

Home Scenes and Home Influence; a series of tales and sketches eBook

Home Scenes and Home Influence; a series of tales and sketches by Timothy Shay Arthur

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Page 1

HOME SCENES.

TAKING COMFORT.

"*Really*, this is comfortable!" said I, glancing around the handsomely furnished parlour of my young friend Brainard, who had, a few weeks before, ventured upon matrimony, and was now making his first experiments in housekeeping.

"Yes, it is comfortable," replied my friend. "The fact is, I go in for comforts."

"I'm afraid George is a little extravagant," said the smiling bride, as she leaned towards her husband and looked tenderly into his face.

"No, not extravagant, Anna," he returned; "all I want is to have things comfortable. Comfort I look upon as one of the necessaries of life, to which all are entitled. Don't you?"

I was looking at a handsome new rose-wood piano when this question was addressed to me, and thinking about its probable cost.

"We should all make the best of what we have," I answered, a little evasively; "and seek to be as comfortable as possible under all circumstances."

"Exactly. That's my doctrine," said Brainard. "I'm not rich, and therefore don't expect to live in a palace, and have every thing around me glittering with silver and gold; but, out of the little I possess, shall endeavour to obtain the largest available dividend of comfort. Ain't I right?"

"Perhaps so."

"You speak coldly," said my friend. "Don't you agree with me? Should not every man try to be as comfortable as his means will permit?"

"Yes, certainly."

"Of course he should. Some men set a value upon money above every thing else, and sacrifice all comfort to its accumulation; but I don't belong to that class. Money is a good gift, because it is the means of procuring natural blessings. I receive it thankfully, and use it wisely. You see how I am beginning life."

"I do."

"Well, what do you think of it?"



By this time my observation of things had become more particular, and I saw many evidences of expenditures that indicated a lavish spirit.

“What rent do you pay?” I asked.

“Three hundred.”

I shook my head.

“Too much?” said Brainard.

“I think so.”

“Perhaps it is a little high. But you can’t get a genteel, comfortable house, in a good neighbourhood, for any thing less.”

As it was my first visit to the young couple, who were but a few weeks past their honeymoon, I did not feel like questioning the propriety of my friend’s conduct to the serious extent he was about involving himself; and so evaded replying to this excuse for taking at least a hundred dollars more rent upon himself than he was justified in doing by his circumstances, he being simply a clerk, with a salary of one thousand dollars.

“Rents are high,” was my apparently indifferent answer.

“Too high,” said he. “A man who wants a pleasant house has to pay for it. This is my experience.”



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The subject of conversation changed; I passed an agreeable evening; at the close of which I left my friend and his lovely young bride in their comfortable home.

What I had seen and heard during the few hours spent with Brainard made me fear that he was about committing a too common error. His ideas of comfort were not in keeping with his circumstances. Some days subsequently I saw my friend and his wife riding out in a handsome vehicle, drawn by a gay horse.

“Taking their comfort,” said I, as I paused and looked upon the happy young couple.

Not long after, I saw them dashing off again to enjoy an afternoon’s ride. Next, I met them at a fashionable concert.

“Have you been to the opera yet?” asked Brainard, leaning forward to the seat that I occupied just in front of him.

“No,” was my answer.

“Then there is a treat in store for you. We go twice, and sometimes oftener, every week. Truffi, Benedetti, Rosi—oh! they are enchanting.”

“Rather expensive,” said I.

“It does cost something,” and Brainard shrugged his shoulders. “But I think it’s money well spent. You know that I go in for the comforts of life.”

And he leaned back, while I thought I perceived a slight shadow flit across his face. A singer came forward at the moment, and no more was said.

“It is possible,” thought I, “in seeking after comfort, to get into the wrong road. I am afraid my young friends are about committing this error.”

I not only suggested as much to Brainard soon afterwards, but actually presented a serious remonstrance against the course of life he had adopted. But he only smiled at the fears I expressed, and said he understood perfectly the nature of the ground he was treading. Thus it is with most young persons. Be their views true or false, they act upon them, in spite of all counsel from the more experienced, and in the end reap their harvest of trouble or pleasure, as the ease may be. Pride, which stimulates the desire to make a certain appearance in the world, is generally more at fault than a wish to secure the comforts of which my friend talked so much.

I had another acquaintance, by the name of Tyler, who was married about the same time with Brainard. His tastes were as well cultivated as those of the former, and his income was as large; yet, in beginning the world, he had shown more prudence and a wise forecast. I found him in a small, neat house, at a rent of one hundred and seventy



dollars. His furniture was not costly, but in good taste and keeping with the house and his circumstances. As for real comfort, as far as I could see, the preponderance was rather in his favour.

“This is really comfortable,” said I, glancing around the room in which he received me on the occasion of my first visit.

“We think so,” replied my friend, smiling.

“Nothing very elegant, but as good as we can afford, and with that we have made up our minds to be content.”

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"If all the world were as wise, all the world would be happier," I remarked.

"Perhaps so," returned Tyler. "Brainard tried to get me into a house like the one he occupies; but I thought it more prudent to cut my garment according to my cloth. The larger your house, the more costly your furniture and the higher your regular expenses. He talked about having things comfortable, as he called it, and enjoying life as he went along; but it would be poor comfort for me to know that I was five or six hundred dollars in debt, and all the while living beyond my income."

"In debt? What do you mean by that?" said I. "It isn't possible that Brainard has gone in debt for any of his fine furniture?"

"It is very possible."

"To the extent of five or six hundred dollars?"

"Yes. The rose-wood piano he bought for his wife cost four hundred dollars. It was purchased on six months' credit."

"Foolish young man!" said I.

"You may well say that. He thinks a great deal about the comforts of life; but he is going the wrong way to secure them, in my opinion. His parlour furniture, including the new piano, cost nearly one thousand dollars; mine cost three hundred; and I'm sure I would not exchange comforts with him. It isn't what is around us so much as what is within us, that produces pleasure. A contented mind is said to be a continual feast. If, in seeking to have things comfortable, we create causes of disquietude, we defeat our own ends."

"I wish our friend Brainard could see things in the same light," said I.

"Nothing but painful experience will open his eyes," remarked Tyler.

And he was correct in this. Brainard continued to take his comfort for a few months, although there was a gradual sinking in the thermometer of his feelings as the time approached when the notes given for a part of his furniture would fall due. The amount of these notes was six hundred dollars, but he had not saved fifty towards meeting the payments. The whole of his income had been used in taking his comfort.

"Why, Brainard!" said I, in a tone of surprise, on meeting him one day, nearly six months after his marriage. "What has happened?"

"Happened? Nothing. Why do you ask?" replied the young man.

"You look troubled."



“Do I?” He made an effort to smile.

“Yes, you certainly do. What has gone wrong with you?”

“Oh, nothing.” And he tried to assume an air of indifference; but, seeing me look incredulous, he added—

“Nothing particularly wrong. I’m only a little worried about money matters. The fact is, I’ve got two or three notes to pay next week.”

“You have?”

“Yes; and what is more, I haven’t the means to lift them.”

“That is trouble,” said I, shaking my head.

“It’s trouble for me. Oh, dear! I wish my income were larger. A thousand dollars a year is too little.”



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“Two persons ought to live on that sum very comfortably,” I remarked.

“We can’t, then; and I’m sure we are not extravagant. Ah, me!”

“I spent the evening with our friend Tyler last week,” said I. “His salary is the same as yours, and he told me that he found it not only sufficient for all his wants, but that he could lay by a couple of hundred dollars yearly.”

“I couldn’t live as he does,” said Brainard, a little impatiently.

“Why not?”

“Do you think I would be cooped up in such a pigeon-box of a place?”

“The house he lives in has six rooms, and he has but three in family—your own number, I presume”—

“I have four,” said Brainard, interrupting me.

“Four?”

“Yes. We have a cook and chambermaid.”

“Oh! Mrs. Tyler has but one domestic.”

“My wife wasn’t brought up to be a household drudge,” said Brainard, contemptuously.

“Your house has ten rooms in it, I believe?” said I, avoiding a reply to his last remark.

“It has.”

“But why should you pay rent for ten rooms, when you have use for only five or six? Is not that a waste of money that might be applied to a better purpose?”

“Oh, I like a large house,” said my friend, tossing his head, and putting on an air of dignity and consequence. “A hundred dollars difference in rent is a small matter compared with the increase of comfort it brings.”

“But the expense doesn’t stop with the additional rent,” said I.

“Why not?”

“The larger the house, the more expensive the furniture. It cost you a thousand dollars to fit up your handsome parlour?” said I.

“Yes, I presume it did.”



“For what amount did you give your notes?”

“For six hundred dollars.”

“On account of furniture?”

“Yes.”

“Tyler furnished his parlour for three hundred.”

There was another gesture of impatience on the part of my young friend, as he said—

“And such furnishing!”

“Every thing looks neat and comfortable,” I replied.

“It may do for them, but it wouldn’t suit us.”

“Whatever is accordant with our means should be made to suit us,” said I, seriously.

“You are no better off than Tyler.”

“Do you think I could content myself in such a place?” he replied.

“Contentment is only found in the external circumstances that correspond to a man’s pecuniary ability,” was my answer to this. “Which, think you, is best contented? Tyler, in a small house, neatly furnished, and with a hundred dollars in his pocket; or you, in your large house, with a debt of six hundred dollars hanging over you?”

There was an instant change in my friend’s countenance. The question seemed to startle him. He sighed, involuntarily.

“But all this won’t lift my notes,” said he, after the silence of a few minutes. “Good morning!”

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Poor fellow! I felt sorry for him. He had been buying comfort at rather too large a price.

The more Brainard cast about in his mind for the means of lifting his notes, the more troubled did he become.

“I might borrow,” said he to himself; “but how am I to pay back the sum?”

To borrow, however, was better than to let his notes be dishonoured. So Brainard, as the time of payment drew nearer and nearer, made an effort to get from his friends the amount of money needed.

But the effort was not successful. Some looked surprised when he spoke of having notes to meet; others ventured a little good advice on the subject of prudence in young men who are beginning the world, and hinted that he was living rather too fast. None were prepared to give him what he wanted.

Troubled, mortified, and humbled, Brainard retired to his comfortable home on the evening before the day on which his note given for the piano was to fall due. Nearly his last effort to raise money had been made, and he saw nothing but discredit, and what he feared even worse than that before him. Involved as he was in debt, there was no safety from the sharp talons of the law. They might strike him at any moment, and involve all in ruin.

Poor Brainard! How little pleasure did the sight of his large and pleasant house give him as it came in view on his return home. It stood, rather as a monument of extravagance and folly, than the abode of sweet contentment.

“Three hundred dollars rent!” he murmured. “Too much for me to pay.” And sighed deeply.

He entered his beautiful parlour, and gazed around upon the elegant furniture which he had provided as a means of comfort. All had lost its power to communicate pleasure. There stood the costly piano, once coveted and afterwards admired. But it possessed no charm to lay the troubled spirit within him. He had bought it as a marriage present for his wife, who had little taste for music, and preferred reading or sewing to the blandishment of sweet sounds. And for this toy—it was little more in his family—a debt of four hundred dollars had been created. Had it brought him an equivalent in comfort? Far, very far from it.

As Brainard stood in his elegant parlour, with troubled heart and troubled face, his wife came in with a light step.

“George!” she exclaimed on seeing him, her countenance falling and her voice expressing anxious concern. “What is the matter? Are you sick?”



“Oh, no!” he replied, affecting a lightness of tone.

“But something is the matter, George,” said the young wife, as she laid her hand upon him and looked earnestly into his face. “Something troubles you.”

“Nothing of any consequence. A mere trifle,” returned Brainard, evasively.

“A mere trifle would not cloud your brow as it was clouded a moment since, George.”

“Trifles sometimes affect us, more seriously than graver matters.” As Brainard said this, the shadows again deepened on his face.



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“If you have any troubles, dear, let me share them, and they will be lighter.” Anna spoke with much tenderness.

“I hardly think your sharing my present trouble will lighten it,” said Brainard, forcing a smile, “unless, in so doing, you can put some four hundred dollars into my empty pockets.”

Anna withdrew a pace from her husband, and looked at him doubtfully.

“Do you speak in earnest?” said she.

“In very truth I do. To-morrow I have four hundred dollars to pay; but where the money is to come from, is more than I can tell.”

“How in the world has that happened?” inquired Mrs. Brainard.

Involuntarily the eyes of her husband wandered towards the piano. She saw their direction. Her own eyes fell to the floor, and she stood silent for some moments—silent, but hurriedly thoughtful. Then looking up, she said, in a hesitating voice—

“We can do without that.” And she pointed towards the piano.

“Without what?” asked Brainard, quickly.

“The piano. It cost four hundred dollars. Sell it.”

“Never!”

“Why not?”

“Don’t mention it, Anna. Sell your piano! It shall never be done.”

“But, George”—

“It’s no use to talk of that, Anna; I will not listen to it.”

And so the wife was silenced.

Little comfort had the young couple that evening in their finely furnished house. Brainard was silent and thoughtful, while Anna felt the pressure of a heavy weight upon her feelings.

How different was it in the smaller and more plainly attired dwelling of Tyler! There was comfort, and there were peace and contentment, her smiling handmaids.



On the next morning, Brainard found it impossible to conceal from his wife the great anxiety he felt. She said very little to him, for his trouble was of a kind for which she could suggest no remedy. After he parted with her at the door, she returned and sat down in one of the parlours to think. The piano was before her, and back to that her thoughts at length came. It was not only a beautiful instrument, but one of great excellence. Often had it been admired by her friends, and particularly by a lady who had several times expressed a wish to own one exactly like it in every respect.

"I wish you would let me have that piano," the lady had said to her not a week before; and said it as much in earnest as in jest.

"I wonder if she really would buy it?" mused Mrs. Brainard. "I don't want so fine an instrument. My old piano is a very good one, and is useless at father's. Oh! if I could only get George the four hundred dollars he wants so badly!"

And she struck her hands together as her thoughts grew earnest on the subject. For more than an hour the mind of Mrs. Brainard gave itself up to this one idea. Then she dressed herself and went out. Without consulting any one, she called upon the lady to whom reference has been made.



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“Mrs. Aiken,” said she, coming at once to the point, “you have often remarked that you would like to own that piano of mine. Were you really in earnest?”

“In earnest? Certainly I was.” Mrs. Aiken smiled, at the same time that a slight expression of surprise came into her face. “It’s one of the finest instruments I ever touched.”

“It’s for sale,” said Mrs. Brainard, in a firm, business-like way. “So there is a chance for you to call it your own.”

“For sale! Why do you say that, Anna?”

“It’s too costly an instrument for me to own. My old piano is a very good one—quite good enough for all my purposes.”

“But this is your husband’s wedding-gift, if I remember rightly?”

