


TRIAL AND TRIUMPH

by
by Timothy Shay Arthur, 1855

Table of Contents in PDF Bookmarks 

Publisher's Preface

“All of the books from the pen of Timothy Shay Arthur are most interesting, and of a high moral and useful tone. To read any of them, must improve the character and the conduct. Mr. Arthur's works are all wholesome; they inculcate morality and purify the feelings by tastefully illustrating the beauties of virtue, and the iniquities of vice.

“This is one of the very best he has written, and a copy of it should be in every family and household in the land, for no one, either old or young, can read it without profiting by it. Like all of the writings of this author, there is a strong moral tone to this work, which cannot fail to produce an uplifting impression on the mind of the reader. It will be read with interest by all the admirers of wholesome novels, and will be seized on with avidity by the thousands of readers who prefer Mr. Arthur's useful and instructive sketches to the flimsy novels which overstock the market. To Mr. Arthur the public are indebted for a species of composition that while it affords delight, conveys at the same time, many moral and practical lessons for life.” (Editor, 1855)

CHAPTER 1.

"Mary Lynn! I will not believe you in earnest!" said Philip Emerson, addressing, in a passionate tone, a young lady who sat near him on the sofa, and whose blushing face, as it bent to the floor, was half veiled by the sunny curls which fell over it. He caught the maiden's hand, and tried to raise it to his lips; but she drew it quickly away, thus preventing the act of endearment.

"Philip," was replied, in a low, tremulous voice, "I am in earnest."

"Impossible! Mary, this cannot be! Have you not given me every encouragement to believe that a sentiment tenderer than mere friendship was in your heart. No! By all the sweet hours we have passed together, I will not believe this."

The face of Mary Lynn bent lower, and her fair ringlets veiled it still deeper. As the young man strained his eyes to catch the expression of her half concealed countenance, he saw a tear fall upon her hand.

"No, no! I will not believe it!" he added, more passionately; and again he grasped her hand and tried to raise it to his lips. But Mary resisted the effort as firmly as before, saying, as she did so, with unexpected decision, and with something of rebuke in her voice,

"Philip, I said a moment ago, that I was in earnest; and I again repeat the words. I am in earnest. I cannot become your wife."

"Why, Mary? Why?"

"Do not ask for reasons, Philip. Do not distress me by vain importunities. Go! And forget that you ever knew me!"

"Ask me to forget myself, Mary. The task were quite as easy!"

"Philip Emerson!" exclaimed the fair young creature, suddenly lifting her head, and throwing back the veil of sunny ringlets — "Be a man! I have said that I never could become your wife. Is not this enough? Would you take that hand" — extending her right hand as she spoke, and placing the other upon her bosom — "while the heart, here, cannot go with it?"

The young man arose and stepped back a pace or two, while an expression of painful surprise passed over his countenance.

"Mary," said he, in a changed voice, "you have trifled with me!"

He looked at her, sternly, until her eyes sunk beneath his gaze and fell to the floor.

"No, Philip," she murmured, "I have not trifled with you. Heaven is my witness for that!"

"Then you love me!" As quick as thought, he was by her side, and seeking to gain possession of her hand. But she resisted him as firmly as in the beginning.

Again he arose and stood before her, with his eyes fixed upon her form. Thus he stood for nearly the space of a minute, after which, without speaking, he retired from the room. A few moments more, and his step was heard along the passage. Then the closing of the street door told the eagerly listening girl that he had left the house. Starting from her seat, on the instant, she glided from the room, and went quickly up to her chamber. Over her face, which was now pale, tears were gushing, and her slight form was quivering like an aspen leaf. She had just passed through the severest trial of her life, and had come out of it completely exhausted in mind and body. How great the trial was, the reader will understand, when we say that she did, indeed, love Philip Emerson; and had loved him for a long time, with all the truth and tenderness of a spirit that knew no guile. Her rejection of his suit was no maiden caprice — no girlish trifling with an ardent lover. She had acted from a principle of right — and, in doing so, had committed violence upon her own feelings.

Long before Mary had recovered her self-possession, her mother entered her room. She came in with a slow step, and a countenance that was sad, even to distress. She was dressed in mourning garments. On the part of Mary, there was an immediate effort to hide, as far as possible, her own feelings.

As Mrs. Lynn took a chair by the side of her daughter, she sighed heavily, and her face became still more overcast.

"More bad news," said she, in a troubled voice.

Mary looked at her mother inquiringly, but did not speak.

"I saw Mr. Williams again this morning, and he informs me that United States Bank Stock has gone down to fifty."

"So low as that," sighed Mary.

"Yes. It has fallen ten dollars in a single day."

"Does Mr. Williams think it will go up again?"

"Yes. He says I must not be alarmed — that a reaction will soon take place. He is certain that the stock has reached its lowest point. But I am afraid we shall lose everything."

"Why not sell the stock now, mother, and secure what it will bring?"

"I urged this upon Mr. Williams; but he says that we mustn't think of such a thing."

"Better save part — than lose all."

"So I think; but Mr. Williams positively objects to such a sacrifice. I wanted him to sell at the first depression in prices; but he would not listen to the proposition then, nor will he hear to it now. He says that he has the fullest confidence in the soundness of the Bank. Oh, dear! I am distressed to death. What will become of us?"

“Mother, had we not better act from our own judgment in this matter?” said Mary. “Better lose half — than all.”
“Far better. I will go and see Mr. Williams and direct him to sell.”
“Do. Let us save a remnant. There is yet enough for our needs, if we live prudently.”
“We will have to give up this house, and reduce our lifestyle in every way,” said Mrs. Lynn, in a troubled voice.
“That need not affect our happiness, mother,” replied Mary. “Our income will still be sufficient for every comfort.”
“I think more of you than of myself,” said Mrs. Lynn, in a meaning tone.
“Of me, mother! Why of me?” quickly answered Mary, looking earnestly and inquiringly into her mother’s face as she spoke.

“The change may seriously affect your prospects in life.”
“How?” Mary fully understood her mother, and yet she asked a reason. This was almost involuntary.
“Was not Philip Emerson here this morning?” asked Mrs. Lynn, with a significance not to be misunderstood.
Mary’s eyes fell to the floor while a deep crimson overspread her face.
“If he should become aware of this sad change in our circumstances — ”
“Mother!” said Mary, quickly, interrupting any further remark, “I have just declined Philip’s offer of marriage!”
“Girl! Are you mad!” exclaimed Mrs. Lynn, her whole manner suddenly changing. “Declined his offer!”
“Yes, mother,” replied Mary, with forced calmness. “Surely, you did not expect anything else, after what we have just heard.”

“And was that your only reason?”
“Yes. It was my only reason. But, surely, that was enough! He has forfeited my respect!”
Mrs. Lynn expression and shaken my confidence in his principles.
The answer of to this was a mere of angry impatience.
“Your own heart must tell you that I am right,” said Mary.
“It tells me that you are wrong!” answered Mrs. Lynn. “Reject an offer like that on such grounds! Do you expect a man to be as perfect as an angel? What have you to do with his business life? Enough that he loves you, and is ready to make you his wife!”

Mary saw too clearly, that to argue with her mother would be worse than useless, and she, therefore, remained silent. Severe enough had been the trial through which she had passed, without having this added. Already her heart was palpitating with pain. To grasp it thus rudely, was to increase the pain to agony. Drooping her head, as when before her lover, until her curls veiled her face, she sat, unanswering, in the presence of her excited parent.

“Mary Lynn!” said the mother, forcing back her excited feelings, and speaking calmly, and with something of authority in her voice — “you must recall your foolish words to Philip. A more suitable and advantageous alliance than this, may never offer again — will never offer again. He loves you tenderly — can your heart ask more?”

But Mary did not reply even to this. She remained with her bent head and her shaded face, motionless, almost, as if inanimate. Thinking that she was making the impression desired, Mrs. Lynn continued —

“He is in good circumstances and well connected. Few young men can boast his personal attractions. His affection for you cannot be doubted. What more do you ask? Surely, my daughter lets some trifle, too near the axis of vision, throw a dark veil over intrinsic excellencies that she ought to see in the clearest light.”

“Do you call dishonesty and cruel selfishness — mere trifles?” said Mary, slowly raising her face, and letting her eyes rest steadily on those of her mother. “Do you think that I could give my hand to any man in a union so sacred as that of marriage, when there was in his heart — a fountain from which such evil things flowed? No, mother! I would be untrue to myself — were I to make such a sacrifice.”

“Dishonesty! Why will you stamp with such a name, mere acts of business that are of every day occurrence. Men must look to their own interests in trade; must take care of their own, or they will find success a mocking delusion.”

“There is a wide difference between a man’s regarding his own interest, and totally disregarding the interests of others,” replied Mary. “The first is a man’s duty; but, to disregard and trample upon the interests of others — is shameless dishonesty; and the man who can do this, has in him a principle of baseness. Rather than be the wife of such a man, mother, I would suffer any physical evil to which a life of poverty might subject me. I feel an inward sense of suffocation at the very thought. It is impossible for such a man truly to love a woman; for, genuine affection, and a love of self so strong that, it deliberately seeks to wrong and oppress others — can never live in the same bosom!”

“You misjudge Philip,” replied Mrs. Lynn. “You take things as they appear, and place upon them your own construction.”

“I do not think I misjudge him, mother,” said Mary, “none knows, but myself, how hard the struggle has been to give him up — to turn from him. It has been like giving up almost my own life.”

“Evidence enough that the act was wrong,” remarked Mrs. Lynn, promptly.

“No, mother; I do not believe that. As to misjudging Philip, as you allege, I am clear in my own mind that this is not so. The man who could, at his age, deliberately cheat in business, and moreover withdraw from a helpless old woman who

had nursed him when he was a babe, and ministered to his needs in childhood, the support a mother's bounty had willed, but not legally provided, and let her spend her last days in an alms-house — must have a base principle in his heart, too base for mine to consort with!"

Mary spoke deliberately and with that eloquence of tone and manner which marks a feeling condemnation of what is wrong in principle. For a few moments, her mother was subdued by this manner, but she quickly resumed —

"I do not believe half what we have heard on this subject. Stories of this kind change in even a short journey — this one has come over a hundred miles."

"Mrs. Glover is not a woman likely to magnify any story. While in Dudley, and in the circle where Mr. Emerson's family was well known, she heard of Philip's unkind and, I will say, cruel treatment of his old nurse. Not being willing to believe such a statement except on the most direct and reliable authority, she took the pains to go to the alms-house and see the person to whom reference had been made. She saw her as you heard her relate, was deeply touched by the interview, and came away shocked at the cruel desertion to which the poor helpless old woman had been subjected. Philip's mother, she said, had generously provided for the nurse, after sickness had rendered her unable to take care of herself, and had frequently promised that she would leave her, at her death, a life-annuity, sufficient to make her comfortable. This, it appears, she neglected to do; but Mrs. Glover says that she conversed with a lady who was with Mrs. Emerson during her last moments, and that she heard her solemnly charge Philip to provide for the nurse, as she had been providing, so long as she lived, and that Philip gave the requisite promise. Moreover, he continued to do for her, in accordance with this promise, for several years; but, finally, withdrew the trifling sum required for her support!"

"You are too ready to believe an evil report," said Mrs. Lynn.

"In that you do me injustice, mother. I was slow to believe this as well as other reports, and gave Philip the benefit of all conceivable doubts. But when I learned that Mrs. Glover called to see him, and made an appeal for his poor old nurse, and that he received her coldly and almost insultingly — I gave him up. A man who could be dishonest in business, and cold hearted and cruel as this act showed him to be — never could so love an object outside of himself as to make that object happy."

"Weak, silly girl!" exclaimed Mrs. Lynn, impatiently. "Is it thus lightly, that you throw away the offer of an marriage that hundreds as good as you, would spring to accept? And this, too, at a moment when threatened with the loss of property and social position?"

"Dear mother!" said Mary, with much feeling, "don't speak to me in this way. Think of me as having made a painful sacrifice, and as being deeply afflicted in consequence. Pity me — sympathize with me — seek to give me strength to bear my great trial; but do not rebuke me thus! I have sought to do right!"

Mary's voice was broken by sobs, as she concluded this appeal; and she bowed her head to hide the tears she could not restrain. Though little affected by all this, Mrs. Lynn, who was a calculating woman of the world, deemed it best to say no more at the time, and so left her daughter, remarking as she retired —

"I will talk with you further on this subject!"

CHAPTER 2.

A few weeks have passed. Mary, in whose beautiful eyes the light has grown dim, and from whose cheeks the bloom has faded, is sitting alone, with a sad, dreamy countenance. The door opens, and her mother enters.

"Mary, Mr. Emerson is in the parlor, and desires to see you."

"Tell him," was the firmly spoken reply, "that I wish to be excused. I cannot see him."

"You must see him, Mary!" the mother answered.

"Why does he importune me in this way?" said Mary, drawing up her slender person, while a flash of indignant feeling went over her countenance.

"He wishes, in justice to himself, to explain away circumstances that have placed him in an unfavorable light in your eyes. An interview for this purpose, you cannot deny him."

"How does he know the reasons which influenced me in declining his offer?" asked Mary, in a tone of surprise.

"I informed him."

"You! mother?"

"He asked of me a reason for your conduct, and I gave it."

"Let him explain to you, then!"

"He has done so, and to my entire satisfaction."

"What has he to say about his poor old nurse in the almshouse?"

"There was a mistake in the whole matter. He never meant to withhold a support from her while she lived. She is no longer in the alms-house."

"Why did he withhold the support, then?" asked Mary.

"Haven't I just said that there had been a mistake in the matter?"

"He didn't say this to Mrs. Glover, when she called on him."

"Mrs. Glover! Don't speak of her! She's a woman who meddles in things that don't belong to her. Philip wouldn't stoop to explanations when she called to interrogate him."

"She asked for no explanations. She simply called upon him with a petition in behalf of the old woman, and he met her with a repulsive coldness that was almost insulting."

"That is her story."

"And I believe it, mother."

"Believe it if you will; but see Philip, and, in justice to both yourself and him, hear his personal explanation."

"I do not wish to see him, mother!" returned Mary. "It can do no good, and will only add to the pain I already feel. If he is innocent of what has been alleged, so much the better for him; let conscious innocence be his sustainer. As for him and myself, we can never bear to each other a different relation from the present. To this resolution, my mind came weeks ago; and all subsequent things have but confirmed the resolution."

"Girl! Girl! Will you sacrifice everything to this perverse and stubborn spirit?" exclaimed Mrs. Lynn, unable to control her angry disappointment. "Can you forget the peril of our present position? The fortune left by your father — a breath may sweep away. It is already reduced two-thirds, and, tomorrow's sun may rise and see us beggars! Philip is not, I am persuaded, aware that all our property is in these stocks. Accept his offer, then, before this knowledge reaches him, and save yourself and family from ruin and disgrace."

Mary arose, while her mother was speaking; and there was a look of sincere surprise in her flushing countenance.

"Would you have me deceive him, mother?" she asked, with a calm dignity, before the expression of which Mrs. Lynn felt rebuked. "Surely you are not in earnest!"

"Philip is waiting below," said the mother, after a pause, speaking less arrogantly. "He asks to see you. Do not the relations that have existed between you for so long a time, give him a right to ask this?"

"I will see him, mother, on one condition," was Mary's answer to this.

"Name it."

"That you first inform him of our altered circumstances."

"Are you beside yourself, girl!" exclaimed Mrs. Lynn.

"No, mother, I am in my right mind. Not for a moment did it occur to me that Philip was ignorant of the great reverse with which we are threatened; and I, therefore, gave him credit for an attachment uninfluenced by sordid feelings. Now, you not only raise a doubt in my mind, but place me in a new relation to him."

"Oh, Mary! you do vex me beyond measure," said Mrs. Lynn. "Everything will be ruined by this perverseness of temper. What have you to do with all these disturbing considerations? Why will you go out of your way, to mar your best prospects in life?"

Mary did not answer to this, and her mother continued her importunities for some time longer. At length, seeming to change her purpose suddenly, Mary said —

"I will see him, but it must be alone."

"As you like," was replied; "but remember that your happiness for life, hangs upon the result of this interview."

