous society*.”

“If he stood alone, this could and ought to be done,” replied Mrs. Algeron. “But he is the son of Mr. Markland, and we cannot exclude him. To his family, it would be a mortal offence. Think, now, if he

were our own son, how we would feel to have him driven from good society. I am sure that I could not bear it.”

“It would be, I know, a hard trial. Still, if one of my sons would act the base part that Sidney Markland has acted — I would have no right to complain if all the world shunned him. Look at poor Mrs. Spencer! I never meet her, that my heart does not ache for her. I never meet her that I do not utter an involuntary *malediction* upon the destroyer of her peace.”

“Still, you must acknowledge that her daughter Sarah was equally to blame with the young man.”

“I know nothing of the circumstances attending the case. I only know that he has robbed a poor widowed mother of her child, and made that child a curse instead of a blessing to the world. I know, moreover, that he is a most *vile and abandoned character* — a sophisticated villain — a *black-hearted destroyer of innocence!*”

“Don’t — don’t speak so hastily,” said his wife, deprecatingly; “Sidney is but a *very young man.*”

“So much the worse. A deliberate villain at his age, gives a wretched promise for the future. The fact is, he ought to be *excluded from virtuous society*. He is a *dangerous man* — a *serpent* with a charming eye — and a poisonous fang! I really think, now that I begin to reflect more seriously upon the subject, that we ought *not* to invite him. We will give the first party. Let us set the example of *excluding the wicked and unprincipled*. If we invite him, we assume the responsibility of introducing to the young and virtuous daughters of our friends, a man whose character and habits we detest — a man with whom we would no more trust our own child, than we would trust her with a demon. Let us stand up with *virtuous integrity* and put the *ban* upon him. It is full time that the social atmosphere was purified from the *pestilent breath* of such men as Sidney Markland!”

“I feel the force of all you say,” was the reply of Mrs. Algeron, “but still, I do not think that *we* ought to assume the responsibility of which you speak.”

Mr. and Mrs. Markland would never forgive us. Nor do I believe we would be sustained in the course you propose. Let *somebody else* act first in this matter — somebody not so intimate as we are with the Marklands.”

“Well, let it be as *you* think best,” was the acquiescing reply of Mr. Algeron, more than half willing, as his temporary enthusiasm subsided, to get rid of the responsibility he had been, a moment before, for assuming.

Sidney was, therefore, included in the card sent to the Markland family, when the invitations went out.

A beautifully embossed card, in a fancy envelope, was left at Mr. Turner’s on the day following that on which the Algerons had concluded to send out their invitations. It contained “Mr. and Mrs. Algeron’s compliments,” etc. etc., all in due form. Mrs. Turner was holding it in her hand, as she sat near the window, in a musing attitude, when her husband came in about the hour of twilight, from his counting-room. He was a merchant who had moved to Philadelphia from New York about a year before. Mrs. Turner handed him the card without speaking. He looked at it, smiled, and handed it back to her, remarking as he did so,

“We *must* go, of course.”

“Oh, certainly. But the principle of action we have laid down for ourselves will, doubtless, be severely tried.”

“Well! Let the *trial* come — we must bear it with patient firmness. We have carefully weighed the whole subject, and our resolution is the result of a deliberate conviction, that it is the only safe course for ourselves, and the only honest one towards others.”

“Yes, of that I am satisfied. Our social atmosphere needs *purification.*”

“Indeed it does. No conduct, however heinous — no principles, however false and dangerous, are considered sufficient to exclude any one from our social circles — if wealth or family connections are thrown into the opposing scale. Is it any wonder, then, that year after year, our sweet young maidens, because they are reputed rich, are wooed and won by specious scoundrels, and their hearts crushed or broken before the *warm flush of youth and beauty* has faded from their cheeks? There is hardly a family among us, whose peace has not been destroyed from this very cause. And have we any guarantee that our dear child will not become the prey of some *designing wretch*, who may have the power to win her

innocent, unsuspecting heart? None at all, as society is now constituted! A friend invites our daughter to his house, and at the same time invites a young man because he is respectably connected, who is as base as evil indulgences can make him. They are consequently thrown together. He wins her heart, because he wishes to make a *wealthy marriage* — and then breaks that heart! He cares nothing for her, but for the wealth and standing which she brings him. Gaining these, what is she to him but an *encumbrance*; or, at best, but a *necessary evil*? Would that this picture were a false one! But it is, alas! too true — and the contemplation of it makes my heart ache.”

“That *vile young man*, Sidney Markland, I am very much afraid, will be countenanced still, for the sake of his family,” remarked Mrs. Turner.

“Most probable. We can hardly depend upon the Algerons to *exclude* him. They are rather too much disposed to *go with the mass*. And besides, they are on terms of intimacy with the Marklands. Well! if *he* is at their party — we will have to retire with Grace. Our minds are made up to that.”

“Mine is, certainly. As painful as such a course will be, I see no other for us to take.”

“There is no other. We must protect our child, at all hazards. And, more than this, seeing as we do, clearly, the *dangerous effects* which flow from the present state of things, we would be false to our social trust, did we not set our faces against it. Someone must *lead the way* in this matter — and why not we?”

“Side by side with you, I am willing to stand,” returned Mrs. Turner, firmly. “Clearly do I see that it is our duty, as members of society, to *set our faces against all social evils*. Is there a worse one than this evil of exposing our daughters to the *corrupting influence* attending upon association with young men of bad character?”

“None. And is it not astonishing that any parent is to be found indifferent on this subject? Astonishing that so few think of the *dangers* which beset their daughters? And still more astonishing that any, when once warned of danger, should continue *criminally indifferent*? Look at the sad case of Sarah Toner. Poor girl! how often my heart has ached for her! Urged by a sense of duty, I openly declared to her father my conviction of the *danger* she ran, in being permitted to attend parties where *Sanford* was a guest. He admitted that the young man was a most *despicable character*, but could not be convinced that there was any danger of his forming an intimacy with Sarah. The result proved not only his lack of true sagacity, but of *true affection for his child* — for true affection for a child seeks to *guard it from danger*. A wise parent knows that dangers lie all around; and a wise parent is ever active in warding them off!”

“As in New York,” said Mrs. Turner, “so in this city, I fear that we shall stand almost alone.”

“We shall, for a time — but, as in New York, our firm stand will doubtless have the effect to open the eyes of a few. That result will be worth the effort, and more than worth it. A little center will be formed; that center will gather the few who can *see* clearly, and have the conscientiousness to *act* firmly. Like the leaven hidden in three measures of meal — the principles from which this little center acts, will, as time progresses, spread widely — will, I trust, leaven the whole lump. There is in society a common-sense perception of right; especially of right principles, that are protective in their operations — to them I look confidently.”

CHAPTER 2.

In due time, the evening for the party at the Algerons came round. It was eight o'clock when the carriage of Mr. Turner drove up, containing, besides himself, Mrs. Turner and their son and daughter. When they entered the spacious parlors of Mr. and Mrs. Algeron, they found assembled a large and brilliant company of the most *wealthy* and *fashionable* people in the city. All was mirthful confusion and unrestricted social fellowship. Grace, being a special favorite with her young friends, was soon drawn away from her mother's side. She was standing near a table upon which were thrown some choice engravings, with one arm around the waist of Margaretta Algeron — when a *young man* of peculiarly *attractive appearance* approached, and with a most *winning smile*, and an air of perfect self-possession, began turning over the prints and making allusions to them — which evinced no ordinary taste in regard to works of art. From these, he gradually led off the thoughts of his auditors, and introduced other subjects. He spoke of books, and quoted brief, but eloquent passages from popular authors, all in some way pertinent to the animated scene around them. In a little while he had joined the promenade, with Grace and Margaretta upon his arms, both of them listening with pleased interest to his attractive conversation.