“I know it is; but the gift was too costly a one for a young man whose salary is only a thousand dollars a year.”

“Then he wishes to sell it.”

“No, indeed, not he!”

“And would you sell it without consulting him?” said Mrs. Aiken.

“Such is my intention.”

“He might be very much displeased.”

“No matter; I would soon smooth his frowning brow. But, Mrs. Aiken, we won’t discuss that matter. The instrument is to be sold. Do you want it?”

“I do.”

“Very well. Are you prepared to buy it?”

“Perhaps so. It cost four hundred dollars?”

“Yes.”

“What is your price?”

“The same.”

“Then you make no deduction?” said Mrs. Aiken, smiling.



“I wouldn’t like to do that. It’s as good as new. If I can sell it, I want to be able to put in my husband’s hands just what he paid for it.”

“Oh, then you want the money for your husband?”

“Certainly, I do. What use have I for four hundred dollars?”

“You’ve come just in time, Anna,” said Mrs. Aiken. “I arranged with my husband to meet him this morning, at his store, to go and look at some pianos. But if yours is really for sale, we have no occasion to take any further trouble.”

“It is for sale, Mrs. Aiken. Understand this.”

“Very well. When do you want the money?”

“This morning.”

“I don’t know about that. However, I will see Mr. Aiken immediately.”

“Shall I wait here for you?”

“You may do so, or I will call at your house.”

“Do that, if you please.”

“Very well. In an hour, at most, I will see you.”

The two ladies then parted.

When Mr. Brainard left his house that morning, he felt wretched. Where—how was he to get four hundred dollars? To go to the party from whom he had bought the piano, and confess that he was not able to pay for it, had in it something so humiliating, that he could not bear the thought for a moment. But if the note was not paid,—what then? Might not the instrument be demanded? And how could he give it up now? Or, worse, might it not be seized under execution?



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“Oh, that I had never bought it!” he at length exclaimed, mentally, in the bitterness of his feelings. And then he half chid himself for the extorted declaration.

Nearly the whole of the morning was spent in the vain attempt to borrow the needed sum. But there was no one to lend him four hundred dollars. At length, in his desperation, he forced himself to apply for a quarter’s advance of salary.

“No doubt,” said he, within himself, “that the holder of the note will take two hundred and fifty dollars on account, and give me time on the balance.”

About the ways and means of living for the next three months, after absorbing his salary in advance, he did not pause to think. He was just in that state of mind in which he could say, with feeling, “Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.” Unhappily, his effort to raise money by this expedient failed. His application was received coldly, and in a way to mortify him exceedingly.

Half desperate, and half despairing, Brainard started for his home about one o’clock, his usual hour for dining. What was he to do? He turned his thoughts to the right and to the left, groping about like a man in the dark. But no light broke in upon his mental vision.

“It will not do to meet Anna in this way,” said he, as he approached his own door. “I left her with a troubled countenance in the morning. Now I must force an assumed cheerfulness.”

He entered, and was moving along the passage, when Anna came out through one of the parlour doors to meet him, and drawing her arm through his, said, in a lively tone,—

“Come, George, I want to play for you a favourite piece. I’ve been practising it for the last hour.”

And she drew him into the parlour, and, taking her seat at the piano, commenced running her fingers over the keys. Brainard stood and listened to the music until the piece was finished, trying, but in vain, to feel an interest in the performance.

“How do you like that?” said the wife, with animation, lifting her sparkling eyes to the face of her husband, which was serious, in spite of all he could do to give it a better expression.

“Beautifully performed,” replied Brainard.

“And do you really think so?” said Anna, as she arose and leaning on his arm again, drew him into the next room.

“Certainly, I do.”



“Didn’t you think the instrument a little out of tune?” asked Anna.

“No; it struck me as being in better tune than when you played last evening.”

“It’s a fine instrument, certainly. I prize it very much.”

Brainard sighed faintly.

“Oh! How about your four hundred dollars?” said Anna, as if the thought had just occurred to her. “Did you get the money?”

A change was apparent in the manner of Brainard.

“No, Anna,” he replied, with assumed calmness.

“Do you want it badly?”



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“Yes, dear. I have four hundred dollars due in the bank to-day, and every effort to obtain the sum has failed.”

“What if I lend it to you?” said the young wife, looking archly into his troubled face.

“You!” he exclaimed, quickly.

“Yes, me. Would you take it as a very great favour?”

“The greatest you could do me just at this time!”

“Very well; here is the money.”

And Anna drew a purse of gold from her pocket, and held it before his eyes.

“Anna! What does this mean?”

And Brainard reached his hand to grasp the welcome treasure. But she drew it away quickly, saying, as she did so,—

“Certain conditions must go with the loan.”

“Name them,” was promptly answered by the husband, into whose face the sunshine had already come back.

“One is, that you are not to be angry with me for any thing that I have done to-day.”

“What have you done?”

And Brainard glanced around the room with an awakened suspicion.

“I want your promise first.”

“You have it.”

“But mind you, I am in earnest,” said Anna.

“So am I. Now make your confession.”

“I sold the piano.”

“What?”

There was an instant change in the expression of Brainard's face.

“Your promise. Remember,” said Anna, in a warning voice.



“Sold the piano!”

And he walked into the next room, Anna moving by his side.

“Yes, I sold it to Mrs. Aiken for four hundred dollars. I had my old instrument brought over from father’s. This is as good a piano as I want, or you either, I should think, seeing that you perceived no difference in its tones from the one I parted with. Now, take this purse, and if you don’t call me the right sort of a wife you are a very strange man—that is all I have to say.”

Surprise kept Brainard silent for some moments. He looked at the piano, then at his wife, and then at the purse of gold, half doubting whether all were real, or only a pleasant dream.

“You are the right sort of a wife, Anna, and no mistake,” said he, at length, drawing his arm around her neck and kissing her. “You have done what I had not the courage to do, and, in the act, saved me from a world of trouble. The truth is, I never should have bought that piano. A clerk, with a salary of only a thousand dollars, is not justified in expending four hundred dollars for a piano.”

“Nor in having so much costly furniture,” said Anna, glancing round the room.

Brainard sighed, for the thought of two hundred dollars yet to pay flitted through his mind.

“Nor in paying three hundred dollars for rent,” added Anna.

“Why do you say that?” asked Brainard.

“Because it’s the truth. The fact is, George, I’m afraid we’re in the wrong road for comfort.”

“Perhaps we are,” was the young man’s constrained admission.



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“Then the quicker we get into the right way the better. Don't you think so?”

“If we, are wrong, we should try to get right,” said Brainard.

“It was wrong to buy that piano. This is your own admission.”

“Well?”

“We are right again in that respect.”

“Yes, thanks to my dear wife's good resolution and prompt action.”

“It was wrong to take so costly a house,” said Anna.

“I couldn't find a cheaper one that was genteel and comfortable.”

“I'm sure I wouldn't ask any thing more genteel and comfortable than Mrs. Tyler's house.”

“That pigeon-box!”

Brainard spoke in, a tone of contempt.

“Why, George, how you talk! It's a perfect gem of a house, well built and well finished in every part, and big enough for a family twice as large as ours. I think it far more comfortable than this great barn of a place, and would a thousand times rather live in it. And then it is cheaper by a hundred and twenty dollars a year.”

A hundred and twenty dollars! What a large sum of money. Ah, if he had a hundred and twenty dollars in addition to the four hundred received from Anna, how happy he would be! These were the thoughts that were flitting through the mind of Brainard at the mention of the amount that could be saved by taking a smaller house.

“Well, Anna, perhaps you are right. Oh, dear!”

“Why do you sigh so heavily, George?” asked Mrs. Brainard, looking at her husband with some surprise.

“Because I can't help it,” was frankly answered.

“You've got the money you needed?”

“Not all.”

“Why, George! Didn't you say that you had only four hundred dollars to pay?”



“I didn’t say only.”

“How much more?”

“The fact is, Anna, I have two hundred dollars yet to meet.”

“To-day?”

Anna’s face became troubled.

“No, not until the day after to-morrow.”

The young wife’s countenance lighted up again.

“Is that all?”

“Yes, thank Heaven, that is all. But how the payment is to be made, is more than I can tell.”

Dinner was now announced.

“I shall have to turn financier again,” said Anna, smiling, as she drew her arm within that of her husband, and led him away to the dining-room.

“I’m a little afraid of your financiering,” returned her husband, shaking his head. “You might sell me next as a useless piece of furniture.”

“Now, George, that is too bad,” replied Anna, looking hurt.

“I only jested, dear,” said Brainard, repairing the little wrong done to her feelings with a kiss. “Your past efforts at financiering were admirable, and I only hope your next attempt may be as successful.”



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Two days more passed, during which time neither Brainard nor his wife said any thing to each other about money, although the thoughts of both were busy for most of the time on that interesting subject. Silently sat Brainard at the breakfast-table on the morning of the day when his last note fell due. How was he to meet the payment? Two hundred dollars! He had not so much as fifty dollars in his possession, and as to borrowing, that was a vain hope. Must he go to the holder of the note, and ask a renewal? He shrunk from the thought, murmuring to himself—"Any thing but that."

As for getting the required sum through Anna, he did not permit himself to hope very strongly. She had looked thoughtful since their last interview on the subject, and at times, it seemed to him, troubled. It was plain that she had been disappointed in any efforts to get money that she might have made.

"That she, too, should be subject to mortification and painful humiliation!" said he, as his mind dwelt on the subject. "It is too bad—too bad!—Oh, to think that my folly should have had this reaction!"

Anna looked sober as Brainard parted with her after breakfast, and he thought he saw tears in her eyes. As soon as he was gone she dressed herself, and taking from a handsome jewel-box the present of her husband, a gold watch and chain, a bracelet, diamond pin, and some other articles of the same kind, left the house.

Two hours afterward, as Brainard sat at his desk trying to fix his mind upon the accounts before him, a note was handed in bearing his address. He broke the seal, and found that it enclosed one hundred and seventy dollars, with these few words from Anna:

"This is the best I can do for you, dear husband. Will it be enough?"

"God bless her!" came half audibly from the lips of Brainard, as he drew forth his pocket-book, in which were thirty dollars. "Yes, it will be enough."

"There is no comfort in owing, or in paying after this fashion," said the young man to himself, as he walked homeward at dinner-time, with his last note in his pocket. "There will have to be a change."

And there was a change. When next I visited my young friend, I found him in a smaller house, looking as comfortable and happy as I could have wished to see him. We talked pleasantly about the errors of the past, and the trouble which had followed as a natural result.

"There is one thing," said Brainard, during the conversation, glancing at his wife as he spoke, "that I have not been able to make out."

"What is that?" asked Mrs. Brainard, smiling.



“Where the last one hundred and seventy dollars you gave me came from.”

“Have you missed nothing?” said she, archly.

“Nothing,” was his reply.

“Been deprived of no comfort?”

“So far from it, I have found a great many new ones.”

“And been saved the trouble of winding up and regulating that pretty eight-day clock for which you gave forty dollars.”



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Brainard fairly started to his feet as he turned to the mantel, and, strange to say, missed, for the first time, the handsome timepiece referred to by his wife.

“Why, Anna, is it possible? Surely that hasn’t been gone for two months!”

“Oh, yes, it has.”

“Well, that beats all.”

And Brainard resumed his chair.

“You’ve been just as comfortable,” said the excellent young woman.

“But you didn’t get a hundred and seventy dollars for the timepiece?”

“No. Have you lost no other comfort? Think.”

Brainard thought, but in vain. Anna glided from the room, and returned in a few moments with her jewel-box.

“Do you miss any thing?” said she, as she raised the lid and placed the box in his hands.

“Your watch and chain!”

Anna smiled.

“You did not sell them?”

“Yes.”

“Why, Anna! Did you set no value on your husband’s gifts?”

There was a slight rebuke in the tone of Brainard. Tears sprang to Anna’s eyes, as she answered—“I valued them less than his happiness.”

Brainard looked at her for a few moments with an expression of deep tenderness. Then turning to me, he said, in a voice that was unsteady from emotion—“You shall be my judge. Has she done wrong or right?”

“Right!” I responded, warmly. “Right! thank Heaven, my friend, for giving you a true woman for a wife. There is some hope now of your finding the comfort you sought so vainly in the beginning.”

And he has found it—found it in a wise appropriation, of the good gifts of Providence according to his means.



CHILDREN—A FAMILY SCENE.

“Mother!”

“As I was saying”—

“Mother!”

“Miss Jones wore a white figured satin”—

“Oh! mother!”

“With short sleeves”—

“Mother! mother!”

“Looped up with a small rosebud”—

“I say! mother! mother!”

The child now caught hold of her mother’s arm, and shook it violently, in her effort to gain the attention she desired, while her voice, which at first was low, had become loud and impatient. Mrs. Elder, no longer able to continue her account of the manner in which Miss Jones appeared at a recent ball, turned angrily toward little Mary, whose importunities had sadly annoyed her, and, seizing her by the arm, took her to the door and thrust her roughly from the room, without any inquiry as to what she wanted. The child screamed for a while at the door, and then went crying up-stairs.

“Do what you will,” said Mrs. Elder, fretfully, “you cannot teach children manners. I’ve talked to Mary a hundred times about interrupting me when I’m engaged in conversation with any one.”

“It’s line upon line and precept upon precept,” remarked the (sic) visiter. “Children are children, and we mustn’t expect too much from them.”

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“But I see other people’s children sit down quietly and behave themselves when there is company.”

“All children are not alike,” said the (sic) visiter. Some are more restless and impetuous than others. We have to consult their dispositions and pay regard thereto, or it will be impossible to manage them rightly. I find a great difference among my own children. Some are orderly, and others disorderly. Some have a strong sense of propriety, and others no sense of propriety at all.”

“It’s a great responsibility; is it not, Mrs. Peters?”

“Very great.”

“It makes me really unhappy. I am sometimes tempted to wish them all in heaven; and then I would be sure they were well off and well taken care of. Some people appear to get along with their children so easy. I don’t know how it is. I can’t.”

Mrs. Peters could have given her friend a useful hint or two on the subject of managing children, if she had felt that she dared to do so. But she knew Mrs. Elder to be exceedingly sensitive, and therefore she thought it best not to say any thing that might offend her.

There was a quiet-looking old gentleman in the room where the two ladies sat conversing. He had a book in his hand, and seemed to be reading; though, in fact, he was observing all that was said and done. He had not designed to do this, but the interruption of little Mary threw his mind off his book, and his thoughts entered a new element. This person was a brother of Mrs. Elder, and had recently become domesticated in her family. He was a bachelor.

After the (sic) visiter had retired, Mrs. Elder sat down to her work-table in the same room where she had received her company, and resumed her sewing operations, which the call had suspended. She had not been thus engaged long, before Mary came back into the room, looking sad enough. Instead of going to her mother; she went up to the old gentleman, and looking into his face with her yet tearful eyes, said—

“Uncle William?”