"I will remember it," said Mary, in a low, solemn voice, as if speaking to herself. Without a word more, she left her room and descended to the parlor, where Emerson awaited an interview. The young man, who was walking the floor as she entered, came quickly towards her, with his hand extended, saying,

"Mary! At last I see you!"

He tried to smile as he grasped the hand she could not, in courtesy, refuse to give, and fixed a look of the most earnest inquiry upon her face. Mary looked at him for a moment only, and then her eyes were cast upon the floor. Seeing that she made no answer to his salutation, Emerson led her to a seat, and placed himself beside her.

"You look pale, Mary," said he. "Very pale and changed. Have you been ill?"

"No," was faintly murmured.

By this time, she had succeeded in withdrawing the hand Emerson had sought to retain. There was now an embarrassing pause, which the young man broke by saying,

"It seems, Mary, that some enemies of mine have been busy, and with too good success, in the work of poisoning your mind against me."

"Oh, no, Philip," quickly answered Mary. "No one has been busy in this work."

"Then I have been wrongly informed," said he, in a tone of surprise. "Your mother certainly gave me to understand this as the reason for your suddenly manifested aversion. And I have asked an interview in order to hear the charges from your own lips, and to answer them."

"I have no charges to make, Philip," replied Mary.

"Then why this change in your feelings?"

"Philip," said the young girl, "I have changed, because a better knowledge of your character, has satisfied me that we could not be happy together. Will not this reason suffice?"

"What point in my character? Upon what acts, or supposed acts of mine do you base your decision?"

"Philip Emerson!" Mary arose from her place by his side, and stood before him. "It is not just to me, this importunity for a reason in a matter of so trying and delicate a nature. I have been sincere to you from the beginning; I am sincere with you now. At our last painful interview, I told you that I was in earnest; and I can but repeat the words on this occasion. Go, and forget me! But you need not think of me unkindly, for I have no unkind thoughts toward you. My present action is the result of a deliberate conviction that I should not accept the flattering offer you have made — not of angry or offended feeling — and be assured that I cannot change my well-formed resolution. That I am a sufferer, your own eyes have already informed you. I shall still be a sufferer; yet will I not change. Spare me then, further pain. Let me plead for this; even by the pleasant memories of the past."

There was a tremor of emotion in the voice of Mary as she thus spoke, which deeply affected her auditor; and, in spite of her words, he ventured yet to plead his cause. But, before he had uttered a sentence, tears gushed over her face, and she turned from him, and left the room.

For Emerson to have remained longer, would have been as hopeless as indelicate; and so he retired, before Mrs. Lynn, who had been anxiously awaiting the termination of the interview, had time to intercept him.

Scarcely had the noise made by the closing door ceased to reverberate through the house, before the bell was rung, and Mrs. Lynn, who was already on her way to her daughter's room, paused on the stairs to listen. As the servant opened the street door, she heard a man's voice; then a man's step sounded in the entry.

"Mr. Williams wishes to see you," said the servant, coming up to where she still remained on the stairway.

The name caused the heart of Mrs. Lynn to give a sudden throb. The visit was untimely, and boded either good or bad news — bad she had great reason to fear. Hurriedly descending, she entered the parlor, and found Mr. Williams standing in the floor with a troubled countenance.

"Dear madam," said he, in an agitated voice, "our worst fears are at last realized! There has been a sudden collapse in the stock market. Shares fell today as low as fifteen!"

"Oh, Mr. Williams!" exclaimed the distressed widow, clasping her hands together, and growing suddenly pale. "Then am I indeed a beggar!"

"Thousands are involved in a like ruin! How little did I dream of this?"

"Oh, why did you not let me sell, months ago, when I was so anxious to save a portion of my own, and my children's property? Now all is hopeless ruin!"

And the distressed woman wrung her hands and wept.

"I advised you for the best," said the rebuked agent, in a deprecating voice. "I never dreamed that this stock was worthless. So entire was my confidence in its ultimate value, that I as steadily refused to part with a single share held on my own account. I am, therefore, a loser with others, and to a large amount."

"But I wanted to sell, Mr. Williams. I felt that all was insecure from the first. At seventy cents, I would still have saved a handsome competence. At fifty, I would still have had twenty-five thousand dollars. Even at forty, I would have retained a remnant, and I begged you to save even that. But, no, no! And now, all is ruined!"

"Still I acted for the best," said Mr. Williams. "It was your interest, not my own, that I regarded. If I have erred in judgment — thousands have erred with me. No one believed that the affairs of the bank had become so desperate. All looked upon the panic as momentary, and the pressure upon the stock certain to be removed. It was for this reason, that I have steadily opposed your sacrificing your property; and I acted by you as I would have acted by my own sister. It now appears that I fatally erred in judgment. But say what you wish done now, and I will act promptly. Shall I sell your stock at fifteen?"

"At fifteen! Oh, ruin! ruin! ruin! Fifty thousand dollars shrunk down suddenly to seven thousand! No! better throw all into the sea! It cannot get worse!"

"It is a terrible sacrifice!" said Mr. Williams. "Terrible! Fifteen dollars for what cost a hundred and twelve! Who could have dreamed of this? I would have risked a dozen fortunes here. But this great depression can only be the effect of a panic. Prices must advance again, Mrs. Lynn. The bank owns a vast amount of property, and, I still think it will ultimately redeem a large proportion of her stock. The temptation to sell at fifteen cents is so small, that it seems like folly to throw away the prospect of ultimately realizing from forty to fifty thousand dollars — for the paltry consideration of six or seven thousand."

"What is to become of me!" exclaimed Mrs. Lynn, still wringing her hands, and now beginning to move about the room with every exhibition of distress.

"Calm yourself, my dear madam," said Mr. Williams. "The best way to meet an evil, is to look it steadily in the face."

"Don't speak to me of calmness," replied the widow, impatiently. "Ask a man on the wheel to be calm!"

"What will you do? Save what may now be saved — or await the outcome of this business?"

"Sell at fifteen! What will that avail? To lose everything can be little worse. It will be ruin at best. No, Mr. Williams, I cannot consent to such a sacrifice."

"I will not advise you further," said the agent.

"What had I best do?" now asked Mrs. Lynn. The moment she felt that upon herself rested the responsibility of further action, distrust and doubt arose.

"I cannot advise you," repeated the agent.

"Do you think prices will advance?"

"I cannot tell, madam."

"Do you think they will get lower?"

"This it is equally out of my power to say."

"Oh, dear! What shall I do! I wish you would advise me, Mr. Williams. I am at my wit's ends. Even seven thousand dollars are better than nothing!"

"True."

"It will keep the gaunt wolf 'poverty' from our door a little while."

"Yes. Better that than nothing."

"Go and sell out, then, Mr. Williams! Go quickly, while there is a chance of saving this poor remnant."

The agent bowed in acquiescence, and was moving from the door, when Mrs. Lynn said eagerly,

"Stop! This is too great a sacrifice. Oh, sir! advise me! You understand these matters better than I do. I do not like to take the responsibility of throwing away my children's property in this way. My husband said that I must confide in your judgement. What had I better do?"

"Thus far your confidence in me has proved utterly vain," replied Mr. Williams. "You must now decide for yourself. If you direct me to sell your stock at present prices, I will sell. But the responsibility must be yours."

Again Mrs. Lynn commenced wringing her hands and weeping, while she sobbed,

"Oh, what shall I do! What shall I do!"

"Compose yourself and think calmly over the matter during the day," said Mr. Williams. "In the morning I will call again, and then act upon your decision."

"But, won't you say what I had best do? What are you going to do in your own case?"

"I'm going to wait longer," was the unhesitating answer. "I've made up my mind to run the risk of losing all — rather than sell at present rates. But you must not be guided by my action. You cannot afford to lose all."

"If you were in my place — what would you do?"

"Don't ask me that question. I am not in your place. But, do as I have suggested. Compose your mind, and think calmly over the matter. Sleep on the question. Tomorrow morning I will hear your decision."

"Do you think there is any hope of an advance in price, Mr. Williams?" asked Mrs. Lynn, in a voice that implored an answer to the question.

"I am totally in the dark, madam," replied the agent.

"Surely, you have some opinion! Pity me, and advise me!"

"I can say nothing now, Mrs. Lynn. Tomorrow I will see you. Perhaps I can advise you then, more understandingly than now."

The agent departed, and Mrs. Lynn sunk upon a chair, where she remained lost in painful abstraction; until the thought of Mary and her late interview with Philip Emerson, caused her to start quickly to her feet, and pass from the room to seek her daughter's chamber.

CHAPTER 3.

"A most distressing affair this," remarked a business friend, to Philip Emerson, a few weeks later in the history of events.

"What affair?" inquired the young man.

"I allude to the failure of the United States Bank, and the ruin it has brought into hundreds of families."

"Oh, yes, that is a distressing affair, truly, I saw poor Mrs. Meriam a little while ago, and the sight of her made my heart ache. She is reduced, with her children, from competency to poverty and dependence."

"And Mrs. Lynn, too."

"What!"

"Everything left by Mr. Lynn, was invested in this stock. Of fifty thousand dollars, but five thousand are left."

"Are you not in error here?" asked Emerson.

"No, I saw her agent, Mr. Williams, half an hour ago; and he told me that he had just paid into her hands, the proceeds of five hundred shares at ten dollars a share."

"Bless me! I never dreamed of this."

"It is too true. Poor woman! I feel very sorry for her."

The friend retired, and Emerson fell into a mood of deep thoughtfulness. A generous impulse first moved over the surface of his heart; but the rippling waves soon met a counter current, and all was in commotion. A selfish and sordid principle ruled in his mind, and this opposed the almost instant determination to renew his offer of marriage to Mary Lynn, and thus show her how devoted was his attachment. For the whole of that day the struggle went on, and was continued in the loneliness and silence of his chamber, when he retired at night.

Philip had been as sincere in his attachment to Mary as it is possible for any one to be, who admits worldly and selfish considerations into his mind. It is not at all probable, that he would have permitted his love to center upon her, had she not possessed some attractions beyond what were personal. She was a lovely, pure-minded, right thinking girl, with every quality to give happiness in marriage; and the better Emerson knew her — the more clearly was this perceived. As their intimacy became closer, he lost sight, to a considerable extent, of some of the first mercenary ideas that influenced him, and his affection assumed a truer character. But, now, the baser qualities of his love again appeared. The stream that ran so pure, was troubled. Circumstances had become materially changed.

It was near midnight before the mind of Emerson grew calm in a generous purpose. Then he wrote a letter to Mary.

"I have just heard," thus he addressed her, "of the sad loss your mother has sustained in the failure of the United States Bank. Until now, I was not aware that her property was invested in the stock of this institution. The news has deeply grieved me, and, were it not for the relations that exist between you and myself, I would at once hasten to offer your family, in person, the sympathy which I feel. Except for this unhappy event, I would not again have ventured to address you. But, now that I see dark clouds of adversity gathering over the head of one in whom I feel the deepest interest, and hear the distant roar of the coming tempest, I am impelled by something that I cannot resist to renew the offer, she a little while ago declined. Dear Mary! believe me, that I address you in no selfish spirit. Do not turn from me again without looking deep into your own heart. If my image is there — and I believe that it is — do not lightly efface it. Drop a line, on receiving this, and say that a visit from me will be acceptable. Speak but a single word of encouragement, and I will be instantly at your side."

While writing this letter, Emerson felt all the glow of a generous impulse; but as he read it over and over again, and thought of a marriage in which not a single worldly advantage would be gained, his mind became once more troubled, and he wavered in his resolutions.

"Shall I humble myself again?" he said aloud. "Shall I put myself in the way of another repulse, which will be more humiliating than former ones? Shall I lay my genuine regard at her feet — that she may trample upon it?"

Again he entered upon a struggle, which continued until near day dawn. Then he slept for a few hours. His mind was calmer and clearer when he awoke. After thoughtfully reviewing his relation to Mary, and considering her altered condition, he resolved to send the letter he had written, and did so. — But scarcely had it passed from his hands beyond recall, before he repented of what he had done. In spite of all his efforts to resist its influence, the fact that Mary, if she now accepted his offer, would come to him a portionless bride, was changing, materially, the state of his feelings. The force of attraction with which he was drawn towards her, was sensibly weakened; and he was conscious of the fact.

Emerson was an importer and dealer in elegant and fancy articles. His store was much frequented by fashionable people, especially ladies. About an hour after his letter to Mary was dispatched, and when his sober second thoughts were bringing repentance for the act — a young and beautiful girl entered with the design of purchasing some article. She was the daughter of a manufacturer in good circumstances, named Barker, and in her person and accomplishments, combined many attractions. She smiled winningly upon Emerson as he met her at the counter. The young man was struck by her beauty more than on any previous occasion; and there was in the tones of her voice a melody he had not perceived before.

She lingered longer than usual in making her purchases, and seemed quite interested in the conversation he addressed to her; and, as she left the store, turned, on gaining the street, to glance back at the handsome young dealer.

More than flattered, was Emerson by this manifestation of interest on the part of the beautiful girl, and her image was distinct before his mind for a long time after she had retired; so distinct, as partially to obscure the image of Mary Lynn.

From that time, the heart of Emerson beat with a more troubled motion. Hourly he waited, in expectation of an answer to his letter. His pulse would give a quicker throb at the entrance of anyone who seemed like the bearer of a communication from Mary. But the day wore on, and no answer came.

The letter sent by Emerson to Mary Lynn, came first into the hands of her mother, who unscrupulously broke the seal, and read the contents — with what feelings the reader may imagine. She then placed the letter in a new envelope, re-directed it, and had it sent up to her daughter's room, who received it without the least suspicion that her mother knew what it contained. Mary read it over hastily, and wept as she read. While it remained open in her hand, Mrs. Lynn entered. The first impulse of Mary was to conceal the letter, and she made a movement to do so, but checked herself.

"Who is that from?" asked Mrs. Lynn, at once referring to the letter in Mary's hand.

"From Philip," was replied, unhesitatingly.

"Indeed!" Mrs. Lynn affected surprise. "Can I see it?"

Mary handed her the letter, which she read over for the second time.

"A noble, generous-hearted young man!" exclaimed Mrs. Lynn, with enthusiasm. "Surely, Mary, you cannot but respond to this in the spirit with which it is written!"

"I wish it had not been written," was murmured, in reply.

"Why do you say that?" inquired Mrs. Lynn.

"Because it will be to me the cause of renewed pain. I had hoped that this trial was over."

"Mary, in the present extremity, can you for a moment hesitate? Think of me — think of your brother and sister. Will you see us go down into poverty and suffering, when a word from you could save us?"

"Oh, mother! Why will you tempt me in this way?" said Mary, in great distress. "If you love me, let me be alone for the present. Give me time to reflect and look upwards."

There was more in the manner of this appeal, than in the words, which affected Mrs. Lynn. She felt conscious of having taken an ungenerous advantage of her daughter, and an emotion of shame went over her selfish and worldly heart. For a few moments she lingered in her daughter's room, and then retired. The moment she closed the door, Mary sunk on her knees and buried her face in her hands. For a long, long time, she remained in this attitude, almost motionless. When, at last, she rose, her face was calm, and elevated in expression. A little while afterwards, she left the house and took her way towards a less fashionable part of the town than that in which she resided. At a moderate-sized, comfortable-looking house, she stopped, and on ringing, was admitted. Running upstairs, as familiarly as if at home, she entered one of the rooms, where sat a lady past the prime of life, in whose countenance was impressed the beauty of a truly wise and virtuous spirit.

"Mary, dear!" she said, affectionately, as the young girl entered, and she kissed her fair cheek with the tenderness of a mother.

"Dear aunt!" replied Mary, leaning her face against her, and trying to repress the sobs that were ready to break forth. "I have come to ask you a few more questions, and to seek further your advice."

"Say on, child," returned the lady.

"I wish to speak of Philip," said Mary.

"Does he still persecute you with his offers of marriage?" was remarked, in a voice of surprise.

"He has heard of our loss of property, and comes forward again. But here is his letter — read it."

The aunt — she was the sister of Mary's father — took the letter of Emerson and read it carefully.

"I hardly expected this of him," she remarked, as she refolded the letter, and handed it back to Mary. "It certainly places him in a more favorable light."

"Does it alter his real quality of mind?" asked Mary.