As soon as Mr. Turner entered the rooms, he looked carefully around to see if *Sidney Markland* was there, determined to retire instantly with his family, if that young man made one of the company. But he did not see him, and the weight upon his feelings was removed. It was about an hour after, that, following a pause in an animated conversation into which he had entered with a gentleman, he alluded to young Markland, and declared his determination, as a matter of *principle*, not to remain in any company where he was an invited guest.

"Then you cannot remain *here*," was the reply, "for Sidney Markland is now present."

"Are you certain?" asked Mr. Turner in a changed tone.

"I am. It is not ten minutes ago I saw him in the other room, with *your daughter* upon his arm!"

Mr. Turner's heart bounded with a sudden and painful throb, as he quickly arose to his feet, and passed into the other parlor. What he had heard was indeed too true! There stood Markland, with Grace upon his arm, who was listening with a beaming face to his words, that, whatever they were, seemed to her *peculiarly pleasing*. Mr. Turner's first impulse was to separate them instantly, and, with open indignation, throw the young man aside, as he would a *venomous serpent* from the path of his child. But the dictate of *prudence* prevailed. Quietly retiring into the room he had just left, he sought his wife amid a group of ladies, and drawing her aside, whispered in her ear the startling news. Mrs. Turner did not hesitate a moment. She was quickly by the side of Grace, and, bowing coldly to Markland, asked him to excuse her daughter. She then passed with her out of the rooms, without attracting observation.

It was nearly half an hour before anyone missed them — long before that time, they were in their own home. To Grace, this seemed a strange proceeding, until her mother, after she was alone with her in their chamber, told her that the young man she had been conversing and promenading with was Sidney Markland, and that her father had determined not to remain in any company where *he* was invited.

"No — but surely, mother, you must be mistaken. That was not Sidney Markland."

"Who was it, then?"

"I don't know; he was not introduced to me. But he was a different kind of a person from young Markland, I am sure."

"Not at all different, my dear — for he it was, himself. An accomplished, handsome, intelligent, attractive young man — but, at heart, *thoroughly corrupt*."

This to Grace seemed inexplicable. She had never before met the *profligate son* of Mr. Markland, although she had frequently heard of him. Her idea of his personal appearance and manners, had conformed almost entirely with her impression of his moral character. It seemed to her, now, impossible that one so *interesting* — indeed, so really *fascinating* — as was the young man who had been holding her ear for nearly an hour, could be the *base wretch* he was represented. Sidney Markland was an object

of her *detestation*; but she could not think of her brilliant companion of that evening with any feeling of dislike.

The silence and too apparent incredulity of Grace troubled Mrs. Turner exceedingly. She felt more deeply than ever, the *dangers which lurked in every path in social life* for her child — for the child of every parent — while no *lines of moral distinction* were drawn; but where the mere factitious addition of *wealth* or *family* made the passport into any circle. She did not, however, press the subject on the mind of Grace further than to assure her that she had been in company with none other than the *young profligate*, whose course of conduct for two or three years past had been such as to justly *exclude him from virtuous society*.

The brother of Grace, a young man of twenty-two, who had been carefully educated, and carefully guarded by his father, did not know of his sister's withdrawal by her parents from the company, until nearly ten o'clock. Mr. Turner glanced hastily around for him when about leaving, but not observing him did not care to look very closely. He would explain matters more fully on the next day, and then leave him, as he was of mature age, to act in freedom, according to the dictates of his own mind. He had fallen, soon after his entrance, into the company of Margaretta Algeron. She had been his favorite for some time past. Now she seemed more interesting than usual. In her society the moments flew by unnoticed; and he was unconscious that he had been monopolizing too long one of the most charming girls in the room, until Sidney Markland came up, and with his easy, polite assurance, said,

“Come, come, Mr. Turner! This won't do! Here you've been playing the agreeable to Miss Algeron for an hour past, while some half-dozen of us young fellows have been watching for a chance to speak to her. Allow me, if you please, to take your place — turn about, you know, is fair play.”

Turner perceived in Margaretta a slight movement that indicated her approval of Markland's words, so flattering to herself, and, bowing with a forced smile, relinquished her. This was the first intimation he had that Markland was in the room. He immediately went in search of his sister; but not finding her readily, he looked about for his father and mother. They were not to be found either. The truth instantly crossed his mind. His first impulse was to retire likewise. But the interest he felt in Margaretta caused him to linger for an hour longer, during most of which time she was in the company of Markland, whose conversation seemed to be peculiarly attractive. He then left the mirthful assemblage, and went home with more than usually troubled feelings, the reason of which he could hardly explain to himself.

CHAPTER 3.

“Ah! good morning, Sid!” said a friend of young Markland’s to him familiarly, as they met in Chestnut Street, one morning, about ten days after the party at Mr. Algeron’s. “You are stirring early!”

“Yes. There is *game* abroad!”

“Indeed! Then you’re on another *scent*? But take care you do not bark up the wrong tree.”

“Never fear. I don’t often make mistakes.”

“And your game?”

“Is worth catching, I can assure you.”

“No doubt. But who is she?”

“One of the sweetest girls in town. A *prize*, let me tell you, if there is any virtue in *beauty* and *booty*.”

“You’re enigmatical.”

“And you are dull. Haven’t I told you about the *conquest* I made at the last party?”

“Oh, yes! Miss *Algeron*. But what do you mean?” The friend looked grave as he asked this question.

At this, Markland laughed gayly for a moment or two, and then said, with a more serious tone and manner,

“I mean all fair, of course. Margaretta Algeron is of age and so am I, and I have therefore as perfect a right to win her heart and gain her hand as any one. And what is more, I intend doing it.”

“Why, then, meet her in Chestnut Street? Why not go, like a man, to her father’s house?”

“Because, as you know, *circumstances* alter cases. There has been an attempt made by that meddling old rascal, Turner, to get up a cry against me, on account of my *little indiscretion* with Sarah Spencer. Do you know that he actually left Mr. Algeron’s house, with his wife and daughter, the moment he understood that *I* was there!”

“He did?”

“Yes — he did. And, I have been told, avows his determination not to attend, nor permit his family to attend, any social company where *I* am an invited guest!”

“Preposterous! He must be insane!”

“Not he. He’s a cool-headed, determined old fellow, and will do just what he has said, to the letter.”

“What does he mean?”

“Simply, that *young-bloods* like you and I, who have the independence to go our own road, in spite of old-fashioned morality, are to be prohibited from good society.”

“Oh, dear!”

“It’s true. And what is more, I’m cursedly afraid he’ll get too many to sympathize with him. He’ll prove a kind of leader to some, no doubt. But I think I can neutralize the effect of all this. I have already induced my old folks to send out invitations for the next party. This will take place before *Turner’s leaven* can spread very far, and then, all who attend will feel it too delicate a matter to make an exception in my case when the family is invited out. Do you understand? Let the Turners draw their heads into their own turtle-shells, if they like to. Who cares?”

“You’ve outwitted them fairly,” returned the friend, laughing.

“So I think. But we shall see. On the second evening following Mr. Algeron’s party, I called and spent an hour with Margaretta, much to her delight. That I could readily see. But I have been there three times since, and she has been ‘engaged’! I can understand that? Of course I can. Day before yesterday, I met her in Chestnut Street. We walked together for a couple of hours, during which time I readily got from her an admission that, if her wishes had been consulted, the *excuse about being engaged* would never have been made. I needed no more. It was, I saw, all easy work, so far as *she* was concerned. Yesterday we met again, and this morning she promised to come out early.”