“What, dear?” was returned in a kind voice.

“Something sticks my neck. Won’t you see what it is?”

Uncle William laid down his book, and, turning down the neck of Mary’s frock, found that the point of a pin was fretting her body. There was at least a dozen little scratches, and an inflamed spot the size of a dollar.



“Poor child!” he said, tenderly, as he removed the pin. “There now! It feels better, doesn’t it?”

“Yes, it feels better; thank you, dear uncle!” and Mary put up her sweet lips and kissed him. The old gentleman was doubly repaid for his trouble. Mary ran lightly away, and he resumed his book.

In about ten minutes, the child opened the door and came in pulling the dredging-box, to which she had tied a string, along the floor, and marking the progress she made by a track of white meal.

“You little torment!” exclaimed the mother, springing up, and jerking the string and box angrily from Mary’s hand. “It is too bad! you know well enough that you had no business to touch this. Just see what a condition the floor is in! Oh dear! Shall I never teach the child any thing?”

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Mrs. Elder took the dredging-box out into the kitchen, and gave the cook a sound scolding for permitting the child to have it. When she got back, Mary had her work-basket on the floor, rummaging through it for buttons and spools of cotton.

“Now just see that!” she exclaimed again. “There now!” And little Mary’s ears buzzed for half an hour afterwards from the sound box she received.

After the child was thrust from the room, Mrs. Elder said, fretfully, “I’m out of all heart! I never saw such children. They seem ever bent on doing something wrong. Hark! what’s that?”

There was the crash of something falling over head, followed by a loud scream.

Uncle William and Mrs. Elder both started from the room and ran up-stairs. Here they found Henry, a boy two years older than Mary, who was between three and four, lying on the carpet with a bureau drawer upon him, which he had, while turning topsy-turvy after something or other, accidentally pulled out upon him. He was more frightened than hurt, by a great deal.

“Now just look at that!” ejaculated the outraged mother when the cause of alarm became apparent. “Just look at that, will you? Isn’t it beyond all endurance! Haven’t I told you a hundred times not to go near my drawers, ha? No matter if you’d been half killed! There, march out of the room as quick as you can go.” And she seized Henry by the arm with a strong grip, and fairly threw him, in her anger, from the chamber.

While she was yet storming, fretting, and fuming over the drawer, Uncle William retired from the apartment and, went down-stairs again. On entering the room he had left but a few minutes before, he found Mary at her mother’s work-basket again, notwithstanding the box she had received only a short time before for the same fault.

“Mary,” said Uncle William to the child, in a calm, earnest, yet kind voice.

The child took its hands from the basket and came up to her uncle.

“Mary, didn’t your mother tell you not to go to her basket?”

“Yes, sir,” replied Mary, looking steadily into her uncle’s face.

“Then why did you go?”

“I don’t know.”

“It was very wrong.” Uncle William spoke seriously, and the child’s face assumed a serious expression.



“Will you do it any more?”

“No, sir.” Mary shrink close to her uncle, and her reply was in a whisper.

“Be sure and not forget, Mary. Mother sews with her spools of cotton, and uses her scissors to make little Mary frocks and aprons, and if Mary takes any thing out of her work-basket, she can’t do her sewing good. Will you remember?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Now don’t forget.”

“No, sir.”

“And just see, Mary, how you have soiled the carpet with the dredging-box! Didn’t you know the flour would come out and be scattered all over the floor?”

“No, sir.”



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“But now you know it.”

“Yes, sir.”

“You won’t get the dredging-box any more?”

“No, sir.”

While this conversation was going on, Mrs. Elder came down, still feeling much excited. After Uncle William had said what he considered enough to Mary, he took up his book and commenced reading. The child stood leaning against him for five or ten minutes, and then ran out of the room.

“How long do you suppose she will remember what you have said?” remarked Mrs. Elder, with a lightness of tone that showed her contempt for all such measures of reform.

“Much longer than she will remember your box on the ear,” was the blunt reply.

“I doubt it. Words make no impression on children.”

“Harsh words make very little impression, I admit. For these close up, instead of entering the avenues to the mind. Kind words, and reasons for things, go a great way even with children. How long did Mary remember and profit by your sound rating and box on the ear (still red with the blow) into the bargain? Not over ten minutes; for when I came down-stairs, she had both hands into your basket again.”

“The little huzzy! It’s well for her that I did not catch her at it!”

“It is well indeed, Sarah, for you would, by your angry and unjust punishment, have done the little creature a serious injury. Did you ever explain to her the use of your work-basket and the various things in it, and make her comprehend how necessary it was to you to have every thing in order there, just as you placed it?”

“Gracious, William! Do you think I haven’t something else to do besides wasting time in explaining to children the use of every thing in my work-basket? What good would it do, I wonder?”

“It would do a great deal of good, Sarah, you may rely upon it, and be a great saving of time into the bargain; for if you made your children properly comprehend the use of every thing around them, and how their meddling with certain things was wrong, because it would incommode you, you would find them far less disposed than now to put their hands into wrong places. Try it.”



“Nonsense! I wonder if I haven’t been trying all my life to make them understand that they were not to meddle with things that didn’t belong to them! And what good has it done?”

“Very little, I must own; for I never saw children who had less regard to what their mother says than yours have.”

This touched Mrs. Elder a little. She didn’t mind animadverting upon the defects of her children, but was ready to stand up in their defence whenever any one else found fault with them.

“I reckon they are not the worst children in the world,” she replied, rather warmly.

“I should be sorry if they were. But they are not the best either, by a long way, although naturally as good children as are seen anywhere. It is your bad management that is spoiling them.”



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“My management!”

“Frankly, Sarah, I am compelled to affirm that it is. I have been in your house, now, for three or four months, and must say that I am surprised that your children are as good as they are. Don’t be angry! Don’t be fretted with me as you are with every thing in them that doesn’t please you. I am old enough to hear reason as well as to talk reason. Let us go back to a point on which I wished to fix your attention, but from which we digressed. In trying to correct Mary’s habit of rummaging in your work-basket, you boxed her ears, and stormed at her in a most unmotherly way. Did it do any good? No; for in ten minutes she was at the same work again. For this I talked to her kindly, and endeavoured to make her sensible that it was wrong to disturb your basket.”

“And much good it will do!” Mrs. Elder did not feel very amiable.

“We shall see,” said Uncle William, in his calm way. “Now I propose that we both go out of this room, and let Mary come into it, and be here alone for half an hour. My word for it, she doesn’t touch your work-basket.”

“And my word for it, she goes to it the first thing.”

“Notwithstanding you boxed her ears for the same fault so recently?”

“Yes, and notwithstanding you reasoned with her, and talked to her so softly but a few moments since.”

“Very well. The experiment is worth making, not to see who is right, but to see if a gentler mode of government than the one you have adopted will not be much better for your children. I am sure that it will.”

As proposed, the mother and Uncle William left the room, and Mary was allowed to go into it and remain there alone for half an hour. Long before this time had expired, Mrs. Elder’s excited feelings had cooled off, and been succeeded by a more sober and reflective state of mind. At the end of the proposed period, Uncle William came down, and joining his sister, said—

“Now, Sarah, let us go and see what Mary has been doing; but before we enter the room, let me beg of you not to show angry displeasure, nor to speak a harsh or loud word to Mary, no matter what she may have been about; for it will do no good, but harm. You have tried it long enough, and its ill effects call upon you to make a new experiment.”

Mrs. Elder, who was in a better state than she was half an hour before, readily agreed to this. They then went together into the room. As they entered, Mary looked up at them from the floor where she was, sitting, her face bright with smiles at seeing them.



“You lit”—

Uncle William grasped quickly the hand of his sister to remind her that she was not to speak harshly to Mary, no matter what she was doing, and was thus able to check the storm of angry reproof that was about to break upon the head of the child, who had been up to the book-case and taken, therefrom two rows of books, with which she was playing on the floor.



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“What are you doing, dear?” asked Uncle William, kindly.

“Building a house,” replied the child, the smiles that the sudden change in the mother’s countenance had driven from her face, coming back and lighting up her beautiful young brow. “See here what a pretty house I have, uncle! And here is the fence, and these are trees.”

“So it is, a very pretty house,” replied the uncle, while the mother could scarcely repress her indignation at the outrage Mary had committed upon the book-case.

The uncle glanced toward the table, upon which the, work-basket remained undisturbed. He then sat down, and said—“Come here, love.”

Mary got up and ran quickly to him.

“You didn’t touch mother’s work-basket?” he said.

“No, sir,” replied Mary.

“Why?”

Mary thought a moment, and then said—“You told me not to do it any more.”

“Why not?”

“Because if I take the cotton and scissors, mother can’t make aprons and frocks for Mary.”

“And if you go into her work-basket, you disturb every thing and make her a great deal of trouble. You won’t do it any more?”

“No, sir.” And the child shook her head earnestly.

“Didn’t you know that it was also wrong to take the books out of the book-case? It not only hurts the books, but throws the room and the book-case into disorder.”

“I wanted to build a house,” said Mary.

“But books are to read, not to build houses with.”

“Won’t you ask papa to buy me a box of blocks, like Hetty Green’s, to build houses with?”

“I’ll buy them for you myself the next time I go out,” replied Uncle William.

“Oh, will you?” And Mary clapped her hands joyfully together.



“But you must never disturb the books in the book-case any more.”

“No, sir,” replied the child, earnestly.

Mrs. Elder felt rebuked. To hide what was too plainly exhibited in her countenance, she stooped to the floor and commenced taking up the books and replacing them in the book-case.

“Now go up into my room, Mary, and wait there until I come. I want to tell you something.”

The child went singing up-stairs as happy as she could be.

“You see, Sarah, that kind words are more effective than harsh names with children. Mary didn’t touch your work-basket.”

“But she went to the book-case, which was just as bad. Children must be in some mischief.”

“Not so bad, Sarah; for she had been made to comprehend why it was wrong to go to your basket, but not so of the book-case.”

“I’m sure I’ve scolded her about taking down the books fifty times, and still, every chance she can get, she’s at them again.”

“You may have scolded her; but scolding a child and making it comprehend its error are two things. Scolding darkens the mind by arousing evil passions, instead of enlightening it with clear perceptions of right and, wrong. *No child is ever improved by scolding, but always injured.*”



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“There are few children who are not injured, then. I should like to see a mother get along with a parcel of children without scolding them.”

“It is a sad truth, as you say, that there are but few children who are not injured by scolding. No cause is so active for evil among children as their mother’s impatience, which shows itself from the first, and acts upon them through the whole period in which their minds are taking impressions and hardening into permanent forms. Like you, Sarah, our own mother had but little patience among her children, and you can look back and remember, as well as I, many instances in which this impatience led her into hasty and ill-judged acts and expressions that did us harm rather than good.”

“It’s an easy thing to talk, William. An easy thing to say—Have patience.”

“I know it is, Sarah; and a very hard thing to compel ourselves to have patience. But, if a mother’s love for her children be not strong enough to induce her to govern herself for their sakes, who shall seek their good? Who will make any sacrifice for them?”

“Are you not afraid to trust Mary up in your room?” said Mrs. Elder, recollecting at the moment that Mary was alone there for a longer time than she felt to be prudent.

“No. She will not trouble any thing.”

“I’d be afraid to trust her. She’s a thoughtless, impulsive child, and might do some damage.”

“No danger. She understands perfectly what may be and what may not be touched in my room, and so do all the children in the house. I wouldn’t be afraid to leave them all there for an hour.”

“You’d be afraid afterwards, I guess, if you were to try the experiment.”

“I am willing to try it.”

“You are welcome.”

“Henry! William!” Uncle William went to the door and called the children.

Two boys came romping into the room.

“Boys,” he said, “Mary is up in my room, and I want you to go up and stay with her until I come.”

Away scampered the little fellows as merry as crickets.



“They’ll make sad work in your room, brother; and if they do, you mustn’t blame me for it.”

“Oh, no, I shall not blame you, nor scold them, but endeavour to apply some corrective that will make them think, and determine never to do so again. However, I am pretty well satisfied that nothing will be disturbed.”

In less than an hour, Mrs. Elder and her brother went up to see what the children were about. They found them seated on the floor, with two or three loose packs of plain cards about them, out of which they were forming various figures, by laying them together upon the floor.

“Why, children! How could you take your uncle’s cards?” said Mrs. Elder reprovingly.

“He lets us play with them, mother,” replied the oldest boy, turning to his uncle with an appealing look.

“You haven’t touched any thing else?” said Uncle William.



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“No, sir, nothing else. We found Mary playing with the cards when we came up, and we’ve been playing with them ever since. You don’t care, do you, Uncle William?”

“No; for I’ve told you, you remember, that you might play with the cards whenever you wanted to.”

“Can’t we play with them longer, Uncle William?” asked Mary.

“Yes, my dear, you can play with them as long as you choose.”

Mrs. Elder and her brother turned away and went down-stairs.

“I don’t know how it is, William, that they behave themselves so well in your room, and act like so many young Vandals in every other part of the house.”

“It is plain enough, Sarah,” replied her brother. “I never scold them, and never push them aside when they come to me, no matter what I’m engaged in doing. I never think a little time taken from other employments thrown away when devoted to children; and, therefore, I generally hear what they have to say, let them come to me when they will. Sometimes I am engaged in such a way that I must not be interrupted, and then I lock my door. I have explained this to them, and now the children, when they find my door locked, immediately go away. On admitting them into my room at first, I was very careful to tell them that such and such things must on no account be touched, and explain the reason why; at the same time I gave them free permission to play with other things that could sustain no serious injury. Only once or twice has any of them ventured to trespass on forbidden ground. But, instead of scolding, or even administering a reprimand, I forbade the one who had done wrong coming to my room for a certain time. In no case have I had to repeat the interdiction. If I can thus govern them in my room, I am sure you can do it in the whole house, if you go the right way about it.”

“You say that you always attend to them when they come to you?” said Mrs. Elder.

“Yes. I try to do so, no matter how much I am engaged.”

“If I were to do that, I would be attending to them all the time. I couldn’t sit a moment with a visitor, nor say three words to anybody. You saw how it was this morning. The moment I sat down to talk with Mrs. Peters, Mary came and commenced interrupting me at every word, until I was forced to put her from the room.”

“Yes, I saw it,” replied the brother in a voice that plainly enough betrayed his disapproval of his sister’s conduct in that particular instance.

“And you think I ought to have neglected my visitor to attend to an ill-mannered child?”



“I think, when Mary came to you, as she did, that you should have attended to her at once. If you had done so, you would have relieved her from pain, and saved yourself and visitor from a serious annoyance.”

“How do you mean?”

“Don’t you know what Mary wanted?”

“No.”

“Is it possible! I thought you learned it when she came to me after Mrs. Peters had left.



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“No, I didn’t know. What was the matter with her?”