"All acts which spring from unselfish motives, change, in a degree, the evil qualities of the mind. A man who does right from a deliberate purpose, is just so much the better. He may recede or advance from the point gained, according as he afterwards gives place to good or bad influences."

"Yes, I can understand that. But I wish to ask you one or two questions about Philip."

"Say on."

"About the two pictures he sold to Mr. Harding. You are certain that Philip represented them as having just been received from his agent in Paris?"

"So Mr. Harding has informed me!"

"And you are still further certain that he bought them for a mere trifle, at a sale in New York?"

"I am. The pictures belonged to an old friend of mine in that city. I have seen them on her walls hundreds of times. When I saw them again at Mr. Harding's, and heard his story about having paid Emerson five hundred dollars for the pair, as choice old pictures, just received from his agent in Paris, I was curious enough to write to my friend. She informed me that she had sent a part of her furniture to auction — these pictures among the rest — and that the latter had sold for ten dollars apiece. I didn't like the look of this. Knowing Emerson's intimacy with you, I determined to gain some certain information on the subject, and so wrote to my friend asking her as a favor to ascertain, if possible, from the auctioneer, the name of the purchaser of the pictures. In a few days I received an answer, stating that the name was Emerson. I wrote still further, inquiring as to his residence. It was in this city. That I might be entirely certain in the matter, I then related to my friend how the pictures had been sold for five hundred dollars, and under what representations, and asked if she would oblige me by a still more particular inquiry of the auctioneer, who happened to be a friend. Her reply was conclusive. Philip Emerson is the man. Moreover, she wrote that the auctioneer expressed himself, as not in the least surprised by Emerson. 'That,' said he, 'is one of his every day tricks. I shall hear all about it on his next visit to New York. If his own stories are true, he has made several thousand dollars in the last few years by operations of this kind. He's a shrewd fellow; and thinks nothing of a business lie. All fair in trade is his motto.'"

Mary sighed deeply as her aunt ceased speaking.

"He is not an honest man," said she, at length, in a firm voice.

"Actions like this do not flow from an honest principle," replied the aunt.

"A good tree cannot bear evil fruit."

"Nor a sweet fountain send forth bitter waters," added the aunt. "Still, Mary, we must take this into consideration, "that men engaged in business are very apt, in their eagerness for gain, to lose sight of the landmarks of strict integrity. Where trick and overreaching is resorted to on every hand, even honest men may be led, almost imperceptibly, away from their integrity."

"Not honest men, aunt," replied Mary. "If there were not a foundation of dishonesty in the mind, a man would shrink from a dishonest act — as quickly as shrinks the leaf of a sensitive plant when touched."

"You are no doubt correct in this," remarked the aunt.

"I am in a great strait," said Mary, in a sad voice. "Mother knows of this letter from Philip, and expects me to return a favorable answer. If I regarded myself alone, I would not hesitate a moment. But, in my decision, the happiness and comfort of others are involved. Mother has lost, by the failure of the bank, nearly everything. We are left without any means of support. If I accept Philip's renewed offer, little apparent change will take place in our external circumstances. But, if I decline it, we sink down at once from our present position. As for myself, I am ready to meet any form of worldly reverse, to bear any privation and toil that may come — rather than give myself to a man in whose integrity I can place no sure reliance. How could I unite myself to the moral wisdom of my husband — when in heart he was dishonest? My spirit, instead of uniting in a glad and happy union, would shrink away and turn from him. Instead of a gradual union, growing from day to day and year to year — there would be a gradual separation, and both would become wretched. Oh! the very thought appalls me! Dear aunt! think for me, and advise me in this fearful extremity."

"As each one is responsible for his own actions — with each individual, must rest the determination to action."

"I know that, aunt. But feeling too often obscures the judgment. The mind of one in my position, can hardly be said to be in equilibrium."

"The minds of all are held in perpetual equilibrium, Mary. Every one who sincerely desires to do right, will, in passing through life's trials and temptations — see the right way so clearly, that not a doubt will remain. And so it will be in your case. All that is needed is firmness to do right in the face of all consequences."

"If I cannot respect Philip — if I utterly condemn the principles which govern his business life — if I see him to be so blinded by selfishness as to do wrong to his neighbors — ought I to marry him?"

"Answer the question yourself, Mary."

"Most emphatically do I say NO," was the earnest reply of Mary Lynn.

"Right, my child! Right! The evil consequences of such a union may not be calculated," responded the aunt, warmly. "It is not the mere person that is loved, in marriage; nor is it the intellectual endowments; nor graces of mind and action. No, love goes far below all these, and seeks for mental and moral qualities, and, if it does not find what is good and true — it droops, and withers, and dies. If you would not put your happiness both here and hereafter in jeopardy — decline this offer!"

"My heart blesses you for these words!" exclaimed Mary, grasping the hand of her aunt. "They give strength to my own weak purpose in this time of painful trial."

"You must look higher for strength, my dear child; for you will need a greater than human aid, to sustain you in passing through the fire."

Mary's eyes glanced upwards involuntarily.

“How sadly mother will be disappointed at this decision,” murmured the young girl, breaking, soon after, the silence that followed her last remark.

“The time, I doubt not, will come,” said the aunt, “when she will rejoice that you had the firmness to reject an offer which promised so much of worldly advantage, with so little of genuine happiness.”

“Until that time, what will I not have to suffer? Oh, how my heart shrinks from the trial,” sighed Mary.

“God will give you strength,” was answered. “Be true to yourself and Him — and you will be fully sustained.” Again the maiden’s eyes glanced upwards, and she breathed a prayer for sustaining power.

CHAPTER 4.

A day had elapsed since Emerson despatched the letter to Mary, renewing his offer of marriage, and yet no answer had been received. Scarcely had that letter passed from his hands beyond recall, before he repented of what he had done — and from that time he was in a state of restless anxiety, which drew a veil between his perceptions and all that was lovely and attractive in the girl he had been so desirous to lead to the marriage altar. On the next morning, Miss Barker visited his store again. She looked even more beautiful in his eyes than on the day previous; and there was in her manner a winning grace which captivated his feelings. She lingered at his counter longer than usual, and, in going away, remarked that she would call again in the afternoon to look at some elegant fans which Emerson said he was about to open.

“Why did I act so precipitately?” said the young man to himself, with a troubled feeling, as the graceful form of the beautiful girl faded from his eyes, yet still remained distinctly present to his mental vision. “What could I have been thinking about? So much for giving way to a mere generous impulse!”

Someone entered the store at the moment. Emerson turned his head, and saw that it was the city despatch carrier. How suddenly his heart did throb. The man came back to where he was standing and presented him a letter. His hands shook as he broke the seal. A moment more, and the suspense was over. It was simply an order from a customer for goods.

For a short time, Emerson felt as weak as if just risen from a bed of sickness, and moving slowly back to a remote part of his store, sat down to recollect his thoughts and get control of his feelings.

“Why does she not answer my letter?” he said to himself. “What am I to understand by this delay? I am entitled to at least a prompt response. Or, does she mean to treat this generous offer with silent contempt!”

An indignant emotion swelled in the heart of the young man, as he gave utterance to the last sentence. For a few moments he remained in deep thought. Then turning to his desk, he took up his pen and wrote, hurriedly, these few words, addressed to Mary Lynn.

“Let me ask, as a favor, that you destroy my note of yesterday — and forget that it was ever received!”

Without pausing to reflect or change his suddenly formed purpose, Emerson despatched this brief communication.

It was towards evening, on the day previous, when Mrs. Lynn repaired to the room of her daughter, in order to learn her decision in a matter that concerned them both so deeply. She found Mary sitting at a table, in the act of folding a letter which she had just written.

“Have you replied to Philip yet?” she asked.

“Yes, mother,” said Mary, in a low, yet firm voice.

“How have you replied?” was the next, and eagerly asked question.

Without a word, Mary handed her mother the letter she had just written. Mrs. Lynn almost tore the folds in her eagerness to get at the contents. They were as follows, and were taken in at a glance: “I am touched by the manner in which you have renewed your offer of marriage, and thank you most sincerely for the generous sentiments expressed. But, deeply conscious that a union would fail to secure either your happiness or mine, I am constrained to adhere to my first decision. Philip! Try and forget me.”

As the eyes of Mrs. Lynn rested on the last words, she tore the letter into ribbons, and scattered them passionately on the floor.

“And this is your love for me, foolish girl!” she exclaimed.

Mary trembled in every nerve, and shrunk beneath the angry gaze which was fixed upon her. She felt a strong impulse to say, in a spirit of self-sacrifice,

“I will accept his offer.” But something held her back; and she remained silent.

“Is this a time to hesitate?” resumed the mother. “When it is in your power to save yourself and family from poverty, humiliation and distress — will you refuse in obedience to some girlish fancy? Happiness! How could you use the word in such a connection? Where do you expect happiness to come from?”

“I do not expect much in this life,” replied Mary, tears falling slowly over her face. “But I would avoid an abyss of wretchedness, a single glance into which, has filled my heart with terror.”

To this the mother answered only with an expression of impatience. In the silence that followed, both grew calmer. Mrs. Lynn then changed her mode of address, and sought to influence her daughter by appeals which the poor child found it almost impossible to resist.

Again the struggle was renewed in her mind, and once more she passed amid the clouds and shadows of doubt. A further time for reflection was granted. The anguish of the night that followed, Mary did not forget in many years. Brief was her sleep and sadly troubled; and the morning found her still unprepared to act. When she thought of accepting the offer — her whole nature appeared to rise up in opposition; and when she thought of her mother — her heart grew faint, and she shrank from the trial that was before her.

Twice during the morning had Mrs. Lynn appealed to Mary against a longer delay.

“It is not just to Philip to keep him thus in suspense,” she said.

But Mary was not prepared to act.

It was about eleven o'clock, and the deeply tried girl sat writing another answer to Emerson's offer of marriage — it was the same as the first — when Mrs. Lynn burst into her room with a pale, agitated face, and an open letter in her hand.

"Mad girl! See what your delay has wrought!" she exclaimed, flinging the letter on the table before Mary, who caught it up eagerly. It was from Emerson, and read — "Let me ask, as a favor, that you destroy my note of yesterday — and forget that it was ever received!"

"Thank God!" murmured the tried and tempted girl, clasping her hands together, and lifting upwards her eyes that were suddenly filled with tears. "Thank God! It is over!"

Then covering her face with her hands, she sobbed until every nerve and muscle quivered in the intensity of her emotion.

CHAPTER 5.

We pass over two years with but a glance at its events. The disappointment of Mrs. Lynn, at the failure of Mary to accept the hand of Mr. Emerson, was very great, and her feelings, in consequence, much embittered towards her daughter, who was rendered thereby very unhappy. Misfortunes rarely come alone. So it proved in the case of Mrs. Lynn. The five thousand dollars saved out of the wreck of her property, was deposited, temporarily, in one of the city banks, until such time as a good investment of the sum could be made. The failure of the bank, before the deposit was withdrawn, swept away this poor remnant of her fortune, and left her helpless and almost penniless.

To a weak minded woman whose heart is filled with a love of the world, a reverse like this is paralyzing. Such a woman was Mrs. Lynn. Up to this time, since parting with her depreciated stock at ten dollars a share, she had sought to keep up the old appearance of things in order to deceive others in regard to her real condition. Mary's steady rejection of so good an offer as that made by Emerson, tried her sorely. But she still had hope that her beautiful and accomplished daughter would attract some suitor of equal merit. In this, however, her hope found no realization. Mary was neither wooed nor won when this second disaster came — and ruined everything.

As is usual in such cases, only a few friends were found to draw near and sympathize with the distressed family, and these had little to offer but good advice as to how they were to help themselves. In the eyes of a woman like Mrs. Lynn, there is something disgraceful attached to useful labor. The idea of either herself or daughter working for money, shocked her the moment it was presented. But Mary's mind was of a better quality, and she had, in her aunt, one to advise her, who saw with a far better vision than did her mother. In every state of doubt and trial, Mary went to her aunt Edith, and she usually found, in the calm and just views of life and life's duties — strength to walk patiently and firmly in the way that opened before her.

For three days after the failure of the bank in which had been placed the little remnant of her property, Mrs. Lynn, completely prostrate in mind and body, kept to her bed and refused to be comforted. In this unhappy state of affairs, Mary wrote to her brother, a lad in his seventeenth year, who was away at school, advising him of the total wreck of their fortunes, and desiring him to come home immediately. His name was William. Her sister Agnes, younger than William by three years, was still at home. The brother did not hesitate a moment in obeying the summons. This action on the part of Mary gave offence to her mother, who accused her of taking upon herself more than she was entitled to assume. This Mary bore without reply; but, when her mother desired her son to return to school immediately, she did not hesitate to ask

—
“How are we to pay the expense?”

“One would think that your tongue would cleave to the roof of your mouth in asking that question!” was the unfeeling retort of Mrs. Lynn. “For this extremity — we may thank you!”

Mary drooped her head meekly and remained silent.

“William must go back to school,” said the mother, firmly. “He must complete his education at every sacrifice.”

“We have nothing to sacrifice, mother,” urged Mary. “When the bills become due — how are we to pay them?” But Mrs. Lynn would hearken to none of these suggestions of her daughter. There was still in her mind the purpose to keep up an appearance, and one of the means of doing so was to let William remain at an expensive school, regardless as to whether the bills for board and tuition were ever paid or not. She did not succeed, however, in carrying out this plan, for William refused, positively, after a long and earnest conference with his sister, to return to school, and, in the face of his mother's angry remonstrance, procured for himself a situation in a store. For service therein, he was to receive a hundred dollars a year. The boy, like Mary, had in him something of the upright and independent spirit of his father.

For the house in which Mrs. Lynn was living at the time her fortunes became so sadly changed, she paid the annual rent of six hundred dollars. She was still in this house, although her resources were exhausted, and debts were beginning to accumulate at every point, while those who knew something of her real circumstances, were beginning to wonder how she could maintain so expensive a style. Of course she was in a state of wretchedness scarcely to be described — and Mary was almost as wretched as herself. Many plans for aiding in the support of the family had passed through the mind of the latter; but, while living at the present expense, exertion on her part was felt to be hopeless, and she awaited, passively, the outcome of events.

The end of this came at last. Landlord, grocers, market men and others, became impatient for their money — and Mrs. Lynn was compelled to sell the best part of her furniture to satisfy their claims, and then to move into a smaller house. Here she made a slight stand against the pressure of adversity; but it was only for a brief space. She had yet to go down lower. Without an income, what else could she have expected?

At the end of two years — we find them poor indeed. They are living in a part of a small house, in a neighborhood through which Mrs. Lynn would, in her better days, scarcely have permitted her coachman to drive. Their only income is from the labor of their hands. Yes, they are poor indeed, and Mrs. Lynn, struggling angrily against her fate, is very wretched. Not for a moment has she forgiven Mary for refusing the hand of Emerson.

Up to this time, the work done by Mary and her mother has been needle-work obtained at the Ladies' Repository. Work was procured here, because it could be done without exposing the fact to the parties worked for, who left their garments at the repository, and received them again, without knowing by whose hands they had been made up. This saved from mortification, the false and stubborn pride of Mrs. Lynn; but it reduced them to the necessity of long and fatiguing labor and a meager income, while Mary possessed higher abilities, which, if brought into use, would have yielded a far better return than needle-work. These abilities, the true-hearted, right-thinking girl at last determined to bring into exercise. What led particularly to this resolution on her part, was a consciousness of the defect suffered by her sister in not attending school.

"Agnes must receive a better education," she said to herself. "If the present time is lost — she suffers a detriment for life. Let mine be the task of procuring the means."

While revolving this subject in her mind, she read, in a morning paper, which fell accidentally into her hands, an advertisement for a governess. Without consulting her mother, or anyone else, she went immediately to the place where applicants were directed to call. It was at a large and handsome dwelling, and the name of Barker was on the door. On being admitted, she was shown by the servant into the back parlor. As she sat down, she observed a gentleman and lady in the other room, but did not notice them particularly, until startled by the familiar tones of the former. It was Philip Emerson! — and he was conversing in a mirthful, familiar voice, with his companion!