“Well, she is a *lovely* girl,” remarked his companion.

“She is, without doubt. But there is one who takes my fancy even more than pretty Margaretta.”

“Who?”

“*Grace Turner*. She is truly *an angel!* I had her in quite a fair way at the party, when her mother came up, looking as cross as an old bear, and asked me to be kind enough to *excuse* her daughter. I suppose she had just discovered my presence. I have not set eyes on Grace since that moment. If I thought there was any chance for her, I would let her brother have Margareta, and think it a good bargain. You ought to have seen how cleverly I snatched Margareta from Harry Turner at the party. Ha! ha! He had been sticking as close to her as a *leech* all the evening. I saw this — but didn’t care, so long as I had the willing ear of his sister Grace. But when that *chance* was gone, I was taking care to make a due impression on the second best; and so I went up boldly, and cut him out with a cool impudence that you would have called quite refreshing. He tried to look *daggers* at me — but, do you think I cared? No! Curse him! If he attempts to cross my path, I’ll call him out and *shoot* him! But see! There’s *my little charmer*, looking as bright as a May morning, and as sweet as a bunch of roses! Good-bye, and take care of yourself.”

And so saying, young Markland turned away abruptly, and crossing the street, met Margareta Algeron, with an ease, self-possession, and graceful politeness, that charmed anew her young heart.

CHAPTER 4.

“You look troubled, dear,” said Mr. Algeron, on meeting his wife, that evening. “Is anything the matter?”

“I feel troubled,” was the reply in a serious voice. “The *Marklands* give the next party, and the invitations have already gone around.”

“The *Marklands*? It isn’t possible!” And a *dark shadow* passed over Mr. Algeron’s face.

“Yes — it is too true. And, what is worse, we shall *have* to go. We cannot hold back, now. But my heart trembles for the *consequences*.”

“It is now clear that we were wrong in not acting out our sober convictions in regard to Sidney Markland,” Mr. Algeron said. “If we had *excluded* him, as he ought to have been excluded — he would never have had the opportunity which that occasion gave him, of ingratiating himself into *Margaretta*’s good opinion, as he has too evidently done. There is no calculating, now, the *consequences* of that lack of resolution on our part, which prevented us from *acting right from a clear conviction of right*. It was our duty to have considered the *well-being of society* — to have acted for the *general good* as well as for our individual welfare — to have *guarded our neighbor’s household treasures*, as well as our own. But, we were afraid to stand up, in the simple dignity of true principles — to do right for the sake of right. And upon our own heads, is threatened to be visited, the penalty of our lack of that moral courage which sustains everyone in true courses of action. How different was the conduct of Mr. and Mrs. Turner! Can either of us blame them for promptly withdrawing their daughter from an atmosphere *poisoned by the breath* of a man like young Markland? No! I, for one, honor their firmness, and approve their conduct!”

“But, perhaps, we are, after all, giving ourselves unnecessary fear,” Mrs. Algeron suggested. “Henry Turner seems a good deal interested in *Margaretta*. I noticed that he was with her, on the night of the party, more than with anyone else; and you know he has called here twice since to see her.”

“Yes — I know that. But *Margaretta* is young, and not capable of *seeing far below the surface*. The *brilliant conversation* and *attractive manners* of Markland will make a more ready impression upon her — than possibly can the calm, dignified, somewhat cold exterior of the other. I observed her closely at the party, and saw her eye brighten, and the whole expression of her face kindle with a new animation, when *Markland* came up to her and Henry Turner, and, with the ease and polite grace of a *Chesterfield*, took her away from him.”

“And you say *Margaretta* seemed pleased?”

“Oh, yes! It appeared to me that she was like one passing from a frigid atmosphere, into a warm room.”

Neither of the now unhappy parents of a fondly loved child, whom their own lack of firmness and failure to adhere to just principles of action had placed in imminent danger, spoke for some time. Each became lost in painful thought; and each was vainly searching about for some way of escape from the *dilemma* in which they found themselves. At length, Mr. Algeron said, respiring deeply as he spoke —

“There is but one way. And that is to *imitate Mr. Turner*. That he is right, all must admit — and all do admit, except such as feel a bearing of his conduct upon themselves or families, in some degree, intimate or remote.”

“But that is impossible now,” returned Mrs. Algeron, gloomily. “We gave the first party, and invited all the *Markland* family. They give the second. Now, with what kind of grace can we decline going to their house, on their son’s account!”

“Do you wish to see your child the *wife* of Sidney Markland?” Mr. Algeron asked, with a sudden and bitter emphasis.

“No!” was the quick reply. “I would rather see her *dead!*”

“Then, is any sacrifice too dear which will save her from such a fate?”

“No! none that we have a right to make.”

“Haven’t we a right to stay away from all companies *contaminated* by Sidney’s presence?”

“I suppose we have.”

“Then let us be *true to our trust*. We have committed one error. Timely caution may prevent its proving a fatal one — fatal to our peace — fatal to the *happiness of our child*. Why should we hesitate a moment, when there is so much at stake?”

“We *should* not,” was the half-reluctant admission of Mrs. Algeron.

“Then we *must* not. Let us meet all the trifling consequences of a firm adherence to a right course. *The way of duty, is the only way of safety.*”

When excited, Mr. Algeron was a man who felt strongly and thought clearly. At other times, he was led by the general *customs of the society* in which he moved, and inclined to be *influenced by the good opinions of others*. He was now strongly excited by the vivid perception he had of *his child’s danger*. But this excitement soon wore off, and he began to waver in his mind as to whether it would do for them to pass by the invitation of the Marklands. Finally, after much anxious thought and discussion, it was concluded to attend the party, with their daughter. But to let it be the *last*, if there were any appearances of too close an intimacy between the young couple.

In the mean time, the mother fully exposed to Margareta the *despicable character* of Sidney Markland, as a guard against his advances. Little did they think, that even at the very time they were thus endeavoring to protect her from the *fowler’s snare* — that she was *entangled* almost inextricably in its meshes! But it was, alas! too true. They had *opened the door* for the *tempter* to enter.

Fully aware of what they were doing, and, after reflection on the subject, they had deliberately said to the *destroyer of innocence*, “Come in among us!” And he had come. They hoped to guard their own child from *his allurements*. But she had been first won by them. And already her young heart had thrilled to words of tenderness and love. In vain, then, did Mrs. Algeron endeavor to *paint Sidney Markland in his true colors*. The heart of the daughter rejected the picture, as a *counterfeit presentment* of one who could not be the *wretch* her mother would gladly make her believe him to be. At the first disparaging allusions to him, she ventured a mild defense. But this she saw reasons to waive. Her *silence*, however, took nothing from her *good opinion* of her traduced lover — for such he had ventured to declare himself on their third meeting in Chestnut Street.

On the day previous to the evening on which the Marklands’ party was to take place, Mr. Turner came into the store of Mr. Algeron, and asked for a *private interview*. As soon as he was alone with Mr. Algeron, he said,

“You must pardon me, my dear sir, for the *liberty* I am about to take. But I am a father, and, therefore, I feel with every father, and cannot see a maiden in danger and keep silent with a clear conscience.”

“My dear sir! What do you mean?” exclaimed Mr. Algeron, with a look and tone of alarm.

“Are you aware that your daughter is to be found, almost every day, in Chestnut Street, in company with Sidney Markland?”

“*Impossible!*” ejaculated Mr. Algeron, turning pale.

“It is too true, sir. I have seen them together three times within the past week, myself, and have heard others allude to the fact. Were it *my daughter*, I would *thank* the man who told me, with my whole heart — and I have therefore done to you — just as I would wish to be done by.”