The brother stepped to the door and called for Mary, who presently came running downstairs.

“What do you want, uncle?” said she, as she came up to him and lifted her sparkling blue eyes to his face.

“What were you going to ask your mother to do for you when Mrs. Peters was here this morning?”

“A pin stuck me,” replied the child, artlessly. “Don’t you know that you took it out?”

“Yes, so I did. Let me look at the place,” and he turned down Mary’s frock so that her mother could see the scratched and inflamed spot upon her neck.

“Poor child!” said Mrs. Elder, the tears springing to her eyes as she stooped down and kissed the wounded place.

“Are you playing with the cards yet, dear?” asked Uncle William.

“Yes, sir.”

“Do you want to play more?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Run along then.” And Mary tripped lightly away.

“When the child first spoke to you, Sarah, if you had paused to see what she wanted, all would have been right in a few minutes. Even if her request had been frivolous, by attending to it you would have satisfied her, and been in a much better frame of mind to entertain your friend.”

Mrs. Elder was silent. There was conviction in Mary’s inflamed neck not to be resisted; and the conviction went to her heart.

“We,” said the old gentleman, “who have attained to the age of reason, expect children, who do not reflect, to act with all the propriety of men and women, and that too, without mild and correct instruction as to their duties. Are we not most to blame? They must regard our times, seasons, and conveniences, and we will attend to their ever active wants, when our leisure will best permit us to do so. Is it any wonder, under such a system, that children are troublesome? Would it not be a greater wonder were they otherwise? We must first learn self-government and self-denial before we can rightly govern children. After that, the task will be an easy one.”



Mrs. Elder stayed to hear no more, but, rising abruptly, went up into her chamber to think. When she appeared in her family, her countenance was subdued, and when she spoke, her voice was lower and more earnest. It was remarkable to see how readily her children minded when she spoke to them, and how affectionately they drew around her. Uncle William was delighted. In a few days, however, old habits returned, and then her brother came to her aid, and by timely uttered counsel gave her new strength. It was wonderful to see what an improvement three months had made, and at the end of a year no more loving and orderly household could be found. It took much of Mrs. Elder's time, and occupied almost constantly her thoughts; but the result well paid for all.

Thinking that this every-day incident in the history of a friend would appeal strongly to some mother who has not yet learned to govern herself, or properly regard the welfare of her children, we have sketched it hastily, and send it forth in the hope that it may do good.



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LOSING ONE'S TEMPER.

I was sitting in my room one morning, feeling all “out of sorts” about something or other, when an orphan child, whom I had taken to raise, came in with a broken tumbler in her hand, and said, while her young face was pale, and her little lip quivered,—

“See, Mrs. Graham! I went to take this tumbler from the dresser to get Anna a drink of water, and I let it fall.”

I was in a fretful humour before the child came in, and her appearance, with the broken tumbler in her hand, did not tend to help me to a better state of mind. She was suffering a good deal of pain in consequence of the accident, and needed a kind word to quiet the disturbed beatings of her heart. But she had come to me in an unfortunate moment.

“You are a careless little girl!” said I, severely, taking the fragments of glass from her trembling hands. “A very careless little girl, and I am displeased with you!”

I said no more; but my countenance expressed even stronger rebuke than my words. The child lingered near me for, a few moments, and then shrunk away from the room. I was sorry, in a moment, that I had permitted myself to speak unkindly to the little girl; for there was no need of my doing so; and, moreover, she had taken my words, as I could see, deeply to heart. I had made her unhappy without a cause. The breaking of the tumbler was an accident likely to happen to any one and the child evidently felt bad enough about what had occurred, without having my displeasure added thereto.

If I was unhappy before Jane entered my room I was still more unhappy after she retired. I blamed myself, and pitied the child; but this did not in the least mend the matter.

In about half an hour, Jane came up very quietly with Willy, my dear little, curly-haired, angel-face boy, in her arms. He had fallen asleep, and she had, with her utmost strength, carried him up-stairs. She did not lift her eyes to mine as she entered, but went, with her burden, to the low bed that was in the room, where she laid him tenderly, and then sat down with her face turned partly away from me, and with a fan kept off the flies and cooled his moist skin.

Enough of Jane's countenance was visible to enable me to perceive that its expression was sad. And it was an unkind word from my lips that had brought this cloud over her young face!

“So much for permitting myself to fall into a fretful mood,” said I, mentally. “In future I must be more watchful over my state of mind. I have no right to make others suffer from my own unhappy temper.”



Jane continued to sit by Willy and fan him; and every now and then I could hear a very low sigh come up, as if involuntarily, from her bosom. Faint as the sound was, it smote upon my ear, and added to my uncomfortable frame of mind.

A friend called, and I went down into the parlour, and sat conversing there for an hour. But all the while there was a weight upon my feelings. I tried, but in vain, to be cheerful. I was too distinctly aware of the fact, that an individual—and that a motherless little girl—was unhappy through my unkindness; and the consciousness was like a heavy hand upon my bosom.

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“This is all a weakness,” I said to myself, after my friend had left, making an effort to throw off the uncomfortable feeling. But it was of no avail. Even if the new train of thought, awakened by conversation with my friend, had lifted me above the state of mind in which I was when she came, the sight of Jane’s sober face, as she passed me on the stairs, would have depressed my feelings again.

In order both to relieve my own and the child’s feelings, I thought I would refer to the broken tumbler, and tell her not to grieve herself about it, as its loss was of no consequence whatever. But this would have been to have made an acknowledgment to her that I had been in the wrong, and instinctive feeling of pride remonstrated against that.

“Ah me!” I sighed. “Why did I permit myself to speak so unguardedly? How small are the cause that sometimes destroy our peace! How much good or evil is there in a single word!”

Some who read this may think that I was very weak to let a hastily uttered censure against a careless child trouble me. What are a child’s feelings?

I have been a child; and, as a child, have been blamed severely by those whom I desired to please, and felt that unkind words fell heavier and more painfully, sometimes, than blows. I could, therefore, understand the nature of Jane’s feelings, and sympathize with her to a certain extent.

All through the day, Jane moved about more quietly than usual. When I spoke to her about any thing—which I did in a kinder voice than I ordinarily used—she would look into my face with an earnestness that rebuked me.

Toward evening, I sent her down-stairs for a pitcher of cool water. She went quickly, and soon returned with the pitcher of water, and a tumbler, on a waiter. She was coming towards me, evidently using more than ordinary caution, when her foot tripped against something, and she stumbled forward. It was in vain that she tried to save the pitcher. Its balance was lost, and it fell over and was broken to pieces at my feet, the water dashing upon the skirt of my dress.

The poor child became instantly as pale as ashes, and the frightened look she gave me I shall not soon forget. She tried to speak, and say that it was an accident, but her tongue was, paralyzed for the moment, and she found no utterance.

The lesson I had received in the morning served me for purposes of self-control now, and I said, instantly, in a mild, voice—



“Never mind, Jane; I know you couldn’t help it. I must tack down that loose edge of the carpet. I came near tripping there myself to-day. Go and get a floor-cloth and wipe up the water as quickly as you can, while I gather up the broken pieces.”

The colour came back instantly to Jane’s face. She gave me one grateful look, and then ran quickly away, to do as I had directed her. When she came back, she blamed herself for not having been more careful, expressed sorrow for the accident, and promised over and over again that she would be more guarded in future.



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The contrast between both of our feelings now and what they were in the morning, was very great. I felt happier for having acted justly and with due self-control; and my little girl, though troubled on account of the accident, had not the extra burden of my displeasure to bear.

“Better, far better,” said I to myself, as I sat and reflected upon the incidents just related —“better, far better is it, in all our relations in life, to maintain a calm exterior, and on no account speak harshly to those who are below us. Angry words make double wounds. They hurt those whom they are addressed, while they leave a sting behind them. Above all, should we guard against a moody temper. Whenever we permit any thing to fret our minds, we are not in a state to exercise due self-control, and if temptation comes then we are sure to fall.”

TROUBLE WITH SERVANTS

“Oh, dear Mrs. Graham!” said my neighbour Mrs. Jones to me one day, “what shall I do for good help? I am almost worried out of my senses. I wish somebody would invent a machine to cook, wash, scrub, and do housework in general. What a blessing it would be! As for the whole tribe of flesh and blood domestics, they are not worth their salt.”

“They are all poorly educated,” I replied, “and we cannot expect much of them. Most of them have nearly every thing to learn when they come into our houses, and are bad scholars into the bargain. But we must have patience. I find it my only resource.”

“Patience!” ejaculated Mrs. Jones, warmly. It would require more patience than Job ever possessed to get along with some of them.”

“And yet,” said I, “we accomplish little or nothing by impatience. At least such is my experience.”

“I don’t know, ma’am,” replied Mrs. Jones. “If you go to being gentle and easy with them, if you don’t follow them up at every point, you will soon have affairs in a pretty condition! They don’t care a fig for your comfort nor interest—not they! In fact, more than half of them would, a thousand times, rather make things disagreeable for you than otherwise.”

“I know they are a great trial, sometimes,” I answered, not feeling at liberty to say to my (sic) visitor all I thought. “But we must endeavour to bear it the best we can. That is my rule; and I find, in the long run, that I get on much better when I repress all exhibition of annoyance at their carelessness, short-comings, neglect, or positive misdeeds, than I do when I let them see that I am annoyed, or exhibit the slightest angry feeling.”

Not long after this, we accepted an invitation to take tea with Mr. and Mrs. Jones, and I then had an opportunity of seeing how she conducted herself towards her domestics. I



was in no way surprised, afterwards, that she found difficulty in getting along with servants.

Soon after my husband and myself went in, and while we were sitting in the parlour, Mrs. Jones had occasion to call a servant. I noticed that, when she rung the bell, she did so with a quick jerk; and I could perceive a tone of authority in the ting-a-ling of the bell, the sound of which was distinctly heard. Nearly two minutes passed before the servant made her appearance, in which time the bell received a more vigorous jerk. At last she entered, looking flushed and hurried.



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“What’s the reason you did not come when I first rung?” inquired our lady hostess, in a severe tone.

“I—I—came as quick as I could,” replied the girl, with a look of mortification at being spoken to before strangers.

“No, you didn’t! It’s your custom to wait until I ring twice. Now let this be the last time!”

And then, in a low voice, Mrs. Jones gave the direction for which she had summoned her.

“Such a set!” ejaculated the lady, as the girl left the room. Her words were intended to reach other ears besides ours; and so they did. “That girl,” she continued, addressing me, “has a habit of making me ring twice. It really seems to give them pleasure, I believe, to annoy you. Ah, me! this trouble with servants is a never ending one. It meets you at every turn.”

And, for some time, she animadverted upon her favourite theme—for such it appeared to be,—until her husband, who was evidently annoyed, managed to change the subject of discourse. Once or twice she came back to it before tea-time.

At last the tea bell rung, and we ascended to the dining-room. We were but fairly seated, when a frown darkened suddenly on the brow of our hostess, and her hand applied itself nervously to the table-bell.

The girl who had set the table came up from the kitchen.

“There is no sugar in the bowl,” said Mrs. Jones sharply. “I wish you would learn to set the table while you are about it. I’m sure I have spoken to you often enough.”

As the girl took the sugar-bowl to fill it, the frown left the face of our hostess, and she turned to me with a bland smile, and asked whether I used sugar and cream in my tea. I replied in the affirmative; but did not smile in return, for I could not. I knew the poor girl’s feelings were hurt at being spoken to in such a way before strangers, and this made me extremely uncomfortable.

“Do you call this cream?” was the angry interrogation of Mrs. Jones, as the girl returned with the sugar, pushing towards her the cream-jug, which she had lifted from the table as she spoke.

“Yes, ma’am,” was replied.

“Look at it, and see, then.”

“It’s the cream,” said the girl.



“If that’s cream, I never want to see milk. Here! take it away and bring me the cream.”

The girl looked confused and distressed. But she took the cream-jug and went downstairs with it.

“That’s just the way they always do!” said Mrs. Jones; leaning back in her chair. “I really get out of all patience, sometimes.”

In a little while the girl returned.

“It’s the cream, ma’am, as I said. Here’s the milk.” And she presented two vessels.

Mrs. Jones took both from her hands with an ill-natured jerk. Sure enough, it was as the girl had said.

“Such cream!” fell from the lips of our hostess, as she commenced pouring it into the cups already filled with tea.



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The girl went down-stairs to take back the milk she had brought up, but she was scarcely at the bottom of the stairs, when the bell was rung for her.

“Why don’t you stay here? What are you running off about?” said Mrs. Jones, as she came in hurriedly. “You know I want you to wait on the table.”

And so it was during the whole meal. The girl was not once spoken to except in a tone of anger or offensive authority.

I was no longer surprised that Mrs. Jones found it difficult to keep good domestics, for no one of feeling can long remain with a woman who speaks to them always in a tone of command, or who reprovcs them in the presence of visitors.

My husband was very severe upon Mrs. Jones after we returned home. “No lady,” said he, “ever spoke in anger or reproof to a domestic before a visitor or stranger. Nothing more surely evinces a vulgar and unfeeling mind.”

I did not attempt to gainsay his remark, for he expressed but my own sentiment. So far from uttering a reproof in the presence of a visitor, I am careful not to speak to my domestics about any fault even in the presence of my husband. They have a certain respect for themselves, and a certain delicacy of feeling, which we should rather encourage than break down. Nearly all domestics are careful to appear as well as possible in the eyes of the head of the family, and it hurts them exceedingly to be reprovcd, or angrily spoken to, before him. This every woman ought to know by instinct, and those who do not are just so far deficient in the aggregate of qualities that go to make up the true lady.

I was by no means surprised to hear from Mrs. Jones, a few days afterwards, that the “good-for-nothing creature” who waited upon the table on the occasion of our taking tea at her house, had gone away and left her. I thought better of the girl for having the spirit to resent, in this way, the outrage committed upon her feelings. Domestics have rights and feelings; and if people were to regard these more, and treat them with greater kindness and consideration than they do, there would be fewer complaints than there are at present. This is my opinion, and I must be pardoned for expressing it.

HAVEN’T THE CHANGE.

It was house-cleaning time, and I had an old coloured woman at work scrubbing and cleaning paint.

“Polly is going, ma’am,” said one of my domestics, as the twilight began to fall.

“Very well. Tell her that I shall want her tomorrow.”



“I think she would like to have her money for to-day’s work,” said the girl.

I took out my purse, and found that I had nothing in it less than a three-dollar bill.

“How much does she have a day?”

“Six shillings, ma’am.”

“I haven’t the change this evening. Tell her that I’ll pay for both days to-morrow.”

The girl left the room, and I thought no more of Polly for an hour. Tea-time had come and passed, when one of my domestics, who was rather communicative in her habits, said to me:



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"I don't think old Polly liked your not paying her this evening."