The reader will scarcely wonder that the already uneven pulses of Mary Lynn throbbed with a deeper disturbance at this discovery. Turning her face away, so that the young man could not see it, Mary awaited the appearance of Mrs. Barker, the lady who wished a governess, struggling all the while to repress her emotions. After the lapse of about five minutes, a lady entered the room, and said, as she sat down near her, in a voice that could be heard distinctly through both parlors —

"So you wish to inquire about this situation of governess?"

"I do," replied Mary, in a low voice.

"Have you ever acted in this capacity?"

"No, ma'am."

"I'm afraid you are too young. What is your name?"

"Mary Lynn," was answered in the same low voice with which she had at first spoken.

"Mary Lynn," repeated the lady so loud as almost to awaken an echo in the adjoining room.

Mary knew that Philip was at once aware of her presence and her errand; and she could not prevent a quicker motion of her heart, nor keep back a crimson flush from her face.

"Mary Lynn." Mrs. Barker again pronounced the name, adding, as she did so, with a smile, "There is something familiar in the sound. Are you any relation to Mrs. Justin Lynn, widow of the late Justin Lynn?"

"She is my mother," replied Mary.

"Your mother. Is it possible! What then does this mean? Has there been any change in her circumstances?"

"Oh yes, ma'am. All her property was in United States Bank Stock. By the failure of that institution, she lost everything."

"I am really grieved to hear this," was the sympathizing answer. "Your mother and I were young girls together; although we have not happened to meet for years. Did you say that she had lost everything?"

"Yes, ma'am, everything. By the labor of our hands, we now procure the means of living."

"Oh, that is sad! sad indeed! And you are now seeking the place of a governess?"

"I saw your advertisement, and have come to make some inquiries on the subject," replied Mary.

"You have had a good English education, I presume?" said Mrs. Barker.

"I believe so," was modestly answered.

"I have three little girls, two daughters and a niece, for whom I wish to employ a governess," said Mrs. Barker, who had from the first, felt a bias towards Mary, and whose mind was already made up to give her the place if she would accept of it. "They are eight, ten, and twelve years old. I want a person who will take the entire care of them, as well as give them all required instruction in English. For music and the languages, teachers are to be employed. The situation will be a responsible one, and the duties rather trying; but, to the right person, we are ready to give a liberal compensation."

"How large will be the compensation?" asked Mary.

"Five hundred dollars a year."

"I think that I could give you satisfaction," said Mary.

"I feel certain that you could," replied Mrs. Barker, "and, if you are willing to come, we will at least make the trial. My intention was to ask references from all applicants, as a measure of just precaution; but I believe that I will waive this, in your case. I like your face and manner, and will take you on their recommendation."

"That would hardly be wise," said Mary, smiling. "I can give you the names of a few ladies who knew me best in our brighter days. I do not think that they would speak of me otherwise than kindly. As for my ability to fill the place of a

governess, that can only be known on trial. I like children, and believe that I have patience and perseverance. I know that I will try, in all sincerity, to do what is right."

"And thus trying, you will succeed," replied Mrs. Barker, with some warmth of manner. "No, Mary, I will not seek to go beyond my own personal estimate in this brief interview. If you are willing to come for a few weeks on trial, I will look no farther."

"When do you wish me to come?" asked Mary.

"As early as it will suit your convenience."

"In a week?"

"Yes, that will answer. — Where do you live?"

Mary replied to this question, and then went away, promising to call in a few days to make more definite arrangements for becoming an inhabitant of the family.

"A very interesting girl, that," said Mrs. Barker, as soon as Mary had retired, entering, as she spoke, the front parlor where Philip Emerson sat conversing with her oldest daughter, Caroline.

"Who is she?" asked Caroline.

"Her name is Lynn — Mary Lynn. She is the daughter of the late Justin Lynn, who was a man of considerable property when he died. But, the unfortunate failure of the United States Bank, has swept everything from his family, and his daughter now seeks a means of livelihood."

"Poor girl!" sighed Caroline, in a voice of real sympathy.

Emerson made no remark; but he felt ill at ease.

"I knew her mother when I was your age. We went to school together. Her father was highly esteemed, and had the reputation of being one of the most scrupulously honest men in the community. If his daughter is like him in character, her introduction into our family will be a most desirable thing." Mrs. Barker then left the room. Caroline continued to remark on the sad change of fortune in Mary Lynn's case; but Emerson did not trust himself with a word on the subject. He lingered but a short time after Mary retired.

CHAPTER 6.

The unexpected appearance of Mary Lynn in the family of Mr. Barker, and the prospect of her becoming an inhabitant, disturbed the mind of Emerson very greatly. He did not like it at all. The more so, as from what had reached him, he was satisfied that Mary's refusal to accept his offer of marriage, was based upon a knowledge of some of his overreaching transactions in business.

"She must not enter this family," said he, with an emphasis, and a compression of the lips, which marked the earnestness of his purpose. And he quickened his pace as he gave utterance to these words.

When Mary informed her mother of what she had done, Mrs. Lynn was both surprised and indignant.

"You become a governess, and to Sally Barker's brats!" was her coarse and angry response. "Never! I will work my finger ends off, or starve, first."

"She will pay me five hundred dollars a year. Think how comfortable that will make you all," said Mary, in her meek and quiet way.

"Don't mention it again. I will not accept of comforts at that cost!" replied Mrs. Lynn, passionately.

Mary said no more; but she was none the less determined to avail herself of Mrs. Barker's offer. Her mother had much that was unreasonable to say, but the true-hearted girl entered into no useless argument, content with her own unfaltering conviction that what she purposed doing was right.

Some two hours after Mary's return from the house of Mrs. Barker, a letter was left at the door for Mrs. Lynn. On opening it, she found to her astonishment, that it was from Philip Emerson. The contents were these:

"My Dear Madam: I have just learned, with painful surprise, that your circumstances have become so reduced that you are in great extremity. To have saved you from this deep depression, would have constituted my greatest pleasure in life, but my ardent attachment to your daughter was not reciprocated, and so this pleasure was denied me. Still, the memory of the past, as well as the impulses of a naturally generous heart, prompt me, in all sincerity, to offer you aid in your present necessities. Please accept, as an earnest of my good will, the enclosed sum of one hundred dollars. Every three months you will receive a like sum; and if that should not be sufficient for your needs, more will cheerfully be added. Your sincere friend, Philip Emerson."

With all her pride, Mrs. Lynn had no true delicacy nor independence of feeling. This letter awoke in her mind a thrill of pleasure, and, moreover, created a new hope. It was plain to her that Emerson still entertained a sincere attachment for Mary, and that this was but another advance towards a renewal of his addresses.

"Read that!" said Mrs. Lynn, in an excited, exultant voice, placing, as she spoke, the letter of Emerson in her daughter's hand.

"Oh, mother! Send it back! Send it back!" exclaimed Mary, as soon as she comprehended the meaning of the letter. "Don't touch a dollar of his money! How could he dare do such a thing!"

With sincere astonishment, Mrs. Lynn looked at her daughter.

"No, I will not send it back," she replied. — "Do you think I would thus insult his generous spirit? No! Deeply thankful am I for such a friend in this trying extremity."

"He is a false friend, mother, and such you will find him," said Mary. "Oh, do not touch his money!"

But she might as well have talked to the wind. The hand of Mrs. Lynn had clutched the timely supply with an eager grasp, and more than the opposition of Mary, was required to make her release her hold.

If Mary had in the least wavered in her purpose to become a governess in the situation offered, this circumstance would have determined her. She felt that he had made up his mind to pursue her, and that in Mrs. Barker's family she would be safe from all advances. That her mother should accept his offer of money, touched her with a sense of shame and humiliation; and she resolved that, with her first earnings, she would cancel the debt.

"I have checked that move," said Philip Emerson, to himself, as he sealed and despatched the letter to Mrs. Lynn, containing a hundred dollars. His manner expressed exultation, though not unmingled with concern. — "Mary Lynn must not become an inhabitant of Mr. Barker's family. At least not for the present. She might mar everything. Three months more, and she may come and go at her pleasure. I wish I had never known the girl!"

"You look sober, Philip," said an intimate friend of Emerson's, on calling in to see him that evening.

"Do I?" The young man affected to smile.

"You certainly do. Is anything wrong?"

"Yes."

"Ah! what is it?"

"You know what a long siege I've had with Caroline Barker, or, rather, with her family?"

"Well?"

"Everything has been going on as merry as a marriage bell since the old folks gave up their opposition, and I now stand good with them. In three months I lead Caroline to the altar, and become the happiest man alive."

"Anything so terrible in that?" said the friend, smiling.

"No, not in that. But there's an enemy in the camp."

"Indeed!"

"Yes. You remember that affair of mine with Mary Lynn?"

"Very well. At least I remember your being once her devoted lover, and that she jilted you. But the why and the wherefore, I never heard."

"Curse the hypocritical jade!" said Emerson, with some bitterness of manner. "I'm mad with myself whenever I think what a fool I was to repeat my offer of marriage after she had once refused me. If I had only known her reason!"

"What was it?" inquired the friend.

"You wouldn't guess for a week."

"I shall not waste time with trying," was answered.

"She didn't like my way of conducting business."

"Indeed!"

"No I wasn't green enough for her,"

"I don't take your drift."

"You remember the two pictures I bought so cheap at a sale in New York, and afterwards sold to Mr. Harding?"

"I believe so."

"I mentioned it to you at the time. They were sent to auction by someone who didn't know their true value, and I got them for a song. Of course, I was entitled to receive for them what they were really worth."

"Certainly you were."

"For what cost me twenty dollars — I received five hundred."

"A handsome profit, certainly. But why should your young lady object to this?"

"Of course, I had to throw a little dust in the eyes of Mr. Harding."

"Ah!"

"I showed him the pictures, after getting them cleaned up a little, as two fine old subjects of the Flemish school, just received from my agent in Paris. An innocent deception, you know, such as is practiced in trade every day."

"Yes. Well?"

"Somehow or other, this fact, as I have since understood, with a few others of a like character, came to the ears of Mary, and, forthwith, the little saint takes it into her perverse head that I am a monster of iniquity, and so gives me the slip. I've blessed my lucky stars that she did so, a hundred times since. I was fool enough, in a fit of weak generosity, it is true, to renew my offer when I heard of her mother's reverse of fortune; but while she was delaying an answer, in fear of showing too much eagerness to fly into my arms, I prudently withdrew my proposal."

"For which, of course, she has never forgiven you."

"I presume not. Well, to go on with my story. Today, while I was holding a pleasant conversation with Caroline — who should drop in but Mary Lynn."

"Is she a friend of the family?"

"No. Mrs. Barker advertised for a governess, and she came to apply for the situation."

"Oh!"

"I was sitting in the front parlor with Caroline, and heard the whole interview between her and Mrs. Barker."

"Did she make an engagement to come?"

"Yes. And now you understand why I say that there is an enemy in the camp. Old Barker is as suspicious as he can be; and although he is agreeable enough, I am perfectly aware that he doesn't consider me as the most desirable son-in-law in the world, and that, if he could find a pretty good reason, he would oppose this marriage even now."

"Do you think Mary would try to poison the family against you?"

"I wouldn't trust her. At any rate it is better, to keep danger at a distance."

"True. But how will you accomplish this?"

"I've made one move, that I thought at first would be effectual. But in thinking more about it, I feel less confidence in the result. I sent her mother — the family is in extreme poverty — a hundred dollars, with a promise to supply an equal sum quarterly. This will remove the necessity for Mary to go away from home."

"What reason did you assign for such an act of extra generosity?"

"My interest in the family, and all that."

"I don't think it will answer," said the friend. "If Mrs. Lynn has a particle of womanly spirit, she will return the money."

"She hasn't done so yet, and some hours have elapsed since I sent it."

"You'd better ward off the danger in a more effectual way."

"How?"

"Don't wait until she sows the seeds of prejudice against you in the family of Mr. Barker. Sow them first against her."

“Ah, ha! I didn’t think of that!” said Emerson, with a sudden warmth of manner. “You’re right. I’ll do it!”

“You’ll have to act guardedly.”

“I know. Let me see. How shall I proceed?”

“If you appear in the matter; the slightest error will ruin you. My advice is, that you say nothing about her.”

“Then I can do nothing.”

“That doesn’t follow. You can write a letter, can’t you?”

“A letter?”

“Yes; an anonymous letter, warning the family not to put confidence in a certain young lady who has applied for the situation of governess. It will not be necessary to name her. A fair description will suffice. You can insinuate anything against her you please. But I would not go beyond insinuation. That will do your work effectually.”

“That’s it. I wish I’d seen you before I threw my hundred dollars away.”

“That was a useless waste of money.”

“Confound the girl! I wish she’d keep out of my way. I don’t want to do her any harm. But I can’t and won’t permit her to step in between me and one of the dearest objects of my life.”

“You’d be a fool if you did.”

“Wouldn’t I? A great fool!”

“What is done in this matter,” said the friend, “had better be done quickly. And as I can’t help you in the work, I’ll leave you to go about it at once. So, good evening, and may all come to a safe outcome.”

The friend then retired, and Emerson sat himself down seriously to the task of creating a base and ruinous suspicion against the pure-minded Mary Lynn.

CHAPTER 7.

The unwavering purpose of Mary to accept the offer of Mrs. Barker, met with the strongest opposition from her mother, which was continued up to the very moment of her leaving their humble place of abode to enter upon her new home. In the hope of influencing her daughter, Mrs. Lynn resorted to language of a most heartless character, and used some words that stung the poor girl cruelly.

With her mind, from this cause, in a state of agitation, Mary went forth to lead her new path of duty, feeling sad, even to wretchedness. If there had been but a single cheerful, encouraging word from her mother — how bravely and even happily would she have entered upon this new and toilsome path in life! But all was opposition, harshness, and smarting condemnation.

With a heart laboring heavily under its burden of painful feeling, Mary went forth from the cheerless home of her mother, and took her way toward the residence of Mrs. Barker. She did not observe, as she drew near the house, that a young man was just in advance of her, and that he stopped at the door to which she was going; for her eyes were upon the ground, and her thoughts were not cognizant of anything passing around her.

No wonder that she startled, nor that a crimson flush mounted to her face, as she set her foot upon the step in front of Mr. Barker's house, and, looking up, met the eye of Philip Emerson. The young man was as much surprised at this unexpected meeting, as herself. But not the slightest sign of recognition appeared in his countenance. For a moment, he looked coldly upon her, and then turned, as a servant opened the door, and passed in.

Mary followed, asking, as she did so, to see Mrs. Barker.

Caroline Barker met Philip Emerson in the front parlor, where they entered into conversation in a low tone of voice, while Mary sat, in view of them, in the back parlor, trembling in every nerve from the excitement created by the unexpected meeting with her former lover.

Several minutes elapsed before a servant came in and desired Mary to walk up into the sitting room, where Mrs. Barker wished to see her. The moment Mary came into the lady's presence, she perceived a change in her manner from what it was at the previous interview. She did not smile, but received her with a grave formality which instantly chilled the feelings of the unhappy girl.

"I have come, as I promised, madam," said Mary, so soon as she had taken the seat offered to her.

Mrs. Barker slightly inclined her head, and looked still more serious. A servant was in the room, and seemed disposed to linger.

"You can go up and see to the children," said Mrs. Barker to the servant, who, after lingering a short time longer, left the room.

The heart of Mary was beating, by this time, with a heavy, oppressive motion, that was actually painful. A few moments of silence ensued, which Mary broke, by saying —

"If you have seen reason to change your mind towards me, do not hesitate about the matter."

Mrs. Barker did not hesitate to comply with this invitation to speak out plainly — and she said —

"I have seen reason to change my first intention in regard to you, and frankly own that I have well grounded doubts as to the propriety of introducing you into my family. Forgive this plainness of speech, but plain speech, in these cases, is always best."

At these words, the face of Mary Lynn became very pale, and for a moment or two, she seemed to gasp for breath. Recovering herself quickly, she said, in a husky voice —

"Then your objection lies against something in my character?"

"It does," replied Mrs. Barker, with a severity of tone that, while it stung Mary, aroused in her mind a sense of virtuous indignation.

"Of course," said she, speaking with more self-possession, "you have received information against me, since I was here a few days ago. Then, all your feelings seemed to be in my favor."

"True; such is the case," said Mrs. Barker.

"May I ask the source of this information, and the nature of the allegations made?"