“I can hardly believe it!” said Mr. Algeron, mournfully, as he laid his head upon his hands, in momentary bodily prostration from the sudden and painful shock occasioned by this distressing news, “that my daughter has thus *deceived* us. It is so *unlike* her. From her earliest years she has acted towards us without disguise.”

“But have you had no reason to suspect that something was wrong?”

“We knew that the young man wished to visit her, for he has called some three or four times at our house. But since his first visit, we have not permitted Margareta to see him. Strange! that in the course of a single evening, he should have made so *indelible an impression upon her mind.*”

“He is, perhaps, one of the *handsomest* and most *fascinating* young men in this city. As much confidence as I have in my own daughter, I would no more trust her — young, innocent, and susceptible, in his company — than I would with a devil! He seems to possess the *power of charming, like a serpent*. It was because you invited him to your house, that I left it with my family, as soon as I discovered that *he*

was there. And, even in the short time my child was present, he found his way to her side. Already had I made up my mind that I would mingle in no social circle where *he* was invited to come.”

“Would to Heaven I had acted as wisely!” said Mr. Algeron, with bitterness. “I saw as clearly as you did, the necessity of *excluding* that young man, and all like him — but had not the *moral courage to act out my clear convictions of right*. Dearly, it seems, I am about to pay for my criminal weakness!”

When Mrs. Algeron, to whom her husband communicated, immediately, the painful news he had learned from Mr. Turner, opened the matter to Margaretta, the maiden replied only by a flood of tears, confirmatory of the truth of the allegation. But she made no effort to *justify* herself, nor could her mother extort from her a *promise* not to see the young man again. She was deeply distressed, but not *penitent* in regard to her conduct. The only thing she said, was in reply to a sweeping declaration in regard to Markland’s character.

“He is not the *wretch* you would have me believe him, mother.”

This was uttered in a firm tone of voice.

“He is without honor, principle, or any shade of moral honesty!” returned Mrs. Algeron, warmly.

“To me he is *honest*, mother — towards me, his intentions are *honorable*. I can judge him no farther.”

There was, in the *manner* in which this was said, a *something* which caused Mrs. Algeron to cease further remonstrance. She felt that it would be worse than useless, and tend to confirm Margaretta in her *mad infatuation*. Leaving her alone in her chamber, she sought her husband and related to him the result of her interview. Never had either of them, in all their previous lives, found themselves in such a strait — never had any affliction which had befallen them, so utterly prostrated their mental energies — so deeply *wounded* them as this. And, added to their pain of mind, was the rebuking consciousness that *they alone were to blame for the whole of this*. That all the wretchedness which must inevitably be their daughter’s portion, if she should finally wed, in spite of them, this *profligate* young man, who was altogether incapable of truly loving one like her — must be chargeable to them!

The only thing they could now do was to take such judicious courses, to prevent their daughter from again meeting young Markland, as seemed best calculated to effect that end, and trust to *time* to efface the impression he had made upon her feelings.

Of the brilliant company that graced the splendid parlor of the Marklands, neither themselves nor daughter formed a part. Sidney looked through the bright group of female loveliness, in vain for her whom he had determined to win. Her *heart* he already possessed, as he knew by her own frank confession. Her *hand* must next come. On that he had resolved. At first, he was attracted by her sweet beauty — then he was stimulated in the pursuit by the evident determination of Mr. and Mrs. Algeron to keep him from associating with her — and confirmed in this by her own innocent confessions of the truth in regard to both her own and her parents’ feelings.

“The *Algerons* are not here, Kate,” said he to his eldest sister, after the evening had more than half worn away, and he had become satisfied that they would not come.

“Sure enough, Sid! I wonder what can be the meaning of it?” Kate returned, in some surprise.

“I think I know,” replied the young man, compressing his lips, and looking grave.

“Explain it to me.”

“I will, tomorrow.”

“Why not now?”

“It will take too much time; and besides, I wish to have a talk with you, alone, in regard to a matter in which I feel a deep interest.”

“Does it concern *Margaretta* Algeron?”

“It does. But here comes two or three *pretty chatterboxes*, and I am in duty bound to *entertain* them. Tomorrow, I will have a long talk with you.”

CHAPTER 5.

“And now, brother, what have you to say to me?” was the interrogation of Kate, as she took a seat beside Sidney Markland, about ten o’clock the next morning. Her face wore a serious expression.

“I wish to talk to you about *Margaretta Algeron*, sis.”

“Well. What of her?”

“In a word, then, I *love* her.”

“You are not the man to make a girl like Margaretta happy,” was the firm reply of the sister, who was older than Sidney by several years.

“The devil, I am not!”

“No, brother, seriously, you are not. Your habits of life and your general estimate of our gender must be radically changed — before you can make any sensitive, pure-minded, confiding woman happy. I speak earnestly and seriously, because I feel so. Though you are my brother, I must say, that you are not a man capable, at present, of loving as she needs to be loved — a girl like Margaretta. You would *break her heart* in a year!”

“How madly you talk, Kate!” exclaimed Sidney, impatiently rising and taking two or three rapid turns upon the floor. “Do you think me *utterly depraved*? Is there *no good* in me? I can bear such a judgment from the *world*. But to be estimated so meanly by my own sister, who ought to know me better — I feel to be unkind, indeed.”

“Sidney!” replied Kate, rising and walking by his side. “You are my brother, and, as such, I love you. But I am not, and do not wish to be, *blind to your faults*. I have shed many a bitter tear on your account. Your *irregular habits*, your *unsettled principles*, your impatience of just restraint — have cost me many a sorrowful hour. For a *sister* to bear all this, is hard — but how much more so for a *wife*? Especially if she is so young, so gentle, so confiding, so pure-minded as Margaretta Algeron. Sidney! I would rather see that sweet maiden in her *burial-clothes*, than decked in bridal garments — if *you* were the one about to lead her to the sacrificial altar!”

“Surely you are beside yourself, Kate!” the brother replied, with ill-restrained impatience. “I love Margaretta tenderly — as I never loved any living creature before — and I can and will make her happy.”

“Does she know of this?”

“She does.”

“How?”

“From my own lips.”

“Where, and when?”

The young man hesitated, and for a moment looked confused, while his sister regarded him with a steady eye and compressed lips.

“Did you tell her so, in her father’s house?”

“No.”

“Did you address her, with her father’s consent?”

“No! Had I waited for that, I never would have addressed her. He is *strongly prejudiced* against me.”

“Too *justly*, alas!” was the sad response of Kate, her voice slightly broken.

“From my own sister, I had hoped for a less severe judgment,” the young man returned, in a tone that showed him to be a good deal hurt.

“Your sister can only love you sincerely and truly for your *virtues*, Sidney. Your *vices*, she hopes ever to detest. Would you have my words only from the teeth outward? Would you be flattered by my lips, while my heart judges you with a harsh judgment? I trust not! Be a man! Let the *truth* come to you, even if it divides the very bones and marrow of your moral being.”

“I have nothing to hope from you, I see,” the brother said, after musing for some time. “I had hoped differently. Margaretta Algeron must and *shall* be mine, in spite of all opposition!”

“Will you ask her of her father?” inquired Kate.

“I will.”

“And if he does not give his consent?”

“I will take her in *spite* of it!”

This was said with a half-angry *determination* of manner, which left the sister little to hope for, in regard to her *influence* over him. She did not attempt to question him further, or to make any more appeals to him. He walked the floor in deep thought for some time, and then turned abruptly away, and left the house.