"She must be very unreasonable, then," said I, without reflection. "I sent her word that I had no change. How did she expect I could pay her?"

"Some people are queer, you know, Mrs. Graham," remarked the girl who had made the communication, more for the pleasure of telling it than any thing else.

I kept thinking over what the girl had said, until other suggestions came into my mind.

"I wish I had sent and got a bill changed," said I, as the idea that Polly might be really in want of money intruded itself. "It would have been very little trouble."

This was the beginning of a new train of reflections, which did not make me very happy. To avoid a little trouble, I had sent the poor old woman away, after a hard day's work, without her money. That she stood in need of it was evident from the fact that she had asked for it.

"How very thoughtless in me," said I, as I dwelt longer and longer on the subject.

"What's the matter?" inquired my husband, seeing me look serious.

"Nothing to be very much troubled at," I replied.

"Yet you are troubled."

"I am; and cannot help it. You will, perhaps, smile at me, but small causes sometimes produce much pain. Old Polly has been at work all day, scrubbing and cleaning. When night came, she asked for her wages, and I, instead of taking the trouble to get the money for her, sent her word that I hadn't the change. There was nothing less than a three-dollar bill in my purse. I didn't reflect that a poor old woman who has to go out to daily work must need her money as soon as it is earned. I am very sorry."

My husband did not reply for some time. My words appeared to have made considerable impression on his mind.

"Do you know where Polly lives?" he inquired at length.

"No; but I will ask the girl." And immediately ringing the bell, I made inquiries as to where Polly lived; but no one in the house knew.

"It cannot be helped now," said my husband, in a tone of regret. "But I would be more thoughtful in future. The poor always have need of their money. Their daily labour rarely does more than supply their daily wants. I can never forget a circumstance that occurred when I was a boy. My mother was left a widow when I was but nine years old



—and she was poor. It was by the labour of her hands that she obtained shelter and food for herself and three little ones.

“Once, I remember the occurrence as if it had taken place yesterday, we were out of money and food. At breakfast-time our last morsel was eaten, and we went through the long day without a mouthful of bread. We all grew very hungry by night; but our mother encouraged us to be patient a little and a little while longer, until she finished the garment she was making, when she would take that and some other work home to a



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lady who would pay her for the work. Then, she said, we should have a nice supper. At last the work was finished, and I went with my mother to help carry it home, for she was weak and sickly, and even a light burden fatigued her. The lady for whom she had made the garment was in good circumstances, and had no want unmet that money could supply. When we came into her presence, she took the work, and, after glancing at it carelessly, said,

“It will do very well.’

“My mother lingered; perceiving which, the lady said, rather rudely,

“You want your money, I suppose. How much does the work come to?’

“Two dollars,’ replied my mother. The lady took out her purse; and, after looking through a small parcel of bills, said,

“I haven’t the change this evening. Call over anytime, and you shall have it.’

“And without giving my mother time more earnestly to urge her request, turned from us and left the room. I never shall forget the night that followed. My mother’s feelings were sensitive and independent. She could not make known her want. An hour after our return home, she sat weeping with her children around her, when a neighbour came in, and, learning our situation, supplied the present need.”

This relation did not make me feel any the more comfortable. Anxiously I waited, on the next morning, the arrival of Polly. As soon as she came I sent for her, and, handing her the money she had earned on the day before, said,

“I’m sorry I hadn’t the change for you last night, Polly. I hope you didn’t want it very badly.”

Polly hesitated a little, and then replied,

“Well, ma’am, I did want it very much, or I wouldn’t have asked for it. My poor daughter Hetty is sick, and I wanted to get her something nice to eat.”

“I’m very sorry,” said I, with sincere regret. “How is Hetty this morning?”

“She isn’t so well, ma’am. And I feel very bad about her.”

“Come up to me in half an hour, Polly,” said I.



The old woman went down-stairs. When she appeared again, according to my desire, I had a basket for her, in which were some wine, sugar, fruit, and various little matters that I thought her daughter would relish, and told her to go at once and take them to the sick girl. Her expressions of gratitude touched my feelings deeply. Never since have I omitted, under any pretence, to pay the poor their wages as soon as earned.

OLD MAIDS' CHILDREN.

“If that were my child, I’d soon break him of such airs and capers. Only manage him right, and he’ll be as good a boy as can be found anywhere.”

“Very few people appear to have any right government over their children.”

“Very few. Here is my sister; a sensible woman enough, and one would think the very person to raise, in order and obedience, a family of eight children. But she doesn’t manage them rightly; and, what is remarkable, is exceedingly sensitive, and won’t take kindly the slightest hint from me on the subject. If I say to her, ‘If that were my child, Sarah, I would do so and so,’ she will be almost sure to retort something about old maids’ children.”



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“Yes, that’s the way. No matter how defective the family government of any one may be, she will not allow others to suggest improvements.”

“It would not be so with me. If I had a family of children, I should not only see their faults, but gladly receive hints from all sides as to their correction.”

“It’s the easiest thing in the world to govern children, if you go the right way about it.”

“I know. There is nothing easier. And yet my sister will say, sometimes, that she is perfectly at a loss what to do. But no wonder. Like hundreds of others, she has let her children get completely ahead of her. If they don’t break her heart in the end, I shall be glad.”

The immediate cause of this conversation between Miss Martha Spencer and a maiden lady who had been twenty-five for some ten or fifteen years—Miss Spencer could not be accused of extensive juvenility—was the refractory conduct of Mrs. Fleetwood’s oldest child, a boy between six and seven years of age, by which a pleasant conversation had been interrupted, and the mother obliged to leave the room for a short period.

“I think, with you,” said Miss Jones, the visitor, “that Mrs. Fleetwood errs very greatly in the management of her children.”

“Management! She has no management at all,” interrupted Miss Spencer.

“In not managing her children, then, if you will.”

“So I have told her, over and over again, but to no good purpose. She never receives it kindly. Why, if I had a child, I would never suffer it to cry after it was six months old. It is the easiest thing in the world to prevent it. And yet, one of Sarah’s children does little else but fret and cry all the time. She insists upon it that it can’t feel well. And suppose this to be the case?—crying does it no good, but, in reality, a great deal of harm. If it is sick, it has made itself so by crying.”

“Very likely. I’ve known many such instances,” remarked Miss Jones.

Mrs. Fleetwood, returning at the moment, checked this train of conversation. She did not allude to the circumstance that caused her to leave the room, but endeavoured to withdraw attention from it by some pleasant remarks calculated to interest the visitor and give the thoughts of all a new direction.

“I hope you punished Earnest, as he deserved to be,” said her sister, as soon as Miss Jones had retired. “I never saw such a child!”

“He certainly behaved badly,” returned Mrs. Fleetwood, speaking in an absent manner.



“He behaved outrageously! If I had a child, and he were to act as Earnest did this morning, I’d teach him a lesson that he would not forget in a year.”

“No doubt your children will be under very good government, Martha,” said Mrs. Fleetwood, a little sarcastically.

“If they are not under better government than yours, I’ll send them all to the House of Refuge,” retorted Miss Martha.



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The colour on Mrs. Fleetwood's cheeks grew warmer at this remark, but she thought it best not to reply in a manner likely to provoke a further insulting retort, and merely said

"If ever you come to have children of your own, sister, you will be able to understand, better than you now do, a mother's trials, doubts, and difficulties. At present, you think you know a great deal about managing children, but you know nothing."

"I know," replied Martha, "that I could manage my own children a great deal better than you manage yours."

"If such should prove to be the case, no one will be more rejoiced at the result than I. But I look, rather, to see your children, if you should ever become a mother, worse governed than most people's."

"You do?"

"Yes, I do."

"And why, pray?"

"Because my own observation tells me, that those persons who are most inclined to see defects in family government, and to find fault with other people's management of their children, are apt to have the most unruly young scape-graces in their houses to be found anywhere."

"That's all nonsense. The fact that a person observes and reflects ought to make that person better qualified to act."

"Right observation and reflection, no doubt, will. But right observation and reflection in regard to children will make any one modest and fearful on the subject of their right government, rather than bold and boastful. Those who, like you, think themselves so well qualified to manage children, usually make the worst managers."

"It's all very well for you to talk in that way," said Martha, tossing her head. "But, if I ever have children of my own, I'll show you whether I have the worst young scape-graces to be found anywhere."

A low, fretful cry, or rather whine, had been heard from a child near the door of the room, for some time. It was one of those annoying, irritating cries, that proceed more from a fretful state of mind than from any adequate external exciting cause. Martha paused a moment, and then added—

"Do you think I would suffer a child to cry about the house half of its time, as Ellen does? No, indeed. I'd soon settle that."



“How would you do it?”

“I’d make her stop crying.”

“Suppose you couldn’t?”

“Couldn’t! That’s not the way for a mother to talk.”

“Excuse me, Martha,” said Mrs. Fleetwood, rising. “I would rather not hear such remarks from you, and now repeat what I have before said, more than once, that I wish you to leave me free to do what I think right in my own family; as I undoubtedly will leave you free, if ever you should have one.”

And Mrs. Fleetwood left the room, and taking the little girl who was crying at the door by the hand, led her up stairs.

“What is the matter, Ellen?” she asked as calmly and as soothingly as the irritating nature of Ellen’s peculiar cry or whine would permit her.



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“Earnest won’t play with me,” replied the child, still crying.

“Come up into my room, and see if there isn’t something pretty there to play with.”

“No—I don’t want to,” was the crying answer.

“Yes; come.” And Mrs. Fleetwood led along the resisting child.

“No—no—no—I don’t want to go. I want Earnest to play with me.”

“Humph! I’d stop that pretty quick!” remarked Miss Spencer to herself, as the petulant cry of the child grew louder. “I’d never allow a child of mine to go on like that.”

Mrs. Fleetwood felt disturbed. But experience had taught her that whenever she spoke from an irritated state, her words rather increased than allayed the evil she sought to correct. So she drew the child along with her, using some force in order to do it, until she reached her chamber. Her strongest impulse, on being alone with Ellen, who still continued crying, was to silence her instantly by the most summary process to which parental authority usually has resort in such cases; but her mother’s heart suggested the better plan of diverting Ellen’s mind, if possible, and thus getting it into a happier state. In order to do this, she tried various means, but without effect. The child still cried on, and in a manner so disturbing to the mother, that she found it almost impossible to keep from enforcing silence by a stern threat of instant punishment. But, she kept on, patiently doing what she thought to be right, and was finally successful in soothing the unhappy child. To her husband, with whom she was conversing on that evening about the state into which Ellen had fallen, she said—

“I find it very hard to get along with her. She tires my patience almost beyond endurance. Sometimes it is impossible to bear with her crying, and I silence it by punishment. But I observe that if I can produce a cheerful state by amusing her and getting her interested in some play or employment, she retains her even temper much longer than when she has been stopped from crying by threats or punishment. If I only had patience with her, I could get along better. But it is so hard to have patience with a fretful, ever crying child.”

Of the mental exercises through which Mrs. Fleetwood passed, Miss Martha Spencer knew nothing. She saw only the real and supposed errors of her mode of government, and strongly condemned them. Her doctrine was, in governing children, “implicit obedience must be had at all hazards.” At all hazards, as she generally expressed or thought it was only meant for extreme or extraordinary cases. Obedience she believed to be a thing easily obtained by any one who chose to enforce it. No where, it must be owned, did she see children as orderly and obedient as she thought they should be. But that she did not hesitate to set down to the fault of the parents. Her influence in the

family of her sister was not good. To some extent she destroyed the freedom of Mrs. Fleetwood, and to some extent



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disturbed the government of her children by interfering with it, and attempting to make the little ones do as she thought best. Her interference was borne about as well as it could be by her sister, who now and then gave her a “piece of her mind,” and in plain, straight forward terms. Mrs. Fleetwood’s usual remark, when Martha talked about what she would do, if she had children, was a good humoured one, and generally something after this fashion—

“Old maids’ children are the best in the world, I know. They never cry, are never disobedient, and never act disorderly.”

Martha hardly relished this mode of “stopping her off,” but it was generally effective, though sometimes it produced a slight ebullition.

At last, though the chances in favour of matrimony had become alarmingly few, Martha was wooed, won, and married to a gentleman named Laurie, who removed with her to the West.

“There is some prospect at last,” Mrs. Fleetwood said to her husband, with a smile, on the occasion of Martha’s wedding, “of sister’s being able to bring into practice her theories in regard to family government. I only hope the mother’s children may be as good as the old maid’s.”

“I doubt if they will,” remarked the husband, smiling in turn.

“We shall see.”

Years passed, and Martha, now Mrs. Laurie, remained in the West. Her sister frequently heard from her by letter, and every now and then received the announcement of a fine babe born to the proud mother; who as often spoke of her resolution to do her duty towards her children, and especially in the matter of enforcing obedience. She still talked eloquently of the right modes of domestic government, and the high and holy duties of parents.

“Let me be blamable in what I may,” said she, in one of these letters, “it shall not be a disregard to the best interests of my children.”

“I hope not, indeed,” said Mrs. Fleetwood, after reading the passage to her husband. “But those who really understand the true character of children, and are sensible of the fact that they inherit from their parents all the evil and disorderly tendencies not fully overcome in themselves, feel too deeply the almost hopeless task they assume, to boast much of what they will do with *their* children. A humble, reserved, even trembling consciousness of the difficulties in the way of the parent, is the most promising state in which a parent can assume his or her responsibilities. To look for perfect order and



obedience is to look for what never comes. Our duty is to sow good seed in the minds of our children, and to see that the ground be kept as free from evil weeds as possible. The time of fruit is not until reason is developed; and we err in expecting fruit at an early period. There will come the tender blade, green and pleasant to the eye, and the firm, upright stalk, with its leaves and its branches; and flowers, too, after a while, beautiful, sweet-smelling flowers; but the fruit of all our labour, of all our careful culture, appears not until reason takes the place of mere obedience, and the child becomes the man. This view saves me from many discouragements; and leads me, in calm and patient hope, to persevere, even though through months, and, I might almost say, years, little prospect of ultimate fruit becomes apparent. But, good seed must bring forth good fruit.”



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After a while, Mrs. Laurie ceased to write in her old strain. She sometimes spoke of her two eldest sons as fine boys, and of her two little girls as dear, sweet creatures; but generally omitted saying any thing more about her family than that all were in good health.

Ten years after Martha's marriage and removal to the West, during which time the sisters had not met, business required Mr. Fleetwood to go to Cincinnati, and he proposed that his wife should accompany him, and pay a visit to Mrs. Laurie, who lived in Springfield, Ohio. Mrs. Fleetwood readily consented, and they started in the pleasant month of October.

On arriving at Springfield, they were met by Mr. Laurie at the stage-office and taken to his house, where the sisters met, overjoyed at seeing each other once more.