Mrs. Barker drew from her pocket a letter, and placed it in the young girl's hands.

Opening it, Mary read as follows:

"To Mrs. Barker. Madam: Having learned, accidentally, that a certain young personage is about applying to you for the situation of governess, I feel it to be my duty to caution you against her, as one whose introduction into your family may give trouble. There are many things about her conduct which do not look well, and among them is the fact that she receives sums of money from a former lover, who is about uniting himself in marriage with the daughter of one of our most respectable citizens. I will not mention her name; but you will know her by this description. She is a fair-faced, light-haired girl, slender, a little above the medium height, and rather pretty. Her mother is a widow, who lost all her property by the failure of the United States Bank. Be warned against her! A true, but unknown friend."

For a short time after reading this, Mary sat immovable. Then starting up, suddenly, she ran swiftly downstairs, with the open letter in her hand. Surprised at this sudden movement, and wishing to regain possession of the letter, Mrs. Barker followed the retreating girl, who, to her still greater surprise, entered the parlor, where sat her daughter and Philip Emerson, and advancing toward the latter, held the letter before his eyes, and said, in a quick, imperative voice —

“Did you write this?”

“Who are you? What do you mean?” exclaimed Emerson, starting to his feet, and contracting his brows angrily. He did not pretend astonishment; he really felt it.

“My name is Mary Lynn,” was answered. “Do you know me now?”

“I never saw you nor heard of you before,” said Emerson. “The girl is mad.”

Mary crushed the letter in her hands as she clasped her temples; stood for a moment, looking wildly upon the young man, and then, with a gesture of agony, turned away, and without a word more, left the house.

“Who is she?” asked Emerson, his face red to the forehead. “What did she mean by my writing a letter? I never saw her before.”

“I presume not,” replied Mrs. Barker, with considerable agitation in her manner. “The girl, as you say, is mad!”

And without further remark, Mrs. Barker left the room.

As Mary Lynn retired from the house, she met at the door a young man, the son of Mr. Barker, who, struck with her appearance, and the strange agitation of her manner, stood looking after her as she went hurrying away.

“What does this mean?” said he, half aloud, as he turned, and entered the house.

CHAPTER 8.

“Curse the girl! She will ruin everything!” muttered Emerson, as he passed along the street with rapid strides, soon after the unexpected encounter with Mary. “I wish she were dead!”

“A fine affair I’ve made of it by following your advice!” said he, on meeting the friend at whose suggestion he had written the letter of warning to Mrs. Barker.

“What’s the matter now?” was inquired. “Didn’t it work well?”

“No.”

“What kind of a letter did you write?”

“Here is a copy of it. See for yourself.”

The friend glanced over the letter, and then said,

“No wonder. It bears on its very face, the stamp of its authorship.”

“How so?”

“Were you beside yourself when you spoke of her receiving money from a former lover, who was about uniting himself with the daughter of a respectable citizen? Could you not see, that if the letter came under her eye — she would at once accuse you?”

“I must have been beside myself!” exclaimed Emerson, striking his hands together. “Of all insinuations against her, that is the last I should have made. But what do you think has been the result?”

“Well.”

“In calling to see Caroline this morning, I met Mary on the door step. She had come, it appears, according to agreement, to enter upon her duties as governess. I did not know her, of course, but passed in, she following. Some ten minutes afterwards, as I sat talking with Caroline, Mary suddenly burst into the room, followed by Mrs. Barker. She had my open letter in her hand. Holding it up before me — she demanded if I were the author!”

“What else could you have expected? But, go on.”

“I called her a mad girl, and vowed that, until then, I had never seen her.”

“Were you believed?”

“Heaven knows.”

“Did she repeat the charge?”

“No. She crumpled the letter in her hand, and then rushed from the house.”

“Retaining possession of the letter?”

“Yes!”

The friend shook his head, saying as he did so —

“You have everything to fear.”

“I know that I have.”

“Hadn’t you better see her and try to compromise the matter in some way?”

“No. That would be worse than useless. She is a girl with an iron spirit which nothing can bend from its purpose.”

“You must silence her in some way, or else give up your claim to the hand of Caroline Barker. That letter, if shown to her father, with such explanations as it is in Mary Lynn’s power to give, will completely destroy you in his estimation. He is a stern old fellow, and would see in this, a lack of principle that would be fatal to your expectations.”

“I know. But the first step has been so disastrous, that I am in no way inclined to take the second. Mary is the most impracticable girl I ever met. With Caroline Barker, I can do almost anything I please. But Mary Lynn is made of other stuff altogether. I wish I had never known her.”

“You are certainly unfortunate in the acquaintance,” said the friend.

“Most unfortunate. Confound those pictures! I’m afraid they’ll prove a dear bargain in the end.”

“The pictures you sold Harding?”

“Yes. I thought five hundred dollars for what cost twenty, and a little business subterfuge, a very fair transaction. But, from present appearances, it bids fair to turn out most disastrously.”

“It would hardly do, in the present aspect of your affairs, to miss an alliance which promises so much as this one.”

“No, my friend!” replied Emerson, and a cloud fell heavily over his face as he spoke. “Something more than a broken heart would be, I fear, the consequence.”

“A broken fortune?”

“There is danger of this, as you know. That copper mine bubble in which I was fool enough to risk so much, has, in bursting, swept from me such large sums of money, that I find myself badly crippled. No later than yesterday, the Merchants’ Bank turned down some of my paper; a thing never done before. I was unprepared for this, and it left me, I can assure you, with my hands full to meet payments for the day.”

“That wasn’t very pleasant.”

“You may well say that. Particularly as I had to go on the street and raise some three thousand dollars at one and a half percent, a month.”

“Indeed! Were you so hard pressed as that?”

“I was, and no mistake; and I shall be hard pressed until I become the son-in-law of Mr. Barker. Then my credit will stand fair enough.”

“I wish the wedding day were tomorrow,” remarked the friend, who was on Emerson’s paper to a very large amount.

“You can’t wish that more ardently than I do. But wishing is of no avail. I must wait, in fear and trembling, the end of this business. Three months is a long period where so much is at stake.”

Enough concerning the character and principles of Philip Emerson has been made apparent to the mind of the reader, to satisfy him that Mary Lynn was right in declining his offer of marriage. He was, in heart, a man so given over to selfishness, that it was impossible for him to form an alliance with a right-minded woman, without insuring her unhappiness. All that Mary had heard concerning his lack of integrity, and a great deal more, was true. And it was also true, that he had, in a most heartless spirit, violated the dying injunction of his mother in the matter of his helpless old nurse, who had been left to spend her last days in the almshouse.

Mr. Barker was a man of the strictest honesty and sense of honor. When Emerson made advances towards his daughter, he was far from being pleased; for, in one or two business transactions which had taken place between him and the young man, he saw a spirit that he did not like. Accordingly, he used every means in his power to discourage his attentions, and tried to influence the mind of Caroline. But the young lady was fascinated with the handsome exterior and winning address of Emerson, and so all parental interference with the current of her preferences proved of little avail. In the end, a formal application was made for her hand. To this Mr. Barker did not hesitate to express his disapprobation.

“You are far from being my choice as the husband of my daughter,” said the plain spoken father, “and I will not deceive you so much as to conceal this fact. I do not believe that you will make her happy.”

Emerson protested the sincerity of his affection, but Mr. Barker was not deceived in the opinion he had formed, that the young man’s love for his daughter had another basis than a regard for personal excellencies. A long time passed before Mr. Barker gave a final consent to the marriage. He delayed month after month in the hope that some circumstance, fully developing what he believed to be the real character of the young man, would transpire. But he waited in vain, and, at last, with a reluctance that he did not take much pains to conceal, yielded the long withheld approbation.

By this time, as has been intimated, the affairs of Emerson were considerably embarrassed, owing to his having been drawn aside, in his lust for gain, into certain stock speculation, by which he lost the greater part of all he had made. He was, therefore, the more eager to consummate the alliance with Mr. Barker’s family, as that would reinstate his credit, now considerably weakened.

All was going on as pleasantly as he could wish, when he was alarmed by the unexpected appearance in the family of Mary Lynn, and most unwisely sought to prevent her becoming a member thereof. In this, he completely overreached himself, and made his position in every way more dangerous than it would have been, had he not so wickedly sought to injure an innocent young girl, who had too much virtue and decision of character to unite herself in holy marriage with one whose principles she could not approve.

On the day after the occurrence of the briefly passing, yet exciting scene in the parlor of Mr. Barker, that gentleman called to see Emerson. He looked grave.

“You must excuse me, Philip,” said he, “but I would like to ask you a few questions about that strange affair of yesterday.”

“What affair?” inquired Emerson. As he spoke, the color rose to his face.

“I understand that a young lady, whom my wife engaged as governess, charged upon you the authorship of a letter, making against her disreputable insinuations.”

“True. She did.”

“Do you know her?”

“Before Heaven, Mr. Barker, I do not!” was unhesitatingly answered. “No one could have been more astonished than myself at the sudden and unexpected charge. Surely the girl was not in her right mind.” A denial so unequivocal as this, quieted, if it did not entirely dispel the suspicions which had arisen in the mind of Mr. Barker. Yet, for all this, the subject rested with a weight upon his feelings, and he was troubled about it, in spite of all efforts to dismiss it from his thoughts.

CHAPTER 9.

A week went by without Mrs. Barker having heard anything more of Mary Lynn, and then two ladies called and spoke of her. They were acquaintances of Mrs. Barker.

"Did not a young girl, named Mary Lynn, apply to you for the situation of governess to your children?" asked one of them.

"I had such an application," was replied.

"You did not take her?"

"No. I was warned not to do so."

"By whom?"

"The warning came anonymously; but it was of a character that made it, on my part, an act of prudence not to bring her into my house."

"If anyone has made evil accusations against her, they are false," said the lady who had first spoken.

"From a personal knowledge of Mary," added the other lady. "I can unhesitatingly affirm the same thing. A purer minded, better girl, I am sure cannot be found; and, as the governess and friend of your children — you would have in her a treasure. Strange, that any should seek to injure one in her friendless and needy condition."

"I can conceive of no motive for such an act," said Mrs. Barker.

"Whatever the motive may have been, it was conceived in a spirit that stamps its author as a debased wretch!"

"You speak in a positive manner," said Mrs. Barker.

"Why should we not?" answered one of the ladies. "We knew Mary well, in her better days, and take some blame to ourselves for letting misfortune remove her so entirely from our observation and circle of friendship."

"May she not have changed since her mother's misfortunes? Adversity is a severe trial."

"In her case, it has but consumed the dross — and made finer the gold. You know Mrs. May, the sister of Mary's father."

"By character."

"We have just seen her and had a long conversation with her on the subject, and she says that a more cruel and malicious slander was never uttered, than that by which some enemy in disguise has sought to injure her niece. Of Mary, she speaks with a tenderness of feeling that is really touching to hear. A better, truer-hearted, purer-minded girl — she affirms that she has never known."

"Who could have written that letter?" asked Mrs. Barker. "Does Mary suspect the author?"

"She does."

"Has she named the person?"

"She declines doing this."

"Why so?"

"She might be mistaken, and will not therefore utter her suspicions, lest an innocent person be injured."

"You believe," said Mrs. Barker, after reflecting for some moments, "that Mary Lynn is worthy of confidence in every way, and that I can introduce her into my family and among my children with perfect safety?"

"We do," was unhesitatingly replied.

One of the ladies added, "Were I in need of a governess, most gladly would I take her, and think myself highly favored in obtaining a person so worthy of all confidence, respect, and esteem."

"You speak warmly," said Mrs. Barker, smiling.

"We do," was answered, "because we are in earnest in the matter. Depend upon it, you will never have cause to regret the entrance of Mary Lynn into your family."

"I must take a little time for reflection," said Mrs. Barker. "This puts quite a new face on the matter. As for Miss Lynn, I must own that I was very much biased in her favor. A number of applicants for the situation have since presented themselves; but none pleased me. If all is right with Mary, no one could suit me so well."

"All is right with her; of that, you may rest fully assured," answered the ladies.

"I will take until tomorrow to think over the matter," returned Mrs. Barker, "and if I come to a favorable conclusion, will send for her."

When Mrs. Barker mentioned what she had heard to her husband, he reflected for a short time, and then said —

"Let us take her. There is a mystery in this affair that I would like to see cleared up. I can't get over the fact of her charging the authorship of that letter upon Emerson."

"Why should he write it?" asked Mrs. Barker.

"Just the question, of all others, that I would like to have answered. He avers before Heaven, that he does not know her. If he does know her, and has a personal interest in keeping her out of our family, he has lied, to say the least of it; and that is enough for me. The man who can call Heaven to witness that he speaks truth, while giving utterance to a lie — must

have a very depraved heart. But worse than this, the man who, to effect some personal end, can stab the reputation of an innocent, friendless girl — is a wretch of the basest kind. Yes, yes; by all means send for Miss Lynn. I am fully satisfied with the endorsement of the ladies who have interested themselves in her behalf. She may prove to our house, a protecting angel. And I truly believe she will.”

Without further delay, a servant was sent to Mary Lynn with a note, asking her to call immediately. Without hesitation, Mary obeyed the summons. She was very pale, and looked as if from a recent bed of sickness, which might almost be said to be true, for the shock occasioned by the unexpected reception she had met at Mrs. Barker’s, for a time completely prostrated her.

“Have you been ill?” asked Mrs. Barker, kindly, upon receiving Mary.

Tears came into the young girl’s eyes. She tried to make an audible reply, but her lips quivered so that she could give no utterance to words.

“I believe I acted hastily, Mary, in the matter of that letter. I am now convinced that it made false charges against you.”

“Oh, ma’am!” exclaimed Mary, “it was a base and cruel slander!”

“Of that I am now convinced,” said Mrs. Barker. “But do you not know from whence it originated?”

Mary’s eyes sunk to the floor, and she remained silent.

“You charged, by implication,” and Mrs. Barker looked steadily at the countenance of Mary, “a young man named Philip Emerson, with the authorship. Why was this?”

“I was half beside myself. I hardly knew what I was doing ma’am,” returned Mary.

“It was a serious matter to charge an act like that upon a young man, who solemnly avers that he does not know you.”

“It was,” answered Mary, now lifting her eyes to the face of Mrs. Barker, and speaking more calmly. “But, as I said, just now, I scarcely knew what I was doing. I was under a great and bewildering excitement. Try and forget that painful scene, as I wish myself to forget it.”

But Mrs. Barker was by no means satisfied with this, and tried to press the subject farther. Mary, however, was altogether disinclined to answer her questions, and the lady, seeing this, deemed it but right to forbear.

“I have sent for you,” she then said, “not only to express my entire conviction that you have been wronged, but to show my sincerity in the matter, by again offering you the situation of governess in my family. Are you still prepared to accept the place?”

“I did not expect this,” returned Mary, exhibiting some emotion.

“No one has applied whom I like so well,” said Mrs. Barker.

“I don’t know,” said Mary, with considerable hesitation in her manner, and speaking partly to herself — “that I ought to come.”

“Why not?” quickly inquired the lady.

It was some time before Mary spoke. She then said,

“Upon reflection, I am satisfied that I ought not to refuse your offer, which will enable me to support my mother and keep my sister Agnes at school. In accepting it, I will take a liberty which you may think altogether out of place. If so, deny my request without hesitation. I would like one hundred dollars advanced on my salary.”

“You need the money very much?”

“For a special purpose I do. Oh, ma’am, you do not know what a weight the possession of that sum would enable me to remove from my mind! Nothing but the intolerable pain occasioned by the pressure, and the panting desire I have for its removal, could tempt me to prefer so untimely a request. In fact, with the weight I speak of resting upon me, I do not feel competent to the performance of the duties I have just agreed to enter upon.”

There was that in the manner of the young girl, which Mrs. Barker could not resist, and she promised, unhesitatingly to furnish the sum she required.

On the next day, Mary Lynn became an inhabitant of Mr. Barker’s family. The children placed under her care, seemed to love her from the first moment, and to come under her gentle influence as by the power of an irresistible attraction. There was about her a sphere of goodness which all felt. No one was more drawn towards her than Mr. Barker, who, from recently occurring circumstances, was led to observe her closely, and thus to perceive the indications of her real character.