He came and went as usual for several days, maintaining towards Kate a *rigid silence* in regard to the subject of their late interview. During that time, he had spent a large portion of each day in walking Chestnut Street, in the hope of meeting Margaretta. But this hope was disappointed. On the evening of the fifth day, he called at the house of Mr. Algeron, and asked an interview with that gentleman. As soon as he met him, and had been received with the most cold and formal politeness, he said —

“I come, Mr. Algeron, to ask the privilege of formally addressing your daughter.”

“Strange that you should not thought of doing this before!” replied Mr. Algeron with ill-concealed irony.

“I do not understand you, sir!”

“Why did you not come frankly and openly, like a *man*, and say this to me before — instead of meeting my child *clandestinely*, and endeavoring to steal away her young affections?”

“On what authority do you charge me with such conduct, sir?” the young man asked in a firm and decided tone.

“On the authority of those who have seen you walking with her, almost daily — while I had not the remotest suspicion of the fact!”

“Was there harm in walking a few squares with your daughter, if I *happened* to meet her in the street? If so, I am not alone in this offence against you — nor are you the only father I have sinned against.”

“Well, well! To bring this matter to a close at once,” said Mr. Algeron, impatiently, “you *cannot* have my consent to address Margaretta! In this I am decided.”

“It will then, I suppose, be useless for me to urge reasons why you ought to change your mind?”

“Entirely so! I am in *earnest* in what I say!”

Sidney Markland arose at this, bowed formally, and left the house.

From that time Margaretta was guarded with the utmost vigilance, at the same time that the appearance of leaving her in freedom was preserved as far as it was possible to do so under the circumstances. She was never permitted to go out alone. At first she was greatly distressed; and did little else but sit alone in her room and weep. This continued for some weeks, when there was a gradual change for the better. She grew more cheerful, and mingled, as she had formerly done, with the family. Still, there was an abstract and dreamy manner about her, that troubled the hearts of her parents. It was too evident that she was not happy.

CHAPTER 6.

One evening, near the hour of retiring, about two months from the time Markland had formally asked for her hand and been refused, she lingered about her father with a more than usually affectionate manner, and seemed half reluctant to part from him. At length she drew her arms about his neck, and laid her young cheek tenderly to his. Then, slowly withdrawing herself, and leaving a tear glistening upon his face, she retired to her chamber, bearing with her his fervently uttered blessing.

“God keep you, my sweet child!” he murmured, as he dashed the moisture from his own dimming eye.

When Margaretta entered her chamber, she carefully locked her door, and, seating herself by her bed, bent over, and buried her face in a pillow. She remained in this attitude for nearly an hour, when she slowly arose, the *tears* resting on her cheeks, that had become pale, and, going to her drawers, commenced taking out her clothes. She had not proceeded far in this, when her feelings overcame her, and she leaned her head down upon the bureau by which she was standing, and sobbed violently. From this state, she aroused herself with an effort, and went on with her strange employment, which consisted in taking from her drawers a portion of her clothing, and tying it up into two large bundles. This completed, she sat down by a table and tried to write a *note*. But for a time the tears blinded her eyes, so that she could not see — and when her vision became clear, her hand trembled too much to fulfill the dictates of her mind. At last, she accomplished her task, a brief note was written and addressed —

“To my dear father and mother.”

It ran as follows:

“Do not be alarmed when you find that I have left my home, and forsaken the father and mother whom I love so deeply and so tenderly. Do not be angry with your child! Do not cast her off for this rash act. You know not the *anguish of mind* she suffers in taking such a step. But she cannot *obey* your wishes, without being miserable — neither can she *violate* them, without exquisite pain. In a little while, she will come back, a humble suppliant for your forgiveness and your love, without which she cannot live. Dear parents! Judge me not too harshly. Do not be angry with me. I cannot bear the thought of your displeasure. I love you, oh! how tenderly! I would sacrifice anything for your happiness, which I could sacrifice without my heart’s breaking in the effort. Again I say, do not be angry with me. Do not determine to cast me off from your love. This would be too severe a punishment of one whose heart asks for you a blessing both night and morning. But, oh! *forgive* your child!”

After folding this with trembling hands, Margaretta threw a cloak over her shoulders, drew on a tight bonnet, and, taking up her bundle, moved towards the door. Pausing, with her hand upon the lock, she listened for some moments, to hear if anyone were stirring in the house. She heard, or imagined that she heard, a sound. This caused her to wait for nearly half an hour longer, during which time she sat almost as still as death — her feelings sometimes wrought up to a pitch of excitement which threatened temporarily to unsettle her reason, and then subsiding into half unconsciousness. At the expiration of this time, *strong doubts* in regard to the step she was about to take came suddenly into her mind, producing a most violent agitation. She arose, moved towards the door and placed her hand upon, it; but she seemed *held back by a strong invisible arm*. *Warmings*, almost audible, seemed whispered in her ear — along with *urgings* to go on as she had begun. Wild confusion reigned in her mind for many minutes, during which time she stood irresolute, with her hand upon the door.

At length, she grew calmer, and with this calmness, came back the *strength* of her rash purpose. Slowly she opened the door, after having extinguished her light, and stepped out into the dark passage. At that instant, the hall-door bell rang violently, the noise ringing up the passage, and penetrating every chamber. Margaretta shrank back, quickly, into her room, her heart throbbing audibly, and stood for some minutes at her half-open door. In a few moments, she heard a movement overhead — then a servant came grumblingly down-stairs, and proceeded to the front-door. She listened eagerly, but could hear no voice. Soon the door was closed with a heavy jar, and the half-asleep servant returned, indicating his progress by running first against a chair, then half-overthrowing a hat-rack, and then striking himself heavily on some forgotten corner.

At last he paused, and she could hear him tapping at her father's door. This was opened — a word or two passed, and then the servant went up again to his room in the attic. A *suspicion* flashed across her mind, that all might not be right. This was confirmed, in a few minutes, by hearing the doors of her father's and mother's chamber open, and someone commence ascending the stairs. Quick as thought, she threw her bundles, with her bonnet and shawl, under the bed, felt for the letter she had left upon the table, and securing it, jumped into her bed, and drew the clothes up tightly about her neck, closing her eyes at the same time, and *pretending sleep*. By the time this was accomplished, her chamber-door opened, and her mother came in with a light in her hand. She paused, and glanced around for a moment. Then coming up to the bedside, she passed the light two or three times before the closed eyes of her daughter, who lay, apparently, in a *profound slumber*. After this, the mother quietly withdrew.

All this had passed, to Margareta, like a *dream*; and, as if but half awake, her bewildered mind acted so incoherently, that it was a longer time before she could realize perfectly, the true position she occupied. By degrees, however, she recovered a distinct consciousness of her situation. The thought that in all this she was not acting alone — that Markland was anxiously awaiting *her* — caused her at length to rise from the bed, and again make preparations to leave her father's house. All was dark within, except the feeble light that came into her window from a sky lit up with its thousands of twinkling star-gems. Allowing about an hour to elapse from the time her mother had visited her chamber, she once more stepped forth, and *stealthily* moved along the dark passages and down the stairs. Her way was past her father's door. It seemed to her, as she drew near, that she could not go by it — that she could not thus leave him who had watched over her from infancy with such tender care, and go forth to cast the *rich treasures of her young heart* at the feet of a stranger. Her mother, too, whose bosom had so often and so long pillowed her head — whose arm had so long been around her — how could she turn away from her, all heedless of her solemn warnings — and take the path she had told her was so full of danger? Struggling with such thoughts and feelings, she moved on, until she was opposite that chamber she dreaded so to pass. At that instant, its door was thrown open, letting forth a blaze of light, and her father stood before her. She startled back in alarm, looked at him for an instant with a pale, frightened face, and then sank to the floor insensible!