"Is that one of your children?" asked Mrs. Fleetwood, after she had laid aside her bonnet and riding-dress, and seated herself in her sister's chamber. A red-faced boy, with pouting lips, and a brow naturally or artificially so heavy as almost to conceal his organs of vision, stood holding on to one side of the door, and swinging himself in and out, all the while eyeing fixedly his aunt, of whose intended visit he had been advised.

"Yes, that is my oldest. Henry, come here and speak to your aunty."

But Henry did not change either attitude, motion, nor expression, any more than if he had been a swinging automaton.

"Did you hear me?" Mrs. Laurie spoke with a slight change in her voice and manner.

The boy remained as impassive as before.

"Come, dear, and shake hands with me," said Mrs. Fleetwood.

Henry now put one of his thumbs into his mouth, but neither looked nor acted less savagely than at first.

Mrs. Laurie was fretted at this unfavourable exhibition of himself by her son. She felt as if she would like to get hold of him and box his ears until they burned for a week.

"Henry! Come here!" She spoke in a tone of command. The door was quite as much impressed as her son.

"Either come and speak to your aunty, or go down-stairs immediately."

The boy moved not.



This was too much for Mrs. Laurie, and she started towards him. Henry let go of the door, and went down-stairs about as quietly as a horse would have gone.

“He’s such a strange, shy boy,” said Mrs. Laurie, apologetically. “But he has a good heart, and you can do almost any thing with him. How is Earnest? the dear little fellow.”

“Earnest is almost a man. He is as large as I am,” replied Mrs. Fleetwood.

“Indeed! I can’t think of him as any thing but a bright little boy, not so large as my Henry.”

As she said this, her Henry, who had gone clattering down-stairs a few moments before, presented himself at the door again, and commenced swinging himself, and taking observations of the state of affairs within the chamber. The mother and aunt both concluded within their own minds that it was as well not to take any notice of him, and therefore went on with their conversation. Presently a happy, singing voice was heard upon the stairs.



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"There comes my little Martha, the light of the whole house," said Mrs. Laurie. In a few moments, a sweet-faced child presented herself, and was about entering, when Henry stepped into the door, and, putting a foot against each side, blocked up the way. Martha attempted to pass the rude boy, and, in doing so, fell over one of his feet, and struck her face a severe blow upon the floor. The loud scream of the hurt child, the clattering of Henry down-stairs, and the excited exclamation of the mother as she sprang forward, were simultaneous. Mr. Laurie and Mr. Fleetwood came running up from the room below, and arrived in time to see a gush of blood from the nose of Martha, as her mother raised her from the floor.

"Isn't it too much!" exclaimed Mrs. Laurie. "I think that it is the worst boy I ever saw in my life!"

The application of a little cold water soon staunched the flow of blood, and a few kind words soothed the feelings of the child, who sat in her mother's lap, and answered her aunt when she spoke to her, like a little lady, as she was.

"Where are the rest of your children?" asked Mrs. Fleetwood. The gentlemen were now seated with the ladies.

"You've had a pretty fair sample of them," replied Mr. Laurie, smiling good humouredly, "and may as well be content with that for the present. To say the best of them, they are about as wild a set of young scape-graces as ever made each other miserable, and their parents, too, sometimes."

"Why, Mr. Laurie!" exclaimed his wife, who had not forgotten her old opinions, freely expressed, about the ease with which children could be governed. "I'm sure you needn't say that. I think our children quite as good as other people's, and a little better than some I could name."

"Well, perhaps they are, and nothing to brag of at that," replied Mr. Laurie. "Children are children, and you can't make any thing more out of them."

"But children should be made orderly and obedient," said Mrs. Laurie, with some dignity of expression.

"If they can," pleasantly returned the father. "So far, we, at least, have not succeeded to our wishes in this respect. As to order and obedience, they seem to be cardinal sins rather than cardinal virtues, at present. But I hope better things after a while."

As this was said, some one was heard tumbling rather than walking up-stairs, and, in a moment after, in bolted a boy about seven years old, crying out—

"Hen' says Uncle and Aunt Fleetwood have come! Have they, mom?"

The boy stopped short on perceiving that strangers were present.

“Yes, my son, your Uncle and Aunt Fleetwood are here,” said Mr. Fleetwood, reaching out his hand to the little fellow. Remembering Martha’s former rigid notions about the government of children, he felt so much amused by what he saw, that he could hardly help laughing out immoderately. “Come here,” he added, “and let me talk to you.”



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The boy went without hesitation to his uncle, who took him by the hand and said, with a half wicked glance at the mother, yet with a broad good humoured smile upon his face,

“That must be a very knowing hen of yours. I should like to have some of her chickens.”

“What hen?” asked the boy, with a serious air.

“Why, the hen that told you we were here.”

“No hen told me that.” The boy looked mystified.

“Oh! I thought you said Hen’ told you so.”

“No, it was Henry.”

“Say, no *sir*, my son.” Mrs. Laurie’s face was not pale, certainly, as she said this.

The boy did not think it worth while to repeat the formality.

“Oh! it was your brother Henry,” replied Mr. Fleetwood, with affected seriousness. “I thought that must have been a very knowing hen.” The boy, and his sister who had recovered from the pain of her fall, laughed heartily. “Now tell me your name?”

“John.”

“Say John, *sir*. Where are your manners?” spoke up the mother, who remembered that, with all her sister’s imperfect management of her children, she had succeeded in teaching them to be very respectful in their replies to older persons, and that Earnest, when she last saw him, was a little gentleman in his manners when any one spoke to him.

“Mo-*ther!*” came now ringing up the stairs, in a loud, screeching little voice. “Mo-*ther!* Hen’ won’t let me come up.”

“I declare! That boy is too bad! He’s a perfect torment!” said Mrs. Laurie, fretfully. “I’m out of all heart with him.”

The father stepped to the head of the stairs, and spoke rather sternly to the rebellious Henry. Little feet, were soon heard pattering up, and the youngest of the young hopefuls made her appearance, and, soon after, Henry pushed his really repulsive face into the door and commenced grimacing at the other children, thereby succeeding in what he desired to do, *viz.*, starting little Maggy, the youngest, into a whining, fretful cry, because “Hen’ was making faces” at her. This cry, once commenced, was never known to end without the application of something more decided in its effects than words. It was in vain that the mother used every persuasive, diverting and soothing means in her



power: the crying, loud enough to drown all conversation, continued, until, taking the child up hurriedly in her arms, she bore her into another room, where she applied some pretty severe silencing measures, which had, however, the contrary effect to that desired. The child cried on, but louder than before. For nearly ten minutes, she sought by scolding and whipping to silence her, but all was in vain. It is doubtful, after the means used to enforce silence, whether the child could have stopped if she had tried. At last, the mother locked her in a closet, and came, with a flushed face and mortified feelings, back to the room from which she had retired with Maggy.



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The moment Mrs. Laurie left, her husband, with a word and a look, brought the three children into order and quietness. Henry was told, in a low voice, and in a tone of authority, that he never thought of questioning, to go up into the garret and remain there until he sent for him. The boy retired without the slightest hesitation.

When Mrs. Laurie returned, Mr. Fleetwood, who was a man of frank, free, and pleasant manners, could not resist the temptation he felt to remind her of the past; he, therefore, said, laughingly,

“You have doubtless found out, by this time, Martha, that old maids’ children are the best.”

This sally had just the effect he designed it to have. It was an apology for the children, as it classed them with other real children, in contradistinction to the imaginary offspring of the unmarried, that are known by every one to be faultless specimens of juvenility.

“Come! That is too bad, Mr. Fleetwood,” replied Mrs. Laurie, feeling an immediate sense of relief. “But, I own to the error I committed before marriage. It seemed to me the easiest thing in the world to manage children, when I thought about it, and saw where parents erred, or appeared to err, in their modes of government. I did not then know what was *in* children. All their perverseness I laid to the account of bad management. Alas! I have had some sad experiences in regard to my error. Still, I cannot but own that children are made worse by injudicious treatment, and also, that mine ought to be a great deal better than they are.”

“Like the rest of us,” returned Mr. Fleetwood, “you have no doubt discovered, that it is one thing to *think* about the government of children, and another thing to be in the midst of their disturbing sphere, and yet act as if you did not feel it. Theory and practice are two things. It seems, when we think coolly, that nothing can be easier than to cause the one exactly to correspond to the other. But whoever makes the trial, especially where the right government of children is concerned, will find it a most difficult matter. What makes the government of their children so hard a thing for parents, is the fact that the evils of the children have been inherited from them, and therefore the reaction of these evils upon themselves is the more disturbing. We haven’t as much patience with the faults of our own children, often, as other people have. They fret and annoy us, and take away our ability to speak in a proper tone and act with becoming dignity toward them, and thus destroy their respect for us.”

“Nothing can be truer,” said Mrs. Laurie. “I stand rebuked. I am self-condemned, every day, on this very account. I used to think that your government and that of Sarah’s over your children very defective. But it was far better than the government that I have been able to exercise over mine. Ah me!”



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“Don’t sigh over the matter so terribly, Martha,” spoke up the husband. “We shall get them right in the end. Never give up the ship, is my motto in this and every thing else. But I wouldn’t have our brother and sister here think for a moment that the scenes they have witnessed are enacted every day. Their visit is an occasion of some excitement to our young folks, and they had to show off a little. They will cool down again, and we shall get on pleasantly enough.”

“That is all very true,” said Mrs. Laurie, more cheerfully. “I never saw them act quite so outrageously before, when any one came in. There is much good in them, and you will see it before you leave us.”

“No doubt in the world of that,” replied Mr. Fleetwood; “there is good in all children, and it is our duty to exercise great forbearance towards their evils, and be careful lest, by what we do or say, we strengthen, rather than break them.”

And the good that was in Mrs. Laurie’s children was clearly seen by Mr. and Mrs. Fleetwood during their stay; but, that good was, alas! not strengthened as it might have been, nor were the evils they inherited kept quiescent, as they would to a great extent have remained, had the mother been more patient and forbearing—had her practice been as good as her theory.

It is easy for us to see how others ought to act toward their children, but very hard for us to act right toward our own.

THE MOTHER AND BOY.

“Tom, let that alone!” exclaimed a mother, petulantly, to a boy seven years old, who was playing with a tassel that hung from one of the window-blinds, to the imminent danger of its destruction.

The boy did not seem to hear, but kept on fingering the tassel.

“Let that be, I tell you! Must I speak a hundred times? Why don’t you mind at once?”

The child slowly relinquished his hold of the tassel, and commenced running his hand up and down the venetian blind.

“There! there! Do for gracious sake let them blinds alone. Go ’way from the window this moment, and try and keep your hands off of things. I declare! you are the most trying child I ever saw.”

Tom left the window and threw himself at full length into the cradle, where he commenced rocking himself with a force and rapidity that made every thing crack again.



“Get out of that cradle! What do you mean? The child really seems possessed!” And the mother caught him by the arm and jerked him from the cradle.

Tom said nothing, but, with the most imperturbable air in the world, walked twice around the room, and then pushing a chair up before the dressing-bureau, took therefrom a bottle of hair lustral, and, pouring the palm of his little hand full of the liquid, commenced rubbing it upon his head. Twice had this operation been performed, and Tom was pulling open a drawer to get the hair-brush, when the odour of the oily compound reached the nostrils of the lad’s mother, who was sitting with her back toward him. Turning quickly, she saw what was going on.



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"You!" fell angrily from her lips, as she dropped the baby in the cradle. "Isn't it too much!" she continued, as she swept across the room to where Tom was standing before the bureau-dressing-glass.

"There, sir!" and the child's ear rang with the box he received. "There, sir!" and the box was repeated. "Haven't I told you a hundred times not to touch that hair-oil? Just see what a spot of grease you've made on the carpet! Look at your hands!"

Tom looked at his hands, and, seeing them full of oil, clapped them quickly down upon his jacket, and tried to rub them clean.

"There! stop! mercy! Now see your new jacket that you put on this morning. Grease from top to bottom! Isn't it too bad! I am in despair!" And the mother let her hands fall by her side, and her body drop into a chair.

"It's no use to try," she continued; "I'll give up. Just see that jacket! it's totally ruined; and that carpet, too. Was there ever such a trying boy! Go down-stairs this instant, and tell Jane to come up here."

Tom had reason to know that his mother was not in a mood to be trifled with, so he went off briskly and called Jane, who was directed to get some fuller's earth and put upon the carpet where oil had been spilled.

Not at all liking the atmosphere of his mother's room, Tom, being once in the kitchen, felt no inclination to return. His first work there, after delivering his message to Jane, was to commence turning the coffee-mill.

"Tommy," said the cook, mildly, yet firmly, "you know I've told you that it was wrong to touch the coffee-mill. See here, on the floor, where you have scattered the coffee about, and now I must get a broom and sweep it up. If you do so, I can't let you come down here."

The boy stood and looked at the cook seriously, while she got the broom and swept up the dirt he had made.

"It's all clean again now," said the cook, pleasantly. "And you won't do so any more, will you?"

"No, I won't touch the coffee-mill." And, as Tom said this, he sidled up to the knife-box that stood upon the dresser, and made a dive into it with his hand.

"Oh, no, no, no, Tommy! that won't do, either," said the cook. "The knives have all been cleaned, and they are to go on the table to eat with."



“Then what can I play with, Margaret?” asked the child, as he left the dresser. “I want something to play with.”

The cook thought a moment, and then went to a closet and brought out a little basket filled with clothes-pins. As she held them in her hand, she said—“Tommy, if you will be careful not to break any of these, nor scatter them about, you may have them to play with. But remember, now, that as soon as you begin to throw them around the room, I will put them up again.”

“Oh, no, I won’t throw them about,” said the little fellow, with brightening eyes, as he reached out for the basket of pins.



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In a little while he had a circle formed on the table, which he called his fort; and inside of this he had men, cannon, sentry-boxes, and other things that were suggested to his fancy.

"Where's Thomas?" asked his mother, about the time he had become fairly interested in his fort.

"I left him down in the kitchen," replied Jane.

"Go down and tell him to come up here instantly."

Down went Jane.

"Come along up-stairs to your mother," said she.

"No, I won't," replied the boy.

"Very well, mister! You can do as you like; but your mother sent for you."

"Tell mother I am playing here so good. I'm not in any mischief. Am I, Margaret?"

"No, Tommy; but your mother has sent for you, and you had better go."

"I don't want to."

"Just as you like," said Jane, indifferently, as she left the kitchen and went up-stairs.

"Where's Thomas?" was the question with which she was met on returning to the chamber.

"He won't come, ma'am."

"Go and tell him that if he doesn't come up to me instantly, I will put on his night-clothes and shut him up in the closet."

The threat of the closet was generally uttered ten times where it was executed once; it made but little impression upon the child, who was all absorbed in his fort.

Jane returned. In a few moments afterward, the quick, angry voice of the mother was heard ringing down the stairway.