“Yes, it was a base attempt to injure an innocent girl,” said he to Mrs. Barker, a week after Mary had entered the family; “and I sincerely hope that the wrong meditated may fall upon the head of the injurer. What could have been the motive for such an act?”

“It is not improbable,” replied Mrs. Barker, “that someone who desired the situation, and who ascertained that Mary had procured it, took this method of removing her out of her way. This has occurred to me as the most probable explanation of the circumstance.”

“I never thought of that,” remarked Mr. Barker, and his tone of voice expressed the relief of mind occasioned by the suggestion. “Yes — that may be the true explanation. Still, I cannot cease to think of the fact that she accused Emerson. Why should she have done this?”

“She says that she was so bewildered that she did not know what she was doing. And I can readily believe that such might be the case. So unexpected and serious a charge, would naturally shock and bewilder the mind.”

“Very true. Well, I hope it is all so — that Emerson is in no way concerned in the business.”

“I do not think he is. Indeed, the more I reflect on the subject, the more fully convinced am I, that he is not,” said Mrs. Barker. “I am afraid that your prejudices against the young man are too strong.”

“Perhaps they are. Still, I cannot help them. But your suggestion as to the authorship of that letter, greatly relieves my mind. It is certainly the most reasonable one.”

CHAPTER 10.

Some ten days had passed since the exciting scene with Mary Lynn in the house of Mr. Barker, and Philip Emerson was beginning to breathe a little more freely, when he was startled from his dream of safety by the following note!

"Sir — Enclosed you have one hundred dollars, the sum transmitted by you to my mother. I am enabled to return it through means of an advance on my salary as governess in the family of Mr. Barker. I trust that you will not attempt to repeat an act which, for one in your position, has no justification. Mary Lynn."

This was the young man's first intimation that Mary had returned to Mr. Barker's family. Nothing could have more astonished and alarmed him. That evening he had intended to pass with Caroline; but he was too much disturbed to venture into her presence. The hours were spent alone. How many disturbing thoughts intruded themselves! How his heart trembled and sunk, as he saw, in clear light, the difficulties that were before him. In attempting to get Mary Lynn out of his way, by improper means, he had made the danger of her presence in the family a hundred fold greater. That she believed him to be the author of the letter to Mrs. Barker, he did not doubt; and, with his knowledge of her character, he felt that there was everything to fear.

Various suggestions were made to the mind of Emerson, as he pondered over the unpleasant relation in which he found himself placed to Mary. One of them was to ask an interview, and attempt to convince her that he was not the author of the letter which she had, by implication, accused him of writing. Another was, to obtain an interview, and procure her silence by threats of consequences. But, after due reflection on each of these points, he dismissed them from his mind. He had positively asserted that he had no knowledge of Mary whatever, and he saw that to attempt an interview, or to communicate with her in any way, might come under the knowledge of Mr. Barker, or some member of his family, who would immediately ask explanations of Mary; and then enough would transpire to render his position extremely questionable in their eyes.

A still more disturbing thought came into the young man's mind as he dwelt on the subject. Would Mrs. Barker have taken Mary into her family, after the warning she had received, and after acting upon that warning — unless entirely satisfied of the falsity of the allegations made against her?

It was plain that she would not. How, then, had Mary been able to satisfy her mind, except by proving the authorship of the letter, and showing a sufficient reason why it should have been written. This view of the case came fraught with no little alarm, and greatly increased anxiety.

The longer the mind of Emerson dwelt upon it, the more likely did it seem to be true. A state of feverish anxiety was the consequence. On the day after receiving Mary's note, he found himself, as to money matters, in a very narrow place. A succession of heavy payments had not only exhausted his own means, but the means of his immediate business friends also, and, as the bank from which he had been in the habit of receiving accommodations had a second and a third time thrown out his offerings — he found himself in an extremity that was really alarming. After various sacrifices and extra exertions, however, he succeeded in getting his paper out of bank, and then called upon the friend, heretofore mentioned, whose name was Concord, for the purpose of consultation and advice as to his best course of action.

"You must have money," said Concord. "Money at all risks. If you break down before your marriage with Miss Barker, it is all over with you; but only keep going until you are Barker's son-in-law, and you are safe. The marriage will strengthen your credit immediately; and, if the worst looks like coming to the worst, you can, in an extremity, put your hand into the old gentleman's pocket a little earlier than a feeling of delicacy would prompt to such an act."

"But how am I to get money? Just answer me that question," said Emerson, in a restless, eager manner.

"There is a way, that might be used as a temporary expedient," remarked Concord, with some hesitation in his voice.

"Name it," was Emerson's prompt response.

"It is hardly legitimate. Still it is better than doing worse."

"Speak out plainly. I must have money; though I am not quite prepared to knock a man down on the highway, or to rob the mail."

"The means to which I refer, might be used as an expedient," said Concord, speaking low, and in an insinuating voice. "It would hardly do to pursue it to a very great extent, as it is a little risky."

"Come to the point, if you please. Don't be afraid," was replied to this firmly. "I am ready to hear almost any proposition."

"You know young Baldwin?"

"Book-keeper in the Trader's Bank?"

"The same."

"Yes. I know him."

"He rides a fast horse."

"I am aware of it."

"And owns him into the bargain."

“Well?”

“Always has a pocket full of money, and always is ready to spend it freely.”

“I know.”

“He spends more than his salary.”

“So I would think.”

“Where do you suppose it comes from?” asked Concord.

“I don’t know. From the bank, in all probability.”

“No doubt of it. Indeed, I know this to be the fact.”

“Ah?”

“Yes. And his mode of removing the deposits is peculiar to himself, and quite ingenious. But he must have someone on the outside to act in concert with him.”

Emerson made no remark to this, but bent closer to his friend, who lowered his voice and continued —

“The mode of operation is this: As he keeps the deposit ledger, the checks paid out by the teller are passed over to him to post and cancel. It is, as you will see, the easiest thing in the world for him to put a check into his pocket before cancelling it, and hand it to some friend to draw the money upon it a second time. The person who draws the money is, of course, free from all suspicion, and Baldwin protects himself by a system of double charges and credits, which may not be found out for years. The settling up of the customers’ bank books being a part of his work, no one sees the discrepancy between some of the entries therein and his ledger accounts. The balances being the same, no suspicion is awakened. Among some hundred bank accounts, this system may be pursued to a considerable extent and with comparative safety.”

To all this Emerson listened with great eagerness, and then opposed various objections as to the alleged safety of the operation. These were all explained away.

“How did you become so intimately acquainted with this matter?” he then asked.

“I have known Baldwin for many years. As you are aware, I am a little mirthful myself; like a fast horse, and see a good deal of pleasure. This has thrown the young man and myself a good deal into each other’s company, and, as he was a fine, generous fellow, I liked the association. On a certain occasion, I found myself pretty hard pressed for money, and being with him about the time, I said, half jestingly —

‘I wish I knew how to get my hands on some of the cash locked up in the vaults of your bank!’

‘Do you?’ replied he, smiling.

‘Indeed I do,’ was my response.

‘Are you pressed for money, then?’ he asked, momentarily.

‘I am,’ I did not hesitate to answer, for I was somewhat encouraged by the way he spoke.

‘How much do you need?’ he then inquired.

‘I need a thousand dollars tomorrow,’ was my reply.

Without hesitation, he drew forth his pocket-book, and taking therefrom three checks each for the sum of five hundred dollars, handed them to me, saying as he did so —

‘Draw these when the bank opens in the morning. A thousand you may use. The balance you can give me after bank hours, when I will see you.’

I looked at the checks, and found that they were drawn by three of our best merchants on the Trader’s Bank. A suspicion that all was not right flashed through my mind, and he saw it. My first impression was that they were forgeries.

‘What is the meaning of this?’ I asked. ‘Are these checks good?’

‘As good as gold,’ he promptly answered.

‘But how did they come in your possession?’

‘Draw the money,’ said he, smiling, ‘and use as much as you want of it. When I call to see you tomorrow, I will explain all to your satisfaction. You needn’t be afraid. They are genuine checks, and will be paid on presentation.’

Thus assured over and over again, I received the checks, and on the day following they were cashed.

‘There’s some roguery about this, Baldwin,’ said I, when he called after bank hours, ‘and you must explain it.’ He made the explanation of which you are already in possession. Now, if you desire to be put en rapport with this young gentleman, just say the word, and it shall be done. You’ll find him with a smooth operation.”

“I’m afraid,” said Emerson, after reflecting on the subject. “The whole thing involves a crime, and, if it came to light, might send me to prison.”

“So would some of your custom house operations!” remarked Concord.

Emerson shrugged his shoulders.

“In them, perjury is involved. Here the transaction is far more simple.”

“I don’t mind cheating the Government, if I can,” said Emerson.

“That is fair game. But using another man’s check is an individual affair, and comes too near home.”

"The operation doesn't touch anyone's private account," said Concord. "The bank bears all the loss; and I'm sure that I would have no more compunctions about cheating a bank, than I would about cheating Uncle Sam. As for the Trader's Bank, that is rich enough, and would never feel the loss of a few thousand."

"I'm afraid it isn't safe," remarked Emerson.

"Nothing could be safer," replied the tempter. "All you have to do is to present a good check and draw the money. Baldwin will manage all the rest. Even if he should be suspected and found out, you will not be involved in the matter. It will be to his interest to conceal your agency."

"Why so?"

"Because the bulk of the money drawn out, will be in your possession. If you are implicated, you will have to refund. If not, he will have something to fall back upon, after losing his situation in the bank. Don't you see?"

"Yes. He will have an interest in concealing the name of the party concerned with him in the transaction. But why don't you continue to act with him?"

"Because, having been helped through a tight place, I can get on without further resort to a means of raising money that is only to be used in desperate cases. Yours is a desperate case, and, therefore, I suggest the thing to you. My word for it, you will go safely over your difficulties by this means."

"I'll turn it over in my mind," said Emerson. "I don't like the look of it at all. Still, anything is better than breaking down just now."

"Of course it is. See Baldwin, and ask him to lend you a few thousand dollars. The amount will be sure to come. Better give him notice a day or two before you need the money. You needn't know, unless you choose to ask him, how the checks you receive come into his hands."

"True. That didn't occur to me." The countenance of Emerson brightened. "It's none of my business how he gets the money. I only borrow it from him. If he steals it, that is his own look-out."

"Certainly it is."

"Thank you for suggesting this means of raising money," said Emerson. "If I can do no better — and I see no way now — I must adopt it."

The friends parted, and Emerson pondered the subject of their conversation over and over in his mind for a long time, and he finally decided to have an interview with young Baldwin. His thoughts then turned towards Caroline Barker, and the dangers that beset his way in that quarter.

"I must see her tonight," was the conclusion of his mind. "Suspense like this cannot be borne."

So he called that evening at the house of Mr. Barker. On first meeting with Caroline, there was a reserve in her manner that oppressed the feelings of Emerson. This gradually wore off, however, and she seemed to him as of old. But he saw no other member of the family. On going away, he did not feel much more at ease than before.

On the next day he was thrown, for a short time, in company with two or three gentlemen, among whom was Mr. Barker. The conversation turned upon certain unfair transactions which had just come to light.

"For my part," said Mr. Barker, remarking on the subject, and speaking with considerable warmth, "I would rather suffer the rack — than be guilty of such roguery. I call things by their right names. Any man who will cheat the Government — will rob if he gets the opportunity. He would knock a man down on the highway for his pocket-book, if he had the nerve to do so."

"Just my way of thinking!" was the prompt remark of Emerson.

Mr. Barker glanced at the young man approvingly, and the latter, encouraged thereat, said —

"How a man can obtain his own consent to engage in fraudulent dealing, is more than I can comprehend. The gain, surely, cannot compensate for lack of self-respect, and the danger of exposure and prosecution."

"Fair dealing is the only wise dealing," added Mr. Barker. "It brings all out right in the end; while few who begin by over-reaching their neighbors, ever attain ultimate success in business. The devil is a false-hearted wretch, and usually betrays those who trust in him."

In less than an hour after this, Emerson despatched a note to Baldwin, asking him to call at his store after the bank closed. The young man came as desired.

"I had some conversation with Mr. Concord today," Emerson thus introduced the subject he wished to talk about, "and I learned from him, that you sometimes had money to lend." Baldwin, from the mention of Concord's name, understood him fully. His reply was — "How much do you want?"

"A few thousand dollars."

"Now?" inquired the young man.

"Not all of it at once. I need some ten or fifteen thousand dollars during the coming three months."

Baldwin shook his head, saying, as he did so,

"That is entirely beyond my ability. I could raise you a thousand dollars, in a week or ten days, perhaps, if that would be of any use."

"Not much," replied Emerson, in a tone of disappointment.

Both parties now became a good deal embarrassed. The manner of Emerson changed, and Baldwin, not comprehending exactly the nature of the change, felt somewhat alarmed.

"I will see you again tomorrow," said he, and he retired in some trepidation, going immediately to the store of Concord.

"Did you tell Mr. Emerson that I had money to lend?" he asked.

"I did," was replied.

"What kind of a man is he?" inquired Baldwin.

"One after your own heart," was promptly answered.

The countenance of Baldwin grew brighter.

"Are you certain?"

"Oh yes. He cheats the Custom-House every month," said Concord.

A slight flush of shame mantled the young man's cheek at this not very flattering compliment to himself. But he recovered quickly, remarking at the same time,

"Is all right then?"

"Entirely so. If you can get him any money, please accommodate him. He's a clever fellow, but extremely hard run just now. He was in the copper speculation."

"Was he? No wonder he is in a tight place now."

"None in the least."

"He needs some ten or fifteen thousand dollars," said Baldwin.

"You can get it for him."

"I suppose I can. But that will be operating rather heavily."

"True. But it will be something handsome to fall back upon one of these days."

"Can I trust him?" asked Baldwin.

"Implicitly. He is the very soul of honor."

This endorsement of Emerson's character was sufficient for Baldwin. On the next day he brought him checks for the sum of sixteen hundred dollars. They were drawn by various merchants on the Traders' Bank; and one of them was a check of Mr. Barker's. The sight of this last check did not produce very pleasant sensations in the mind of Emerson.

"Don't send all these checks in at once," said Baldwin.

"Oh, no, I understand," replied Emerson.

"Twelve hundred dollars of the amount is at your service."

"Thank you! That sum will enable me to go through tomorrow quite comfortably. How will you be on next Monday? That will be a heavy day with me."

"I reckon I can help you some. How much will you need?"

"At least two thousand dollars."

"So much?"

"Yes; unless I find collections far better than they have been."

"I'll see what I can do, at any rate," replied Baldwin. "But don't depend on me for so large a sum."

"I guess you can raise it," said Emerson, in a coaxing tone, and with a smile meant to flatter the young man.

"We'll see," was returned, in a voice that assured Emerson that the money he wanted would be forthcoming.

CHAPTER 11.

The position in which Mary Lynn found herself, was an exceedingly trying one; trying to her personally, as well as to her principles of action. The letter of accusation against her which Mrs. Barker had received, remained in her possession. As to its authorship, she was in some doubt. That Emerson had something to do with it — had, in fact, written it in a disguised hand, or procured it to be written — she felt almost certain. But she did not know this certainly, and, therefore, did not feel that it would be right to predicate action thereon.

A very brief fellowship with Mr. Barker's family, served to attach her strongly to every member thereof; particularly was this so in the case of Caroline, whose goodness of heart and correctness of principle manifested themselves to her more and more daily. The feeling between Mary and the family was reciprocal. Like attract like, by the law of affinities. So it was in the present case.

William, the oldest son of Mr. Barker, who had been so struck with the appearance of Mary, as she left the house on an occasion previously referred to, was not the least favorably affected by the sphere of virtue that surrounded the lovely girl. Every time he met her, he felt drawn towards her more and more; and saw in her new phases of beauty. Frequently he spoke of her to his sister, and, in such terms of praise, that Caroline at length began to jest pleasantly with him about losing his heart to the fair governess. This threw the young man's thoughts back upon themselves, and he felt rather serious on finding that he was more interested in the young girl than was agreeable, considering the different relations each held to society. So, with a deliberate purpose, he sought to turn himself from her. This, however, did not prove so easy of accomplishment. The more he tried to turn himself away — the more instinctively did his thoughts and feelings turn towards her. And, even while he was resolving not to think or care for her — he thought and cared for her the more.