CHAPTER 7.

About two hours previous to the time when Margaretta Algeron left her chamber, and attempted to escape from her father's house — an exciting scene was passing in one of Mr. Markland's parlors, between Sidney and his sister Kate. He had communicated to her his intention of *running away*, that night, with the *infatuated* Margaretta.

"No — no, brother! You intend no such thing!" said Kate, in a quick, decided voice.

"Yes, but I do. And what is more, I want you to go with me, and wait in the carriage while I meet her as she escapes from the house. We will then go to the minister's; after which, I wish to bring her here."

"I shall do no such thing, Sidney!" was Kate's resolute answer.

"You will not?"

"No! I will not! Nor, if in my power to prevent it, shall that *foolish girl* become your wife!"

"You cannot prevent it, even if you were mad enough to make the attempt. I will carry her off, within two hours, in spite of everyone."

"Sidney! you must not!" Kate said, in a voice anxious and appealing. "You do not, you cannot love Margaretta, as one like her needs to be loved. You will as surely *break her heart* — as you wed her! I say this with pain; but the truth is *extorted* from me by your rashness. In your determined pursuit of her, you have been stirred on by selfishness — not by a pure, high-minded, generous passion for a lovely maiden. The *prize*, when gained, will be like the *butterfly* so hotly followed by the eager boy — its loveliness will be more than half diminished. In a little while, you will regard her only as a *burden* — not as a *blessing*."

"A compliment to her, at least," the brother replied, with a *sneer*. "Then you don't think her good enough for me? That alters the position of affairs materially."

"Sidney! You understand me well enough. You are not, at least for the present, capable of making a woman, I ought to say, a *foolish child* — like the one you are about to carry off from the arm and bosom of her mother, happy. You have not been charmed by her virtues — virtuous and innocent though she is — nor has she been moved to love you and confide in you, from a calm appreciation of *your moral qualities* — "

"Moral qualities, the devil! You make me sick, Kate! Don't *preach* after that fashion to me. But say, once for all, will you, or will you not go with me, and receive the girl, after I carry her off?"

"I have already told you *no*, Sidney!" Kate replied, in a husky, choking voice.

"Then I can find someone who will — and no hard matter either!" And thus saying, the young man turned abruptly away and left the house.

Kate did not move from the position in which he had left her for nearly ten minutes. At length, she arose quickly, as if a certain course of action had been decided upon, and sprang up the stairs into her chamber. Seating herself at her writing-table, she penned hastily the following note:

"Mr. Algeron: Within an hour, an attempt will be made by Sidney Markland to run away with your daughter. I, his sister, have endeavored, but in vain, to dissuade him from his purpose. He is bent upon its accomplishment. There is, therefore, but one course left to me, and that is, to *warn you of the impending danger* before it be too late. Say to Margaretta, from me, the *sister* of the man into whose hands she had so rashly determined to place her happiness — that he is not worthy of her. That he will as *surely break her heart* with neglect, infidelity, and unkindness, as he gets power over it as a husband. I say this with painful reluctance — but I am a woman, and I feel for *woman's wrongs* — and did I not speak now, I would be unworthy the name of a woman. He thinks lightly of our gender. We are but *toys for his idle hours* — the *playthings for his amusement*. Heaven knows how ardently I wish that this were not so — that he was truly worthy of a hand like that of your child, whom I would take as a sister to my bosom, with a feeling of pure affection."

After writing this, Kate wrapped herself up warmly, assuming a partial disguise, and quietly descending the stairs, left the house and went with rapid steps in the direction of Mr. Algeron's residence. Just before she reached it, she passed a carriage standing in the street, near which were two men in close

conversation. One of them she instantly recognized as her brother. She had to go very near to them, and her heart trembled lest she should be discovered, and prevented from putting her design into execution.

"I ought to know that girl," said Markland to his companion, after Kate had passed them. "There is something exceedingly familiar about her."

"So it struck me," was the reply. "She seems in considerable of a hurry, I would say. Out on some case of life and death, perhaps!"

Sidney did not remark further in regard to her, but stood thoughtful for nearly a minute. Then he said, in a quick, and alarmed tone —

"Curse her! It cannot possibly be that *incorrigible sister of mine*, mad enough to attempt to defeat our scheme!"

And he started forward, gaining, by a few rapid strides, the corner of the street around which Kate had turned. The house of Mr. Algeron stood far down the square, nearly to the next street — it could easily be distinguished by the light of a brilliant gas-lamp which stood immediately in front of it. Sure enough, the female who had passed them, stood in the door!

"It is Kate, by my life!" he ejaculated, springing forward with a quicker pace.

Kate saw him coming, and her heart trembled lest he should gain the spot where she stood before her summons could be answered. She listened anxiously, but no sound *within* indicated the approach of anyone — and *without* her brother was only the distance of a hundred feet away. Onward he came, at a rapid speed — only the breadth of the street divided them; and still the door remained closed, and no sound reached her eagerly listening ear.

"*Too late! Too late!*" she murmured sadly to herself. At that instant, just as her brother's foot cleared the curbstone nearest her, the door slowly opened.

"Take this to Mr. Algeron instantly!" the excited girl said, thrusting the note she had written into the hand of a servant, and then, to cut off the possibility of her brother's gaining possession of it from the bewildered servant, she drew the door to heavily, her heart bounding with a feeling of relief as she heard the quick fall of the dead-latch. At the same moment, the hand of Sidney clutched her arm with a heavy grip.

"Rash girl! What have you done?" he said in a quick excited whisper.

"My duty!" was the calm reply of the noble-hearted maiden, as she looked him steadily in the face.

Sidney still held her arm with a firm grasp, and seemed ready to hit her. He was terribly excited, and scarcely knew what he was doing.

"If you were not my sister, I would *murder* you as soon as *look* at you! How dare you cross my path in this way?" he said, grinding his teeth, and glaring at her fiercely. Then he jerked her from the door with sudden violence, which caused her to fall heavily upon the pavement, where she lay motionless for a few moments, uttering a low moan, that she evidently struggled to suppress.

The wild excitement of passion under which Sidney had labored, subsided in an instant. Bending over Kate, he endeavored to raise her; but the moment he touched her *arm*, she gave a cry of pain. It was broken! And *he* had broken it!

Seriously alarmed, the young man next endeavored to lift her up, by grasping her waist tightly with both hands. When on her feet, she leaned heavily against him, unable, from sudden physical prostration, to sustain her own weight. But she gradually recovered, and, supported by her brother's arm, walked slowly in the direction of the carriage, suffering most excruciating pain.

"Drive slowly to Doctor Cooper's!" Sidney said to the driver, as soon as Kate had reached and entered the carriage.

"No! — no! Take me home," interposed his sister.

"Do as I tell you!" was the peremptory order of the brother. And the driver mounted his box and proceeded slowly, but in the required direction.

It was in vain that the suffering girl implored to be taken home. Sidney was firm in his determination to have the arm first examined and set by a physician. How he would act after that, he had not yet determined. He had not yet had time for reflection. In a little while, they drew up to Doctor Cooper's. Kate at first refused to leave the carriage; but a firmly expressed determination to take her out by force, if

she did not come of her own will, prevailed over her. The doctor had retired for the night. But the case was *urgent*, and he *had* to attend it.

Kate sat with her veil drawn closely about her face, when the doctor entered. The sleeve of her dress was quickly ripped open, and her *arm* examined. The extent of the injury sustained was soon apparent in a fracture of one of the bones of the right forearm. In falling, she had endeavored to save herself by catching upon her hand, and the concussion had snapped the bone. The doctor said but little until he had carefully set the broken bone, during which operation, Kate fainted. After the arm had been properly bandaged, and Kate had recovered her consciousness, the doctor asked, very naturally, how the accident had happened.