"You, Tom! come up here this instant."

"I'm not troubling any thing, mother."

"Come up, I say!"



“Margaret says I may play with the clothes-pins. I’m only building a fort with them.”

“Do you hear me?”

“Mother!”

“Tom! if you don’t come to me this instant, I’ll almost skin you. Margaret! take them clothes-pins away. Pretty playthings, indeed, for you to give a boy like him! No wonder I have to get a dozen new ones every two or three months.”

Margaret now spoke.

“Tommy, you must go up to your mother.”

She now took the clothes-pins and commenced putting them into the basket where they belonged. Her words and action had a more instant effect than all the mother’s storm of passion. The boy left the kitchen in tears, and went slowly up-stairs.

“Why didn’t you come when I called you? Say!”

The mother seized her little boy by the arm the moment he came in reach of her, and dragged rather than led him up-stairs, uttering such exclamations as these by the way:

“I never saw such a child! You might as well talk to the wind! I’m in despair! I’ll give up! Humph! clothes-pins, indeed! Pretty playthings to give a child! Every thing goes to rack and ruin! There!”

And, as the last word was uttered, Tommy was thrust into his mother’s room with a force that nearly threw him prostrate.



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“Now take off them clothes, sir.”

“What for, mother? I haven’t done any thing! I didn’t hurt the clothes-pins; Margaret said I might play with them.”

“D’ye hear? take off them clothes, I say!”

“I didn’t do any thing, mother.”

“A word more, and I’ll box your ears until they ring for a month. Take off them clothes, I say! I’ll teach you to come when I send for you! I’ll let you know whether I am to be minded or not!”

Tommy slowly disrobed himself, while his mother, fretted to the point of resolution, eyed him with unrelenting aspect. The jacket and trousers were removed, and his night-clothes put on in their stead, Tommy all the while protesting tearfully that he had done nothing.

“Will you hush?” was all the satisfaction he received for his protestations.

“Now, Jane, take him up-stairs to bed; he’s got to lie there all the afternoon.”

It was then four, and the sun did not set until near eight o’clock. Up-stairs the poor child had to go, and then his mother found some quiet. Her babe slept soundly in the cradle, undisturbed by Tommy’s racket, and she enjoyed a new novel to the extent of almost entirely forgetting her lonely boy shut up in the chamber above.

“Where’s Tommy?” asked a friend, who dropped in about six o’clock.

“In bed,” said the mother, with a sigh.

“What’s the matter? Is he sick?”

“Oh, no. I almost wish he were.”

“What a strange wish! Why do you wish so?”

“Oh, because he is like a little angel when he is sick—as good as he can be. I had to send him to bed as a punishment for disobedience. He is a hard child to manage; I think I never saw one just like him; but, you know, obedience is every thing. It is our duty to require a strict regard to this in our children.”

“Certainly. If they do not obey their parents as children, they will not obey the laws as men.”



“That is precisely the view I take; and I make it a point to require implicit obedience in my boy. This is my duty as a parent; but I find it hard work.”

“It is hard, doubtless. Still we must persevere, and, in patience, possessing our souls.”

“To be patient with a boy like mine is a hard task. Sometimes I feel as if I should go wild.” said the mother.

“But, under the influence of such a feeling,” remarked the friend, “what we say makes little or no impression. A calmly uttered word, in which there is an expression of interest in and sympathy for the child, does more than the sternest commands. This I have long since discovered. I never scold my children; scolding does no good, but harm. My oldest boy is restless, excitable, and impulsive. If I were not to provide him with the means of employing himself, or in other ways divert him, his hands would be on every thing in the house, and both he and I made unhappy.”

“But how can you interest him?”



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“In various ways. Sometimes I read to him; sometimes I set him to doing things by way of assisting me. I take him out when I can, and let him go with the girls when I send them on errands. I provide him with playthings that are suited to his age. In a word, I try to keep him in my mind; and, therefore, find it not very difficult to meet his varying states. I never thrust him aside, and say I am too busy to attend to him, when he comes with a request. If I cannot grant it, I try not to say ‘no,’ for that word comes too coldly upon the eager desire of an ardent-minded boy.”

“But how can you help saying ‘no,’ if the request is one you cannot grant?”

“Sometimes I ask if something else will not do as well; and sometimes I endeavour to create a new interest in his mind. There are various ways in which it may be done, that readily suggest themselves to those desirous for the good of their children. It is affection that inspires thought. The love of children always brings a quick intelligence touching their good.”

Much more was said, not needful here to repeat. When the friend went away, Tommy’s mother, whose heart convicted her of wrong to her little boy, went up to the room where she had sent him to spend four or five lonely hours as a punishment for what was, in reality, her own fault, and not his. Three hours of the weary time had already passed. She did not remember to have heard a sound from him, since she drove him away with angry words. In fact, she had been too deeply interested in the new book she was reading, to have heard any noise that was not of an extraordinary character.

At the door of the chamber she stood and listened for a moment. All was silent within. The mother’s heart beat with a heavy motion. On entering, she found the order of the room undisturbed; not even a chair was out of place. Tommy was asleep on the bed. As his mother bent over him, she saw that tears were upon his cheeks and eyelids, and that the pillow was wet. A choking sigh struggled up from her bosom; she felt a rebuking consciousness of having wronged her child. She laid her hand upon his red cheek, but drew it back instantly; it was hot with fever. She caught up his hand; it was also in a burning glow. Alarm took the place of grief for having wronged her boy. She tried to awaken him, but he only moaned and muttered. The excitement had brought on a fever.

When the father came home and laid his hand upon the hot cheek of his sleeping boy, he uttered an exclamation of alarm, and started off instantly for a physician. All night the wretched mother watched by her sick child, unable, from fear and self-reproaches, to sleep. When the morning broke, and Thomas looked up into her face with a gleam of trusting affection, his fever was gone and his pulse was calm. The mother laid her cheek thankfully against that of her boy, and prayed to Heaven for strength to bear with him, and wisdom to guide her feet aright; and as she did so, in the silence of her overflowing heart, the lad drew his arms around her neck, and, kissing her, said—
“Mother, I do love you!”



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That tears came gushing over the mother's face is no cause of wonder, nor that she returned, half wildly, the embrace and kiss of her child.

Let us hope that, in her future conduct towards her ardent, restless boy, she may be able to control herself; for then she will not find it hard to bring him under subjection to what is right.

THE CHRISTMAS PARTY.

Christmas had come round again—merry old Christmas, with his smiling face and wealth of good cheer; and every preparation had been made by the Arlingtons for their annual Christmas party, which was always a gay time for the young friends of the family.

Some hundreds of miles away, in a quiet New-England village, lived Mr. Archer, an uncle of Mr. Arlington. He was a good man; but being a minister of the old school, and well advanced in years, he was strongly prejudiced against all “fashionable follies,” as he called nearly every form of social recreation. Life was, in his eyes, too solemn a thing to be wasted in any kind of trifling. In preaching and praying, in pious meditation, and in going about to do good, much of his time was passed; and another portion of it was spent in reflecting upon and mourning over the thoughtless follies of the world. He had no time for pleasure-taking; no heart to smile at the passing foibles or merry humours of his fellow-men.

Such was the Rev. Mr. Jason Archer—a good man, but with his mind sadly warped through early prejudices, long confirmed. For years he had talked of a journey to the city where his niece, to whom he was much attached, resided. This purpose was finally carried out. It was the day before Christmas, when Mrs. Arlington received a letter from the old gentleman, announcing the fact that she might expect to see him in a few hours, as he was about starting to pay her and her family the long-intended visit.

“Uncle Archer will be here to-morrow,” said Mrs. Arlington to her husband, as soon as she met him after receiving her letter.

“Indeed! And so the good old gentleman has made a move at last?”

“Yes; he's going to eat his Christmas dinner with us, he says.”

“So much the better. The pleasure of meeting him will increase the joy of the occasion.”

“I am not so sure of that,” replied Mrs. Arlington, looking a little serious. “It would have been more pleasant to have received this visit at almost any other time in the year.”

“Why so?”



“You know his strong prejudices?”

“Oh, against dancing, and all that?”

“Yes; he thinks it a sin to dance.”

“Though I do not.”

“No; but it will take away half my pleasure to see him grieved at any thing that takes place in my house.”

“He’ll not be so weak as that.”

“He thinks it sin, and will be sadly pained at its occurrence. Is it not possible to omit dancing for once?”



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“At the party to-morrow night?”

“Yes.”

Mr. Arlington shook his head, as he replied—

“Don’t think of such a thing. We will receive him with true kindness, because we feel it towards the good old man. But we must not cease to do what we know to be right, thus disappointing and marring the pleasure of many, out of deference to a mere prejudice of education in a single person. When we go to see him, we do not expect that any change will be made out of deference to our prejudices or peculiar opinions; and when he comes to see us, he must be willing to tolerate what takes place in our family, even if it does not meet his full approval. No, no; let us not think for a moment of any change in affairs on this account. Uncle Archer hasn’t been present at a gay party nor seen dancing for almost half a century. It may do him good to witness it now. At any rate, I feel curious to see the experiment tried.”

Mrs. Arlington still argued for a little yielding in favour of the good parson’s prejudices, but her husband would not listen to such a thing for a moment. Every thing, he said, must go on as usual.

“A guest who comes into a family,” he remarked, “should always conform himself to the family order; then there is no reaction upon him, and all are comfortable and happy. He is not felt as a thing foreign and incongruous, but as homogeneous. To break up the usual order, and to bend all to meet his personal prejudices and peculiarities, is only to so disturb the family sphere as to make it actually repellent. He is then felt as an unassimilated foreign body, and all secretly desire his removal.”

“But something is due to old age!” urged Mrs. Arlington.

“Yes; much. But, if age have not softened a man’s prejudices against a good thing in itself, I doubt very much if a deference to his prejudice, such as you propose, will in the least benefit him. Better let him come in contact with a happy circle, exhilarated by music and dancing; and the chances are, that his heart will melt in the scene rather than grow colder and harder. The fact is, as I think of it more and more, the better pleased am I that Uncle Archer is coming just at this time.”

But Mrs. Arlington felt troubled about the matter. Early on Christmas morning, the old gentleman arrived, and was welcomed with sincere affection by every member of the family. Mr. and Mrs. Arlington had a daughter, named Grace, who was just entering her eighteenth year. She was gentle and affectionate in disposition, and drew to the side of Uncle Archer in a way that touched the old man’s feelings. He had not seen her before this, since she was a little girl; and now, he could not keep his eyes off of her as she sat by him, or moved about the room in his presence.

“What a dear girl that is!” was his remark to her mother, many times through the day.

“She’s a good girl,” would simply reply Mrs. Arlington, speaking almost without thought. Grace was a good girl; her mother felt this, and from her heart her lips found utterance.



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It seemed, all through the day, that Grace could not do enough for the old man's comfort. Once she drew him into her room, as he was passing her door, to show him some pictures that she had painted. As he sat looking at them, he noticed a small, handsomely bound Bible on her table. Taking it up, he said—

“Do you read this, Grace?”

“Oh, yes,” she replied, “every day.” And there was such a light of goodness in her eyes, as she looked up into his face, that Mr. Archer felt, for a moment or two, as if the countenance of an angel was before him.

“Why do you read it?” he continued after a pause.

“It teaches us the way to heaven,” said Grace.

“And you are trying to live for heaven?”

“I try to shun all evil as sin. Can I do more?”

All the minister's creeds, and doctrines, and confessions of faith, which he had ever considered the foundations upon which Christian life was to be built, seemed, for a moment or two, useless lumber before the simple creed of this loving, pure-hearted maiden. To seek to disturb this state of innocence and obedience by moody polemics, he felt, instinctively, to be wrong.

“Perhaps not,” was his half abstracted reply; “perhaps not. Yes, yes; shun what is evil, and the Lord will adjoin the good.”

“Yes, yes; she *is* a good girl, as her mother says,” was frequently repeated by Uncle Archer during the day, when he would think of Grace.

Evening came, and young and old began to gather in the parlours. The minister was introduced to one and another, as they arrived, and was much gratified with the respect and attention shown to him by all. Grace soon drew around him three or four of her young friends, who listened to what he had to say with an interest that gratified his feelings. Nothing had been said to Grace of her uncle's prejudice against dancing; she was, therefore, no little surprised to see the sudden change in his manner, when she said to a young lady in the group around him—

“Come! you must play some cotillions for us. We're going to have a dance.”

After going with the young lady to the piano, and opening it for her, Grace went back to her uncle, whose face she found deeply clouded.

“A'n't you well, uncle?” she asked, affectionately.



“Oh yes, child, I am well enough in body,” was replied.

“But something troubles you, uncle—what is it?”

By this time a number of couples were on the floor, and at the moment, a young man came up to Grace, and said—

“Shall I have the pleasure of dancing with you this evening?”

“Not in the first set,” replied Grace; “but I will consider myself engaged for the second, unless you can find a more agreeable partner.”

“Do you dance, then?” asked Uncle Arthur, gravely, after the young man had turned away.

“Dance?” Grace was in doubt whether she had clearly understood him.



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“Yes, dear.”

“Certainly I do, uncle. You don’t think there is harm in dancing?”

“I do, my child. And, I am sure that, after what you said about reading your Bible and trying to live for heaven, your admission greatly surprises me. Religion and dancing! How can they have an affinity?”

“Good and evil can have no affinity,” said Grace, in reply to this remark. “Evil, I have always understood to be in a purpose to do wrong. Now, I can dance with a good purpose; and, surely, then, dancing cannot be evil to me.”

“Dance with a good purpose! How can you do that, my dear?”

“I have often danced with the sole end of contributing my share to the general enjoyment of a company.”

“Strange enjoyment!” sighed the old parson.

“The timing of steps, and the orderly movement of the body in concert with musical harmonies, often affects the mind with exquisite delight, uncle. I have enjoyed this over and over again, and have felt better and happier afterwards.”

“Child! child!” replied the old man; “how it grieves me to hear you say this.”

“If there is sin in dancing, uncle,” said Grace, seriously, “tell me wherein it lies. Look at the countenances of those now on the floor; do they express evil or good affection?—here, as I have been taught, lies the sin.”

“It is a foolish waste of time,” returned the old man; “a foolish waste of time; and it is an evil thing to waste the precious time that God has given to us.”

“We cannot always work or read. Both mind and body become wearied.”

“Then we have time for meditation.”

“But even thought will grow burdensome at times, and the mind sink into listlessness and inactivity. Then we need recreation, in order that we may afterwards both work and think better. Music and dancing, in which mind and body find an innocent delight, effect such a recreation. I know it is so in my case; and I know it is so in the case of others. You do not say that dancing is a thing evil in itself?”

“No.” This was admitted rather reluctantly.

“Then if it be made to serve a good end, it is a good thing.”