We said that the position in which Mary Lynn found herself, was a trying one. It was so in regard to Emerson's relation to the family. She had rejected his offer of marriage, because she was satisfied of his lack of right feeling and honest and honorable principles. Such a thing as a real union with a man like him, she believed to be impossible; and she could not conceive how Caroline Barker, in a marriage with him, was to escape unhappiness. There was the less hope of this, if, as Mary, with too good reason feared, Emerson had sought, by the most unjustifiable means, to keep her out of the family. The fact of his having denied to her face any knowledge of her, was bad enough; but as this was not to be reconciled in her mind with any other fact than his authorship of the letter, she was forced to the unwilling conclusion, that he was far more depraved in heart, than she had, heretofore, believed him. The worst feature to her mind, in that letter, was its allusion to the money sent to her by himself; or, rather sent to her mother, and falsely made to appear as if sent to herself.

Day and night Mary thought of all this, and shuddered inwardly, as the time approached when Caroline was to pledge her bridal vows. The closer her fellowship became with Caroline, and the better she knew her — the more was she troubled as her thoughts went on to the future. Hers was a pure and true heart; and for it to be happy in a union with such a man as was Philip Emerson, in her estimation, she felt, to be impossible. But could she step forward to throw a barrier in the way of that union? Was it her duty? Once she had stood in the way of Emerson's attainment of his wishes — should she do so again? If she had been absolutely certain that he was the author of the letter sent to Mrs. Barker, there would have been little hesitation as to what she should do. But many doubts on this subject harassed and confused her mind, and made her really unhappy. That she was ill at ease, the family saw; and not infrequently did Caroline, in particular, question her as to the cause.

In her mother, Mary had no counselor. The mind of the latter was completely darkened by false views of life, and by the mists of selfish feelings. To her Aunt Edith, she opened her heart fully; but, from the point of view occupied by Mrs. May, she was not able to see clearly what it was best for her niece to do. To step in and seek to prevent a marriage to which both parties were solemnly pledged, was too serious an affair to be determined hastily.

"If I only knew that Philip Emerson wrote, or even caused to be written, that letter," said Mary, while in conversation with her aunt a few weeks before the wedding of Caroline was to take place, "I would know how to act. My simple duty would then be, to inform Mrs. Barker, and let her make what further investigations she pleased. But I cannot be certain of this. I have no proof."

"You accused him of having written the letter; and did so before Mrs. Barker?" remarked Mrs. May.

"Yes."

"That ought to be sufficient to raise a doubt in the minds of the family, and to cause them to look and inquire farther."

"But you know, aunt," replied Mary, "I told Mrs. Barker that when I said this, I was half beside myself, and hardly knew what I was doing."

"That was calculated to mislead her."

"I spoke but the truth. I was utterly bewildered. But she took my meaning in a fuller sense than I intended. Oh, Aunt Edith! I wish I knew what it was right for me to do. Caroline is a good girl, and will never be happy as the wife of Emerson. Knowing this, and with the power in my hands of preventing, in all probability, the marriage — what ought I to do? I wish you would advise me."

But Mrs. May was not prepared to advise her niece to any course of action.

"Wait longer," said she. "Something may occur to make your duty plain."

"It will soon be too late, aunt. A few weeks more, and all interference will be vain. Ah! to see her unhappy, and to know that I might have prevented it by a timely warning, will almost break my heart. What a poor return will this be for all the kindness I have received, and am daily receiving, from every member of Mr. Barker's family."

"All do not see and feel alike, Mary," said her aunt to this. "Although Caroline may possess excellent qualities of heart, she has not your determination. She does not perceive, with the intuitive quickness that marked your fellowship with Emerson, his true character; and she may not perceive it after marriage. If he is really attached to her — the beauty of goodness as it shines forth in her daily life, may win him from selfish purposes. This marriage may be permitted, providentially, as a means of withdrawing him from evil. It may be the only way of saving him from the dominion of cruel and selfish passions; or of elevating her, through disappointment and suffering, into a higher state than she would have otherwise obtained. The ways of God are not as man's ways. We are short-sighted; but He is all-seeing. Our lives here are but the preparatory states for a better life, and whatever will tend to develop and strengthen true spiritual life within us, is permitted to take place by Providence."

Mary saw enough in this argument to prevent her from interfering to hinder the marriage of Emerson and Miss Barker, but not enough to satisfy her that she was right in so doing. Hourly the subject was in her mind, and deeply was her heart troubled. So much was she affected thereby, that her appearance caused much concern in the family of Mr. Barker, and frequent earnest inquiries as to the cause of her evident disquietude of mind. To these inquiries, evasive answers were always given, which were often made the subject of conversation between Mr. and Mrs. Barker; the former frequently coming back to the suggestion that Mary knew more of Emerson than she was willing to admit. This idea, however, Mrs. Barker always opposed.

Meanwhile, Mary's fellowship with her mother did not assume a more pleasant character. The money she had obtained in advance from Mrs. Barker, she had sent to Mr. Emerson, warning him, in a brief note, that he well understood, not to repeat the act. Of this she had felt it her duty to advise her mother, that she might understand, in the beginning, that no aid would come from her for six months, and that she must, therefore, guard the money in her hands, which was now merely an advance on Mary's salary. At this information, Mrs. Lynn was greatly outraged, and poor Mary had to bear an outburst of passionate upbraidings, that, while borne meekly, grieved her to the heart.

Of the fact of Emerson's intimacy in the family, and of his approaching marriage with Caroline, Mary wisely said nothing to her mother. That news, come when it would, was destined, she knew, to subject her to remarks of a painful character.

One evening, about two weeks before the appointed wedding-day of Caroline Barker, Mary was spending an hour at home. William, her brother, remarked to her, in the hearing of their mother —

"Someone said, in our store today, that Miss Barker was to be married to Mr. Emerson week after next. Is it so?"

"What's that?" inquired Mrs. Lynn, before Mary had time to answer.

"I heard that Miss Caroline Barker was to be married to Mr. Emerson in a week or two," repeated William.

"Nonsense!" said Mrs. Lynn, quickly. "There isn't a word of truth in it."

She hadn't given up the idea that Emerson would yet lead her daughter to the altar.

"How is it, Mary? You must know," said William, referring to his sister.

"It is true," was her simple response; and as she spoke, she turned her face partly away.

"What!" exclaimed Mrs. Lynn.

"It is true," repeated Mary.

"I do not believe it!" said Mrs. Lynn, exhibiting at once a great deal of feeling.

To this, Mary felt no inclination to reply. In the next moment, her mother, assuming the fact just denied, took occasion to upbraid her for having madly, as she said, refused to save herself and family from beggary, by accepting the offer of an alliance in every way so desirable.

"Are you any better than Caroline Barker?" was the harsh interrogation of this unfeeling, selfish woman.

"No, mother," replied Mary, in a mild voice.

"She doesn't think herself too good to marry Mr. Emerson."

"But I do," said Mary, firmly. "A great deal too good. And if Caroline doesn't repent of her act before a year, I am greatly mistaken. She doesn't know him as I do."

"You'd better enlighten her a little," sneeringly retorted Mrs. Lynn.

Mary did not venture a reply to this, nor to anything her mother said further on the subject; and, as quickly as she could, sought to change the theme of conversation. Her visits were, from this time, made so unpleasant, by her mother's constant reference to the approaching marriage of Miss Barker, that she came home less frequently, and stayed only for a short time.

CHAPTER 12.

During all this period, Emerson, although he called to see Caroline three or four times every week, did not obtain a glimpse of Mary, nor did anyone mention her name in his hearing. In fact the only evidence he had of her presence in the family, was the letter received from her, enclosing a hundred dollars. All dread of interference on her part was nearly removed from his mind, when, one evening, about a week before the wedding-day, as he sat in the parlor alone, awaiting the appearance of Caroline, he was startled by her entrance. She came in with a slow, noiseless step, her face thinner and paler than he had ever seen it, and her eyes fixed intently upon him.

"Philip," said she, in a firm voice, yet speaking only a little above a whisper. "I wish to ask you one question."

"For Heaven's sake, Mary!" exclaimed the young man, evincing great alarm, and lifting both hands deprecatingly as he spoke — "Go away! Go quickly! or you will ruin me."

"I wish to ask you one question," repeated the immovable girl, approaching still nearer. "Did you write that letter to Mrs. Barker?"

"What letter? No!" he replied.

"The letter warning her not to receive me into her family; and alluding to the money you sent my mother, as if sent to me?"

"Mad girl! Do you wish to destroy me?" exclaimed Emerson, in much distress and perplexity. "What right have you to interrogate me in this way? Go! Go!" And he waved his hand imperatively.

"I shall not go until I am satisfied on the subject of my inquiry," replied Mary, in a voice so calm and resolute, that Emerson saw no hope but in trying to convince her that he was innocent.

"I have told you that I did not write the letter," said he. "What more can I do?"

"Why did you send my mother a hundred dollars at the very moment of my application for the situation of governess here?"

"That application first made known to me the extremity of your family. My letter fully explained my motive."

"How is it, that, immediately after this sum is sent, I am charged, in a letter to Mrs. Barker, with receiving money from a young man who was about marrying in a wealthy and respectable family? I want that explained, Philip Emerson! The two facts hang too nearly together. I cannot but regard you as the author of that base letter to Mrs. Barker, reason the subject as I will."

"I tell you that I did not write it, Mary," said the young man, with a show of indignation. "Is not that enough? Now leave me!"

A noise of footsteps was heard along the passage at this moment.

"Go! Go!" exclaimed the distressed Emerson, in a husky whisper.

For a moment or two Mary paused, and then glided from the room. Caroline Barker entered through another door as she vanished from the sight of the agitated young man.

"Who was that?" asked Caroline, in an indifferent tone.

"One of your servants," replied Emerson, turning his face partly away as he spoke. "Oh! I imagined, as I caught a glimpse of her dress, that it was Mary Lynn."

"Mary Lynn? Who is she?"

"Don't you know? Our governess."

"Not the mad girl who charged me with writing some letter about her?"

"Yes, the same."

"Is it possible? I thought, of course, that she was in an insane asylum?"

"Very far from it. I wish all the world were as sane and as good as she is. Some enemy tried to prejudice mother against her in an anonymous letter, and, in the distress occasioned thereby, she wildly charged you with having written it."

"Wildly enough! I had never seen nor heard of the girl. She acknowledged, I believe, that she didn't know what she was doing at the time?"

"Oh, yes, but it was a false and cruel thing thus to seek to injure one so innocent and so friendless. None but a wicked and depraved wretch could have been guilty of such an act."

"I can well believe that." And Emerson again averted his face as he spoke.

"But what could have been the motive?" said Caroline. "That has always puzzled me."

"What is her own view of the matter?" asked the young man, concealing the interest he felt in the answer.

"I do not know. She never alluded to the subject."

"Have you never spoken to her about it?"

"Yes, but she evades all direct answers."

"Who is she?" asked Emerson.

"You remember the late Justin Lynn?"

“Very well. She is not his daughter?”

“Yes.”

“I was not aware of that. Why, I thought Mr. Lynn left a very handsome property at his death?”

“So he did. But it was all lost in the failure of the United States Bank.”

“How unfortunate! And now his poor daughter is compelled to support herself by acting as governess in your family. Really, hers is a sad case!”

“Indeed it is. And we sympathize with her very much.”

“She cannot be very happy,” said Emerson.

“She is far more cheerful than I could ever be under such circumstances. Still, something evidently preys upon her mind. Mother thinks that it is the letter.”

“Why should that prey upon her mind? No one in the family regards it in any other light, than as a slander.”

“I know. Still, there is a mystery about it that is unexplained. I must have a more earnest conversation with her on the subject, and try if I cannot see a little deeper into her thoughts.”

This declaration, coupled with the fact, that Mary had, only a few moments before, demanded of him explanations on the same subject, produced a state of greater anxiety than that from which he was already suffering. He replied, with affected commiseration for Mary,

“If the subject is so unpleasant to the poor girl, I don’t think I would press it upon her.”

Caroline made no answer to this, when Emerson changed the theme of conversation. He did not remain long on this occasion, for he was momentarily in fear of seeing Mary re-enter the parlor to interrogate him still further about that unwisely sent letter.

The new system of money-raising adopted by Emerson worked like a charm. He was no longer forced upon the street to borrow at one and two percent a month in order to meet his payments. All he found necessary, was to give Baldwin two or three days’ notice, and, in due time, checks for a few hundred dollars above the amount desired, were sure to come. The excess was paid to the dashing, fast-living young man, and the remainder passed to his loan account, to be returned at some period as yet but dimly seen in the future. It was by this loan-feature of the case, that Emerson quieted his conscience; and by which he expected to clear himself from all blame, if Baldwin’s dishonest transactions should ever see the light; a circumstance which he flattered himself was not soon likely to occur, as the swindling transaction was a very ingenious one, and managed with consummate skill.

Already had Emerson received from the young bank officer, over twenty thousand dollars, and the drain was still going on. Baldwin was living faster and freer — so much so that the eyes of many were looking upon him with suspicion, and Emerson occasionally heard, from one and another, remarks that produced in his own mind, no very pleasant reflections. Two or three days before the time at which the marriage was to take place, Mr. Barker said to him,

“Do you know this young Baldwin, who is a book-keeper in the Traders’ Bank?”

“I have met him occasionally,” replied Emerson, the color deepening in his face at this unexpected question, asked, as he conceived, in a meaning tone, and with a purpose.

Mr. Barker saw the change in the young man’s countenance and wondered, momentarily, as to its meaning.

“He lives fast,” said he, “for a young man with a salary of only twelve hundred dollars.”

“He may have something beyond his salary,” suggested Emerson.

“I doubt that,” was replied. “I knew his father very well. He was a poor man, and had nothing to give his son.”

“Is he a married man?” asked Emerson, affecting ignorance.

“Yes, and his wife looks like a jeweler’s walking advertisement. There’s something wrong, you may depend on it. Baldwin is living at the rate of at least two or three thousand dollars a year. I wonder that the directors of the bank retain him in the institution.”

“If the business of his desk is faithfully done, they can have no fault to find with him.” said Emerson.

“No,” was replied; “not unless he puts his hand in the money-drawer.”

“Surely, Mr. Barker!” exclaimed Emerson, with well affected surprise, “you don’t suspect anything of that kind?”

“A man must get money — before he can spend it,” said Mr. Barker. “Now where does this young man get two or three thousand dollars a year to squander at the rate he is squandering money?”

“He may go into debt,” suggested Emerson.

Mr. Barker shook his head with an incredulous air.

Emerson remained silent, perplexed in thought, and doubtful whether to say anything further, or change the subject of discourse. Many unpleasant suggestions flitted through his mind. Could it be possible that Mr. Barker had a suspicion of the real truth, and that a motive governed him in asking these questions?

“The fact is,” said Mr. Barker, as if coming to a sudden resolution, “I will give one of the directors, who is a personal and intimate friend, the benefit of my suspicions. He can act afterwards as he sees best. Something is undoubtedly wrong, and the quicker it is set right, the better.”

“There’s trouble ahead!” was the anxiously uttered ejaculation of Emerson, as soon as he was alone. “What can be in the man’s mind? Baldwin does dash too much. I’ve told him so a good many times. But he’s insane on this subject; and doesn’t seem to imagine that he attracts invidious attention.”

While these thoughts were passing through his mind, he received the following note from Baldwin:

“My Dear Sir: Enclosed are four checks for the sum of two thousand dollars. Turn them into money during the day if you please. I will call after the bank closes for a thousand. The balance you can, no doubt, use to good advantage. Baldwin.”

“This has gone far enough!” thus spoke Emerson to himself as he replaced the checks in the envelope from which he had removed them, and put the whole, including Baldwin’s note, under seal. “Suspicion will soon be aroused against him, and then the hunting down will prove quick work. How far am I safe? That is the all important question! Are any of his letters to me yet undestroyed?”

Emerson commenced a hurried search in his desk, and among files of letters. Two notes from Baldwin were discovered and promptly destroyed.

“No evidence among my papers can be found,” said he, after finishing this work. “The credits in my ledger are for money loaned. It is no business of mine where he got the money from.”