“That is of no consequence, sir!” was Sidney’s evasive reply.

“I don’t know, young man; it may be of consequence for anything I can tell. Adventures of this kind —”

“We wanted only your professional services,” quickly interrupted Sidney, “nothing more! These have been rendered, and now, if you will name your fee, I will pay you and retire.”

Doctor Cooper was a firm and decided man. He knew Sidney Markland very well, and knew him to be a *profligate*, and *unprincipled*. His sister, he had never met, and therefore had no idea that the female he had brought in so deplorable a condition, bore to him that intimate relationship. But he saw plainly that he governed her movements *compulsorily*, and that was enough to prompt him resolutely to *interfere*.

“I cannot permit you to retire with this young lady, sir, until I know something of the *causes* which produced so painful an injury to her,” he said firmly, moving to a position that placed him between Sidney and the door.

“Do not tempt me to punch you?” the young man said, his face growing dark with instantly excited passion, as he spoke. “Come,” he added, taking hold of Kate, and drawing her towards the door, “and you, sir, stand aside!”

Doctor Cooper stepped back quickly a few paces — closed the door, and, locking everyone in, put the key into his pocket. This was done with an air of calm deliberation that showed him to be fully in earnest.

There was a momentary breathless silence — the sharp “click” of a pistol-lock was heard, as Sidney drew a *weapon* from his pocket, and presented it to the bosom of Doctor Cooper.

“Stand aside!” he said, in a deep husky voice. “I am not in the mood to be *trifled* with!”

“Oh, brother!” exclaimed Kate, catching hold of his arm, “for God’s sake, stop!”

“And is this your sister?” ejaculated Doctor Cooper, in a changed voice, slowly turning and unlocking the door.

“Confusion!” muttered the young man between his teeth, letting the hand that held the pistol fall to his side. Then striding out of the room — he left the house and his sister alone with the physician.

The few questions he addressed to Kate were only answered by a request to be taken home immediately. This was at once complied with. Doctor Cooper went with her, and accompanying her to her father’s house.

The first intimation the family had that Kate was anywhere but in her own room, was her appearance with the doctor, in the condition we have described her. The whole house was in consternation at the *calamity* that had befallen her under circumstances so mysterious, and yet all unexplained, except so far as the doctor’s story went. Kate remained silent to every question, until the physician had retired, and she was alone with her father and mother. Then she related, even to the most minute particulars, all that had occurred that night. Mr. and Mrs. Markland could only approve the *self-sacrificing, magnanimous conduct* of their daughter. Their hearts ached for their firstborn — the early hope and promise of their house. But now *the thorn* of their prodigal son, made restless their nightly pillow. They waited for his return, even until day-dawn, with feelings that none but the parents of such a son can imagine. But the morning broke coldly and cheerily — and he was still away.

CHAPTER 8.

It was nearly an hour before Margaretta recovered from the state of insensibility, into which the sudden apparition of her father had thrown her. When consciousness returned, she buried her face in the pillow of the bed upon which she had been laid, and sobbed and wept with convulsive violence. Nothing was *said* to her. Her father retired from the room, and her mother laid herself down beside her, with the intention of spending the night there. In the course of half an hour, Margaretta fell off to sleep, and did not awaken until long after daylight. Her mother was sitting by her side, and looking into her face with an expression of *tender concern*, when she opened her eyes. The poor girl burst into tears, and turned her face away. But Mrs. Algeron took her hand, and said, in an earnest but affectionate voice,

“Thank God, my dear child, that you have been *saved*, by His kind interposition — from a lifetime of *heart-aching wretchedness*. Listen to this note, which we received last night, at midnight, from the hand of Sidney’s sister. A sister, and especially such a sister as Kate Markland, would not write a note like this, were she not *impelled* to do so by a most *imperative sense of duty*.”

“Did Kate Markland write that?” Margaretta asked, in a tone of surprise, turning toward her mother, as she finished reading.

“She did. Look at it yourself,” and she handed Margaretta the note. The unhappy girl read it through, and then heaving a deep sigh, or rather groan, turned her face slowly to the wall, and closing her eyes, through the quivering lashes of which stole out the compressed tears, lay silent, but in deep thought. Now that the rash step she was about to take with such made precipitancy had been prevented — she could not help feeling, especially after reading the note from Kate, a silent aspiration of *thankfulness* that she was still *safely in her father’s house*. And yet toward Sidney, her heart went forth in feelings of deep tenderness. He had won her *girlish affections* — those exquisitely tender, immature, and ardent emotions, which are first awakened in a maiden’s bosom; and these clung to him like the vine’s first embracing tendrils, to the stem which lifts it up joyfully from the earth to drink in the sunbeams.

About ten o’clock, Mr. Markland, the father of Sidney, called to see Mr. Algeron. They held a long and somewhat painful interview, in which Mr. Markland related all that Kate had told him in regard to the occurrences of the night previous.

“And now,” said he, on concluding his brief narrative, “believe me, Mr. Algeron, that it would pain me equally with yourself, to see *my unhappy boy* as the husband of *your gentle child*. He could not, and would not make her happy. The most careful precaution should be used on your part to prevent him again seeing her — though I know not, since the incident of last night, which must become public to a certain extent, that he will again attempt to lead her off. He has not yet returned home, nor do I know where he is.”

“Is Kate well enough to receive a visit, and converse?” Mr. Algeron asked, after a thoughtful silence of some moments.

“She is not. She has a great deal of fever this morning, and is in much pain. The doctor says she must be kept very quiet.”

“Then, of course, we cannot take Margaretta to see her.”

“Not immediately. But as soon as she can bear company, it would, I think, be well to let them have an interview. In the meantime, a history of last night’s events will no doubt have a good effect.”

In this, Mr. Markland was not mistaken. The narrative *shocked* Margaretta very much, and, what was better, gave to her thoughts a new direction — though it did not, of course, extinguish her affection for Sidney, whose image still held the uppermost place in her heart.

Sidney did not make his appearance at home until the second day after his ineffectual attempt to carry off Mr. Algeron’s daughter. Then he came in and went out as usual — but *moody* and *silent*. He neither asked after Kate, nor went near her chamber. She, poor sufferer, did not recover speedily. The strong excitement under which she had labored, caused a violent fever to follow the setting of her arm, which lingered about her system for some time, preventing that speedy union of the bones which follow where

the health of the body is good. The cause of her illness could not be concealed, and soon the most exaggerated stories were floating about, none of which reflected a very favorable light upon her brother.

Gradually, the *general detestation* in which he was held, began to have a deeper and deeper influence upon *Margaretta*. It would have been strange if all the means used to poison the mind of one so young, even against so fascinating a lover, should not have had *some effect*. But especially beneficial in weaning her mind away from him, were the earnest appeals of his own sister, as soon as she had sufficiently recovered to visit her.

It was about six weeks from the time the exciting incidents just detailed occurred, that Mr. Turner said to his wife, as they sat one evening conversing,

“This exclusion of ourselves from society is not right; and yet, we have had full warning of the *danger that exists in social life*, under its present forms.”

“And a warning that we dare not pass unheeded,” replied Mrs. Turner.

“True. But is it not our duty, instead of *withdrawing* from society, to make an effort to introduce some *beneficial reforms*?”

“Perhaps it is.”

“I think so; and am willing to make the trial. Suppose we invite company, but upon the principle of excluding all young men whose *characters* are known to be bad. Are you willing to stand up with me in this?”

“I am perfectly willing.”