Still Emerson was far from feeling at ease in his mind — very far. His fellowship with Baldwin had shown him some things in his character that a good deal marred his confidence. He was by no means certain that the young man would not, in case his embezzlements were discovered, refer to him as his accomplice. Anxiously did he await his promised appearance after the closing of the bank.

“Did you draw those checks?” was the smiling and rather eager inquiry of Baldwin, on calling in to see Emerson about four o’clock.

“No,” was the gravely uttered answer.

“Why not? I’m sorry,” returned Baldwin, looking disappointed. “I wanted a thousand dollars particularly this afternoon. Indeed, I must have that sum.”

“For what purpose?” asked Emerson.

“To buy a horse.”

“A horse!”

“Yes. The most splendid trotter you ever saw. I rode out behind him, yesterday, and he went past everything on the road. His price is a thousand dollars; but I have made up my mind to own him. In fact, have bought him, and am to pay down the cash by five o’clock, today.”

“You mustn’t do it,” said Emerson, in a firm voice, and with an expression of face that rather sobered the feelings of young Baldwin.

“Why not?” asked the latter.

“Only that act of folly is needed to complete your ruin,” said Emerson.

“What do you mean?” Baldwin looked frightened.

“This dashing folly, against which I have so often warned you, has awakened suspicion.”

“How do you know?”

“I have heard it from various quarters. Today Mr. Barker referred to it, and did not hesitate to give it as his opinion, that the money you spent so freely, came out of the bank.”

“He did?”

“It is too true — but how can you wonder that such is the case? I do not. Moreover — and this is the worst of it — he said he would call the attention of one of your directors to the fact this very day, and suggest an inspection of your accounts.”

“Let them inspect!” exclaimed Baldwin, with assumed indifference. Yet, even while he spoke, his cheeks blanched. “Confound the meddlesome old rascal!” he added, with much bitterness. “I wonder what business he has to trouble himself with my affairs. Let him mind his own.”

“Suppose they examine your books,” said Emerson. “What will be the result?”

“That will depend entirely upon how they examine them. If cursorily, they’ll find nothing unless by accident. And even a careful examination will reveal nothing, unless they happen to discover the trick.”

“If you had only been prudent in your way of living,” said Emerson, “then suspicion might have been entirely avoided. In a few years you could have resigned your clerkship, and lived at ease for the remainder of your life. Suppose the thing is found out now! What will be the consequence?”

“Dear knows! But I won’t think of that. I don’t believe it will be found out.”

“My fears lead me to a different conclusion. I anticipate the worst; and with good reason.”

“You need be under no apprehension. You are safe,” said Baldwin.

“I’m not so certain of that!” sighed Emerson.

“You certainly are. No one will suspect you in the matter.”

“I don’t know.”

“I do, then. The secret is yours and mine; and there are too many weighty reasons why I should not betray you. The first and strongest is, that you are stake-holder. In case of difficulty, I can fall back upon the funds in your hands; and money is all potent, you know.”

Even while Baldwin talked in this way, his cheek was pale and his lips quivered. The approach of danger, too, had opened his eyes; and he now saw, with a clearness that startled him, the madness of the course he had been pursuing. That he had escaped suspicion so long, was a cause of wonder.

“You had better take these checks and cancel them,” said Emerson, returning the last note he had received from the young man. “In case the worst comes to the worst, don’t forget that everything depends on concealing my agency in the business. I am stake-holder, as you say; and if you get into difficulty, will be your secret, interested, and efficient friend. Your family will need a resource, and have it in me. Yes, money is all potent; and we may, with that in reserve, defy judges and juries, if the law takes hold of the matter. Moreover — you are aware that in a few days, I am to be married to the daughter of old Mr. Barker. This will give me a new position and influence.”

Assuring Emerson, over and over again that he had nothing to fear, Baldwin took back the checks, with a promise to cancel them, and then went away. His face wore a look of trouble, and there was trouble in his heart. But a deeper anxiety and alarm than he felt, was in the heart of his unprincipled accomplice.

CHAPTER 13.

The nearer the hour approached when Caroline Barker was to become the wife of Philip Emerson, the more troubled and anxious became Mary Lynn, and the more in doubt as to what was her real duty. Certainty in regard to the letter written to Mrs. Barker would have determined her course of action. But her mind was not clear on that subject. Who else could have written it? To that question, no answer came to her mind.

Daily affectionate fellowship with Caroline enabled Mary to see deeper into her heart; and the more that was laid open before her, the more fully satisfied did she become, that her marriage with Emerson would prove an unhappy one.

"You do look so sad, Mary," said Caroline, to her, one day, with tender concern in her voice. "I am really afraid you are not happy here. I'm sure we all like you very much, and I think you ought to like us."

"And so I do," quickly replied Mary, tears filling her eyes as she looked into the face of Caroline. "None could be kinder to me nor more considerate than all in this house."

"I wish you would try to be more cheerful, then," said the good-hearted girl, smiling as she spoke. "I'm as happy as I can be; and I can't bear to see a cloud on the face of any."

"Are you very happy?" asked Mary, in a serious voice.

"Indeed I am! And why not? A few days more, and I will be a bride. Is not that enough to make the heart glad?"

At this point, Caroline suddenly checked herself. A short time before, a person who knew Mary's early history, had told her something about a lover to whom she had been deeply attached in her better days; but who, from some cause, she had discarded. The name of this lover was not mentioned. The reason why Caroline checked herself, was in consequence of the thought that an utterance of the joy she felt at her approaching marriage, might throw the mind of Mary too painfully upon the past. She paused for a few moments, and then obeying an impulse to speak, said, in a changed voice, laying her hand upon Mary as she spoke, in a familiar, affectionate way —

"Perhaps I ought not to talk so freely of my own happiness. At least, not to you."

Caroline had not intended to say just this. But these were the words that came first into utterance.

"Why not to me?" asked Mary, with a surprise that was felt and manifested.

"Because," said Caroline, her mind a little confused, "it may throw your mind unpleasantly backward; and, Heaven knows that I would not utter a word calculated to give you a moment's pain."

"Did you think, for an instant, that I retained a single spark of regard for Phil — "

This much had fallen from 'the lips' of Mary, before a thought of what she was saying came to check further utterance. She was speaking with a quick energy and a flashing of the eyes that startled her auditor.

"Forgive me for having unwittingly pained you," said Caroline, in a voice which showed Mary that she was not understood, and that in her momentary forgetfulness she had not betrayed the secret that rested so heavily upon her heart. Her feelings, however, were so much disturbed, that she lost the mastery over them; and was borne away by their pressure. With many words of kindness and affection, did Caroline seek to soothe the heart in which she had awakened a tempest of emotion; and in this she was at last successful.

When calmness was restored, Mary sought her own room, to ponder over the one all-absorbing theme — her duty to the loving-hearted girl, who was about being sacrificed to a man in every way unworthy to lead her to the altar; and which sacrifice, a word from her could prevent. It was while seeking to know her duty on this occasion, that she resolved to see Emerson, and interrogate him on the subject of the letter, and if, in the interview, she were made entirely certain that he wrote it, to let that decide her course of action. As has been seen, he denied the authorship, and in a way that left her mind still in doubt; and in doubt it remained, day after day, until the one came that was to see the marriage of Caroline and Philip Emerson.

Mary was alone with Caroline a good many times during the day, and each time she was so much overcome by her feelings as to shed tears. Kindly and tenderly would Caroline seek to speak comforting words. Alas! how little power did they contain. To all the family, Mary's great distress of mind was apparent, and the members spoke together on the subject.

"Oh, that I knew my duty!" murmured the unhappy girl, as she sat alone, or thought that she was alone, a few hours before evening.

"If we all knew and performed our duty as well as you do," replied Mrs. Barker, who happened to enter the room at the moment, "it would be far better for us."

Mary startled, and a crimson flush overspread her pale face. She was on the verge of opening her whole heart to Mrs. Barker; but something held her back.

The lady paused a few moments, as if waiting for her to speak, and then passed on through the room.

"Oh! what shall I do?" sobbed the distressed girl, wringing her hands, and weeping again, bitterly.

Time moved on, and evening came.

But let us go back a little in the day, and see how it is with Emerson.

On the day previous, Baldwin had been suspended from his place in the bank, on suspicion that all was not right. The hints of Mr. Barker had been acted upon by the director, who called the attention of the board to the subject. By them, a secret investigation of the deposit ledger was made, under the direction of the Cashier and the Receiving and Paying Tellers, while Baldwin was enjoying a ride on one of his fast-going horses. The result was, a discovery of various discrepancies, and strange entries, that made them decide upon suspending the young man until a more thorough examination into the books could be made; and this, was accordingly done — greatly to his mortification and terror; and greatly to the alarm of Emerson.

“A nice business, that, of young Baldwin’s,” said William Barker to Emerson, as he called in at the store of the latter about mid-day.

“A bad business, certainly, for him,” replied Emerson, as calmly as he could speak, “for, whether proved innocent or guilty, he is a ruined man. The stain of a suspicion like the one attached to him, is never fully wiped out.”

“It certainly never will be wiped out in his case,” said Barker, “for suspicion has given place to certainty. He has confessed his crime.”

“What!” The color faded momentarily from the face of Emerson.

“It is true. He confesses to having abstracted over thirty thousand dollars from the bank, though he has, so far, concealed the means. But he speaks of an accomplice outside.”

“He does!”

“Yes; but refuses to give his name. As that accomplice probably has the bulk of the money, strong efforts will be made to induce Baldwin to give him up. These efforts, backed by the intervention of Baldwin’s friends, will, no doubt, bring the scoundrel to light.”

The knees of Emerson trembled as he stood leaning on his counter. But for this support, he could hardly have borne the weight of his body.

“Bad business, certainly,” he murmured. “Very bad business.”

“Indeed it is a bad business,” said William Barker. “Somebody will go to the penitentiary!”

From that time until evening, Emerson’s mind was in a state of bewildering anxiety and fear. He could not hold back from meeting Caroline at the marriage altar, for he had no reason that he dared give for such an act; and he shrank from wedding anyone with the prospect of being arrested in an hour afterwards as an accomplice in a crime that might send him to the State’s Prison. What the wretched man suffered during the few hours that elapsed before repairing to the house of Mr. Barker, is beyond description.

We now return to Mary Lynn. Evening had come, and in an hour more, Caroline would be a bride. The conflict in Mary’s mind had been so severe as to make her really ill, and she had retired to her own room, where, depressed in mind and body, she had thrown herself across the bed. All the earnest persuasions of Caroline, and other members of the family, that she would be present at the wedding, had been resisted; and now, she had obtained a release from importunity by pleading illness — and the plea was no subterfuge.

Often, and with tearful earnestness, did Mary lift her heart to Heaven, during that last hour, and pray for direction. At length she fell asleep; but her dreaming thoughts moved on in the same current — not now guided by reason, but imagination. She was amid the company assembled below, to witness the holy rite of marriage. Emerson was there. He stood in the center of the rooms, to her a giant in form — his eyes red with an evil light, and lines deeply furrowed by cruel purposes on his forehead. By his side, shrunk, trembling, the pure-hearted Caroline, awaiting her sacrifice. Close around were the company — and, as Mary glanced from face to face, she saw in none a pitying emotion. Then the ceremony began, and was proceeding, when, in the anguish of her feelings, the sleeper cried out, “Will no one save her?”

“Save who, Mary?” came to her ears in a tone of affectionate concern, at the same time that she felt a kiss upon her cheek.

“Oh, Caroline!” exclaimed the waking girl, flinging her arms around the neck of Caroline Barker, who, all dressed in her bridal robes, had come to see her for a moment before joining the company who were waiting for the ceremony to begin.

For almost a minute Mary clung to the neck of Caroline, sobbing with unrestrained emotion. Then the latter sought to lift herself up, but Mary only clung to her the tighter, saying as she did so, in a low whisper, “I cannot let you go!”

“But they are waiting for me, dear,” returned Caroline. “All is ready, and I have come to see you for a moment.”

Still Mary did not withdraw her arms.

Caroline kissed her once more, wondering, all the while, at the girl’s strange conduct, and again sought to get away from her.

“Don’t go. Stay here with me. They won’t find you,” said Mary, in a wandering manner.

With a sudden effort, Caroline disengaged herself from the arms of Mary.

“Why do you say this?” she exclaimed. But seeing the flushed face and bright eyes of Mary, she comprehended, in a moment, that her mind was, from sickness or some other cause, partially unbalanced.

“There, there, dear,” she said, in a soothing voice, laying her hand upon the hot forehead of the young girl. “Don’t talk so.”

Mary, regaining in a moment, the lost equilibrium of her mind, murmured,
“Forgive me. I hardly knew what I was saying.”

Kissing her once more, Caroline turned from the bed whereon she was lying, and glided from the room. As she did so, Mary started up with a wild, distressed look, and bent her ear, hearkening to the sound of Caroline’s retiring footsteps. Then banding her temples with her hands, she commenced moving about the room, the very picture of anguish and irresolution.

Meanwhile the ceremony had commenced below. Those who observed Emerson closely, marked an unusual pallor of countenance, accompanied with a restless wandering, or rather, darting of the eyes from point to point. It was plain that he was ill at ease, yet struggling hard to appear self-possessed.

Mr. Barker was standing near one of the doors that opened into the hall, looking first upon the face of the young man and then upon the pure, sweet face of his child, while his heart felt troubled and oppressed. He had never liked the idea of this union, and he liked it less than ever now. In his mind was an overpowering perception that his daughter was about entering upon a life of misery. But it was too late now to recede. No good reason for forbidding the marriage had heretofore been presented to his mind, and none were presented now. So he stood a passive witness of the ceremony as it proceeded.

A moment or two remained before Caroline was to give utterance to the brief words that made her the wife of Emerson, when Mr. Barker felt his arm suddenly grasped from behind. Turning quickly, he met the agitated, and almost colorless face of Mary Lynn, who said to him in an eager whisper,

“Oh, Mr. Barker! save her from this fate! If you love your child, save her!”

The father required no further prompting now. Instantly his voice filled the rooms with a peremptory command to stop the ceremony! A wild scene of confusion ensued, in which Caroline was borne, fainting, from the room. When this abated, and one and another looked around for Emerson, he was not to be found. In the first moment of excitement, he had left the house.

Scarcely had quiet been restored, before a gentleman came rushing in, asking in a loud voice for Mr. Barker.

“Is your daughter married yet?” he inquired, so soon as he found the person he sought.

“No, thank God!” replied Mr. Barker.

“You may well thank God,” said the stranger, “for it has just been discovered that Philip Emerson is the accomplice of young Baldwin in robbing the Traders’ Bank!”

“What an escape!” murmured the agitated father, as he clasped his hands together. “Yes,” he added in a fervent voice, “thank God! thank God! For He has wrought for us this great deliverance.”

A few months have glided by, since the troubled scenes just described, and there is another bridal assemblage in the house of Mr. Barker. But under what different circumstances, and with what different prospects for happiness do the parties now about to be united approach the marriage altar. Over them bends the cloudless sky, and beautiful vistas open far down into the future. Who is the bride? There she stands beside William Barker, pure and beautiful as Spring’s earliest flowers. Her name is Mary Lynn. She has passed through her long night of trial, and this is the glad hour of virtue’s triumph.

There is but one pale cheek and sad eye in that pleasant company. Caroline is there; and even while she feels a weight like a hand pressing on her bosom, she is thankful that it is with her as it is — and that she is not the wife of a man just proven guilty of crime, and sentenced to the punishment thereof, in the solitary and gloomy walls of a prison. No one looks with a tender and more loving eye upon the gentle bride than herself; nor rejoices with a deeper joy at the happiness that is in store for her.

Mrs. Lynn is there of course, and her worldly heart is swelling with a proud delight at this unlooked for elevation of her daughter and prospective change for herself. There is no one now who more loudly execrates the “villain Emerson,” than she.

And here let us draw the curtain over the scenes we have introduced, with the simple remark that in all cases where a maiden discovers an overweening selfishness and lack of honest principle in a lover — her plain duty to herself is to discard him. To marry such a man, is a greater risk than any woman is justified in taking. Her virtues may win him from his evil avarices; but the chances are all against such a result; and we repeat, the risk is too great, and should not be taken!