“Then let us appoint an early evening, and send out our notes of invitation. In the mean time, I will converse freely with Mr. Algeron, who, of course, is ready to sanction such a proceeding now, and also with as many others as I think prepared for such a step. The common sense of everyone must approve it. All that is needed, I am sure, is someone firm enough to lead the way.”

True to this just determination, Mr. and Mrs. Turner sent out their notes of invitation at an early day. Only a few of these were *prohibitive* in their character — as, for instance, that sent to the Markland family, which specified by name, those who were invited — and three others, sent to families that were unfortunate enough to have one member each, not worthy to mingle in virtuous society; which were worded in like manner. To two of these families, the exclusion proved a deep offence. But the others could not help but acknowledge that there was a *true principle* governing the conduct of Mrs. Turner, and approved it, though painful to their feelings.

CHAPTER 9.

The party at the Turners', which was well attended, and proved a delightful one to all present, was quickly followed by another at Mr. Algeron's, upon the same *exclusive principle*, and this by a third, under like restrictions. Grace Turner and Margareta Algeron attended all these, and many others during the close of that season. The latter gradually recovered from her disappointment, though it was a long time before she could even think of Sidney Markland without a quicker throb of her heart. He never attempted to throw himself in her way afterwards. Driven, by his evil courses, from the circle in which he had mingled for years, he abandoned himself more and more to vulgar and degrading vices, until he became lost to all sense of shame — and lay like a dead weight upon the heart of his family.

Henry Turner, who had felt much drawn towards Margareta, and whose attentions to her early in the fall had been lightly treated — soon ceased to show her more than ordinarily polite civilities. Her decided preference for a man like Markland made him think but lightly of her — and still more lightly, after the attempted elopement, with its sequel, had transpired. But when he again came into familiar contact with her, he could not help feeling an awakening admiration, although he struggled against it, and argued against her on the score of her *blind and weak infatuation* in regard to a man whose vile habits should have made every pure-minded woman shrink from him with instinctive aversion! Time wore on, and the season of festivities passed away, during which the parties were mainly conducted upon the *exclusive principle* which Mr. and Mrs. Turner had been first to establish. All saw that it was right. And even those upon whom it bore hard, or at least upon some members of their families, could not but acknowledge that, into *virtuous society* — *virtue* should be the passport.

Wealth and family connections impart no moral qualities, and, therefore, these alone should never give admission to a man of bad character into our social circles. Is not this a self-evident truth to every mind? If not — if it requires the *practical operation of a principle* to make its nature apparent — let the incredulous open their eyes and look around them. Let them read over the *social histories* of the first circles in our city for twenty years past — and if it does not give them the heartache, then are they callous indeed. And why does it present so painful a picture? There have been *too few social restrictions!* No man's daughters are safe, even in so called "good society." Need we again repeat the truth — that society has not been hedged around as it should have been — that *virtue* has not been the passport?

But to return, and briefly wind up our story. During the ensuing summer, Grace and Margareta, who had always been fond of each other, became very intimate. This intimacy was not, at first, pleasing to Mr. Turner, who did not think the daughter of Mr. Algeron a fair companion for his child, after the exhibition of her *character* which the events of the winter had presented. And yet he never saw her, that his prejudice did not, in some degree, give way. She was *modest, retiring, intelligent, and accomplished*. Above all, she even reminded him of his own child. When together, they looked like sisters, and by strangers were often thought to bear that relation to each other.

Fall and winter again came around; and with the festive season, came also to Mr. Turner and some others, a consciousness that they had a social duty to perform. The *restrictions* of the preceding year had been felt by every parent as a *protection* for his child; but so much are the majority of people *slaves to the tyranny of custom*, that, unless they can find a leader to take the odium and responsibility of *innovation* — they will go on in the old track, be the threatened danger ever so great. So it would have been in this instance, had not Mr. Turner and Mr. Algeron been firm in leading off upon the *exclusive system*. Twice, during the season, this beneficial rule was broken by people *too weak to offend* in certain quarters; but the prompt withdrawal from their companies, by Mr. Turner and a few who imitated his example, of their families — effectually checked the spread of such a dangerous precedent. During this winter, Henry Turner was thrown more than ever into Margareta's society, and, in spite of his efforts to struggle against his feelings, he could not help feeling for her a growing preference — in fact, a warm regard. Still, the *Markland affair* troubled him. He could not tell how far her feelings were still committed in that direction; and, indeed, the idea that she now or had ever entertained an affection for one like *him*, gave him a momentary aversion to her. But this grew weaker every day.

As for *Sidney Markland*, he was running his *downward course* with insane velocity. Having now no external inducements for an *pretension* of virtue and propriety — he let his true character speak forth freely in all his actions — which were often too *gross violations of decency* to bear a record here.

One morning, towards the ensuing spring, Margaretta sat glancing over a newspaper, when her eye fell upon the following paragraph, under the head of city news:

“SKIRMISH — AND JUST PUNISHMENT. An affair came off in one of our public streets, yesterday, which, though involving a breach of the law, we can hardly find it in our heart to condemn. Most of our citizens who have occasion to go into Chestnut Street, have noticed a bearded, haughty, moustached fellow, named *Markland*, of no very enviable notoriety. For a year past, he has wisely confined his adventures to a class of people in whom the public take no particular interest. But recently he stepped beyond this boundary, and dared to offer an insult to the sister of a young man well known in our first circles. The consequence was a public beating, which every virtuous mind must approve. It is said to have been well laid on, and in the presence of a large number of people, not one of whom interfered to check the brother’s honest indignation.”

Margaretta still sat with the newspaper in her hand, when Grace Turner came in.

“Read that, Grace,” she said, pointing to the paragraph, while her cheek glowed and the moisture dimmed her eyes.

Grace read it over hurriedly, and then looked into the face of her friend inquiringly.

“Nightly do I thank my Heavenly Father,” said her gentle friend, “that He so mercifully prevented me from throwing myself away upon that *wretched young man*. I shudder, sometimes, when I have a more than usually vivid consciousness of the danger I have escaped. How blind and mad I was! It seemed as if I were in the *center of a charmed circle*, and impelled by an invisible power in one direction! Reason was powerless. The earnest entreaties and solemn admonitions of my parents did not linger in my mind a moment. They were scattered like autumn leaves in the breath of a tempest.”

“I thank God for your escape, and also for my own,” Grace replied earnestly. “I, but for the firmness of my parents in withdrawing me from the circle *contaminated* by his presence, would have been in a like danger with yourself. He sought my side early on the evening of the first party at your house, and held my delighted attention for nearly an hour. I never heard so *musical a voice* — I never felt so *sudden an attraction*. Truly he was a *skillful charmer*! It has since come to my ear that he first determined to win my *heart* — and then claim my *hand*. The prompt action of my father protected me. You, consequently, were the next selected *victim*. But, thank Heaven! we have both escaped! We are both free!”

Innocent were the heart-warm tears which mingled, as the lovely maidens embraced each other tenderly.

“I have a word for your ear,” Grace said, in a whisper, half withdrawing herself, yet still clasping her arms about the neck of Margaretta. “Will you become my *sister-in-law*?”

The maiden started, paused a moment, and then turning toward her companion, half revealed her blushing face, while she imprinted a fervent kiss upon her lips. Then burying her face in her bosom, she wept anew, but her tears were tears of exquisite joy.

Need we longer hold the reader’s attention? or tire him with an account of the last mirthful party of the season — a *bridal party* — where Margaretta was the blushing bride, and Henry Turner the worthy claimant of her hand? No! Enough has already been said. As for Grace, her father’s judicious care over her has not been in vain. She, too, has found one worthy to win her and wear her. Mr. Turner is a happy man, and he deserves to be.