“But is often made to serve evil,” said the minister.

“Then it is an evil thing,” promptly answered Grace; “and so every good gift of heaven may be made an evil thing to those who use it for an evil purpose. You know it is said that a spider extracts poison from the same flower where the bee gets honey. The deadly nightshade draws life from the same rain and sunshine that nourishes and matures the wheat, from which our bread is made. It is the purpose, uncle, that makes a thing evil.”

“Could you pray on going to bed, after an evening spent in dancing?” asked the old man, confident that he had put a question that would clearly show his niece her error. To his surprise, Grace answered, with a beautiful smile on her face—



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“Oh, yes; and I have so prayed, many and many a time; not failing to return thanks for the pleasure I had been permitted to enjoy.”

“Thanks for mere carnal pleasure!”

“All things are good that are filled with good affections,” said Grace. “We are in a natural world, where all pleasure and pain affect us in the natural degree most sensibly. We must come down, that we may go up. We must let our natural joy and gladness have free course, innocently, that they may be changed into a joy that is higher and spiritual. Is it not so, uncle?”

Now, the old man had not expected to find such a nice head on so young a body; nor did he expect to be called upon to answer a question, which came in a form that he was not prepared either to negative or affirm. He had put all natural pleasures under the ban, as flowing from the carnal mind; and, therefore, evil. As to filling natural pleasures with spiritual life, that was a new position in theology. He had preached against natural pleasures as evil, and, therefore, to be abandoned by all who would lead a heavenly life. Before he could collect his thoughts for an answer satisfactory to himself, two or three ladies gathered around them, and he discreetly forebore to make any further remarks on the subject. But he felt, as may be supposed, very uncomfortable.

After the first set was danced, one of the young ladies who had been on the floor, and who had previously been introduced to the old gentleman by Grace, came, with colour heightened by excitement, and her beautiful face in a glow of pleasure, and sat down by his side. Mr. Archer would have received her with becoming gravity, had it been in his power to, do so; but the smile on her face was so innocent, and she bent towards him so kindly and affectionately, that he could not find it in his heart to meet her with even a silent reproof. This young lady was really charming his ear, when a gentleman came up to her, and said—

“Anna, I want you to dance with me.”

“With pleasure,” replied the girl. “You will excuse me for a while, Mr. Archer,” said she, and she was about rising as she spoke, but the old man placed his hand upon her arm, and gently detained her.

“You’re not going to leave me?”

“No, not if my company will give you any pleasure,” replied the young girl, with a gentle smile. “Please excuse me.” This she addressed to the person who had asked her to dance. He bowed, and turned away.

“I am glad to keep you by my side,” said Mr. Archer, with some seriousness in his manner.



“And I am glad to stay here,” was promptly answered, “if my company will give you any pleasure. It does me good to contribute to others’ happiness.”

The old man was touched by this reply, for he felt that it was from the heart. It sounded strangely to his ears from the lips of one who had just been whirling in the mazy dance.

“There is no real pleasure in any thing selfish,” he remarked. “Yes, you say truly, it does us good to contribute to the happiness of others.”



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“For this reason,” said Anna, “I like dancing as a social recreation. It is a mutual pleasure. We give and receive enjoyment.”

The old minister’s face grew serious.

“I have been to three or four parties,” continued the young girl, “where dancing was excluded, under some strange idea that it was wrong; and I must say that so much evil-speaking and censoriousness it has never been my lot to encounter in any company. The time, instead of being improved as a season of mental and bodily recreation, was worse than wasted. I know that I was worse instead of better on returning from each of these companies, for I insensibly fell into the prevailing spirit.”

“That was very bad, certainly,” remarked Mr. Archer, before whose mind arose some pictures of social gatherings, in which had prevailed the very spirit condemned by his young companion. “But I don’t see how you are going to make dancing a sovereign remedy for the evil.”

“It is not a sovereign remedy,” was answered, “but it is a concert of feeling and action, in which the mind is exhilarated, and in which a mutual good-will is produced. You cannot dance without being pleased, to a greater or less extent, with your partners on the floor. Often and often have I had a prejudice against persons wear off as we moved together in the dances, and I have afterwards discovered in them good qualities to which I was before blinded.”

“Uncle,” said Grace to the old man, just at this moment, bending to his ear as she spoke, and taking his hand in hers,—“come! I want to show you something.”

Grace drew him into the adjoining parlour, where another set was on the floor. Two children, her younger brother and sister, were in it.

“Now, just look at Ada and Willy,” whispered Grace in his ear, as she brought him in view of the young dancers. Ada was a lovely child, and the old uncle’s heart had already taken her in. She was a graceful little dancer, and moved in the figures with the lightness of a fairy. It was a beautiful sight, and in the face of all the prejudices which half a century had worn into him, he felt that it was beautiful. As he looked upon it, he could keep the dimness from his eyes only by a strong effort.

“Is there evil in that, uncle?” asked Grace, drawing her arm within that of the old man’s.

“Is it good?” he replied.

“Yes; it is good,” said Grace, emphatically, as she lifted her eyes to his.

Mr. Archer did not gainsay her words. He at least felt that it was not evil, though he could not admit that it was good.

Spite of the dancing, which soon ceased to offend the good old man, he passed a pleasant evening. Perhaps, he enjoyed the Christmas party as much as any one there.



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Nothing was said, on the next day, by any one, on the subject of dancing; though Mr. Archer, especially, thought a great deal about the matter. Some ideas had come into his mind that were new there, and he was pondering them attentively. On the third day of his arrival, he had a severe attack of rheumatism, from which he suffered great pain, besides a confinement to his room for a couple of weeks. During that time, the untiring devotion and tender solicitude of Grace touched the old man's heart deeply. When the pain had sufficiently abated to let his mind attain composure, she sought to interest him in various ways. Sometimes she would read to him by the hour; sometimes she would entertain him with cheerful conversation; and sometimes she would bring in one or two of her young friends whom he had met at the Christmas party.

With these, he had more than one discussion, in his sick room, on the subject of dancing, and the old minister found these gay young girls rather more than a match for him. During a discussion of this kind, Grace left the room. In her absence, one of her companions said to him—

“Grace is a good girl.”

A quick light went over the old man's countenance; and he replied, with evident feeling —

“Good? Yes; I look at her, sometimes, and think her almost an angel.”

“She dances.”

The old man sighed.

“She is a Christian.”

“I wish there were more such in the world,” said he, unhesitatingly.

“And yet she dances.”

“My dear child,” said Mr. Archer, turning with an affectionate smile towards his young interlocutor, “don't take such an advantage of me in the argument.”

“Then it is settled,” was continued, in triumph, “that if dancing is not a Christian grace, a maiden may dance and yet be a Christian?”

“God bless you, and keep you from all the evil of the world,” said the old man, fervently, as he took the young girl's hand and pressed it between his own. “It may be all right! it may be all right!”

Grace came back at the moment, and he ceased speaking.



From that time the venerable minister said no more on the subject, and it is but fair to believe that when he returned home he had very serious doubts in regard to the sin of dancing, which had once been as fairly held as if it had been an article in the Confession of Faith.

IS SHE A LADY?

“Mrs. Tudor is a perfect lady,” said my wife, Mrs. Sunderland, to me one day, after having received a visit from the individual she named.

“She may have the manners of a lady,” I replied, “when abroad; but whether she be a lady at home or not, is more than I can tell. It is easy to put on the exterior of a lady; but to be a lady is a very different thing.”

“All that is true enough; but why do you connect such remarks with the name of Mrs. Tudor? Do you know any thing to the contrary of her being a lady?—a lady at home, as you say, for instance?”



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“No, I can’t say that I do; but, somehow or other, I am a little inclined to be doubtful of the genuineness of Mrs. Tudor’s claims to being a lady. Once or twice I have thought that I perceived an air of superciliousness to persons who were considered inferior. This is a rigid but true test of any one’s claims to being either a lady or a gentleman. No true lady is less careful of the feelings of those below her than she is of those who are upon an equality.”

“But you only thought you saw this,” said Mrs. Sunderland.

“True, and my thought may be only a thought,” I returned, “and unjust to Mrs. Tudor, who may be as much of a lady at home and under all circumstances, as she appears to be when abroad.”

“What she is, I have not the least doubt,” said my wife.

I never altogether fancied this Mrs. Tudor, although Mrs. Sunderland liked her very much. Before we built our new house, Mrs. Tudor did not know us, notwithstanding the fact that our pews had adjoined for two or three years. But after that event, Mrs. Tudor found out that we had an existence, and became uncommonly gracious with my wife.

Not long after I had spoken out my mind in regard to Mrs. Tudor, that lady, in company with her husband, paid us a visit one evening, and after sitting an hour, invited us to come around and take tea with them on a certain evening in the ensuing week.

When the time came, as we had accepted the invitation, we went. We found about a dozen persons assembled, half of whom were entire strangers to us. Among these I soon perceived that there were two or three who, in the eyes of Mrs. Tudor, were a little superior to her other guests. On our entrance, we were introduced to them first, and with particular formality, our lady hostess pronouncing their names in a very distinct manner, while her articulation of ours was so low that they were scarcely, if at all, heard. During the hour that passed before tea was announced, Mrs. Tudor confined her attentions almost exclusively to these two or three individuals, who were evidently persons of more consequence than the rest of us. So apparent was all this, that most of those who were in the room, instead of joining in the conversation, sat looking at the more favoured guests.

“They must be persons of some importance,” I could not help saying to my wife in an undertone, in which her quick ear detected something of sarcasm.

“For mercy’s sake, Mr. Sunderland!” she replied, in a voice that only reached my own ears, “don’t make remarks upon any of the company.”

If she had said, “It is not gentlemanly to do so,” she could not have conveyed what she wished to utter more distinctly than she did.



I felt the force of her reproof, but could not resist the inclination I felt to reply.

“We have so good an example of what is polite and genteel, that it is not to be wondered if we profit a little.”



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“Mr. Sunderland! Why, will you!” My wife seemed distressed.

I said no more on the subject, content with having let her know that I was noticing the conduct of her perfect lady. I believe, if I could have seen her thoughts, that among them I would have detected this one among the rest; that it was not exactly fair and gentlemanly in me to remind her so promptly of the error she had probably committed in her estimate of Mrs. Tudor’s character.

Fully absorbed as she was in showing attentions to her more favoured guests, Mrs. Tudor did not perceive the cold, uncomfortable, unsocial feeling that had crept over the rest of her company.

Tea was at last announced. I felt relieved at this, and so, I perceived, did most of those around me. At the tea-table I expected to find Mrs. Tudor more general in her attentions. But no. These favoured ones were served first, and “Mrs.—, will you have this?” and “Mrs.—, will you have that?” were almost exclusively confined to three persons at the table. Mr. Tudor, I remarked, noticed this, for he exerted himself in order to make all the rest feel at ease, which he succeeded in doing to some extent.

Waiting upon the table was a female domestic, a young girl of good manners and appearance. To her Mrs. Tudor uniformly spoke in a way that must have been felt as peculiarly disagreeable. The blandest smile; and the most winning expression of voice, would instantly change, when Lucy was addressed, to a cold, supercilious look, and an undertone of command. Several times I saw the blood mount to the girl’s forehead, as a word or tone more marked and offensive than usual would be given so loudly as to be perceived by all. Once or twice, at such times, I could not resist a glance at Mrs. Sunderland, which was generally met with a slight, rebuking contraction of her brow.

Through the efforts of Mr. Tudor, who certainly did his part well, the tea-table party was a good deal more social than had been the individuals composing it while in the parlour. The favoured guests, notwithstanding the incense offered them by our hostess, appeared in no way to esteem themselves as better than the rest, and, as soon as opportunity was afforded them, tried to be at home with every one. Once more in the parlours, and arranged there by a kind of social crystallization, I perceived that Mrs. Tudor was sitting between two of the ladies who were considered by her worthy of the most marked attention. There she sat during nearly the whole of the evening, except when refreshments were introduced, when she accompanied Lucy round the room, occasionally speaking to her in a tone of offensive command or cutting rebuke.

For one, I was glad when the time came to go home, and I rather think that all present were as much relieved, in getting away, as I was.

“What is your opinion now?” said I, triumphantly, to Mrs. Sunderland, the moment we were in the street.



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“My opinion,” she replied, a little sharply, “is, that you did not act, in several instances, this evening, like a gentleman!”

“I did not!” I spoke with affected surprise only; for I thought I knew what it was she meant.

“No, I am sorry to say that you did not. Nothing could have been more improper than the notice you took of what was passing. A true gentlemanly spirit would have led you to look away from, rather than at the weakness of our hostess.”

“Look away from it, Mrs. Sunderland! How could I do that, pray? It was before my eyes all the time.”

“You ought to have shut your eyes, then.”

“Nonsense.”

“Very far from it, Mr. Sunderland! You are ready enough to see the faults of other people!”—(in this, I must confess, my wife did not err very much)—“but quite willing to shut your eyes to your own. Now, I think you acted just as bad as Mrs. Tudor; and, in fact, worse.”

“Worse! You are complimentary, Mrs. Sunderland.”

“I can’t help it if I am. Mrs. Tudor was led by her weakness to conduct herself in an unlady-like manner; but you, with her example before your eyes, and in a mood to reflect, permitted yourself to remark upon her conduct in a way calculated to give pain.”

“In the name of wonder, what are you driving at, Mrs. Sunderland? No one but you heard any remark I made.”

“I wish I could think so.”

“Who, besides yourself, heard what I said?”

“Mr. Tudor.”

“Impossible!”

“He was sitting very near us when you so far forgot yourself as to notice, verbally, what was passing, and I am well satisfied, either heard distinctly what was said, or enough to enable him to understand the nature of all you said.”



“You are surely mistaken,” said I, feeling a good deal mortified, and perceiving much more clearly than I did before the nature of my offence against good manners and propriety of conduct.

“I wish I were. But I fear I am not. I know that Mr. Tudor looked around toward you suddenly, and I noticed that he was much more particular afterward in his attentions to the rest of the company. At table, you may have yourself remarked this.”

“Yes, I noticed it.”

“And yet, even at the table, when he was doing his best, you again hurt his feelings.”

“Me!”

“Yes, you. When Mrs. Tudor spoke harshly to Lucy, or did something or other that you thought out of the way, you must look your sarcasm at me, notwithstanding the eyes of her husband were upon you.”

“But he didn’t see me, then.”

“Yes, but he did. I saw him looking directly at you.”

“Oh, no! it cannot be.” I was unwilling to believe this.

“I wish it were not so for my husband’s sake,” returned Mrs. Sunderland. “But the evidence of my senses I generally find it necessary to credit.”

I must own that I felt considerably cut up, or cut down, whichever is the most mortifying state to be in. To look and whisper my censure in company, I had thought no great harm; but now that I had found I had been discovered in the act, I had a mortifying sense of its impropriety.



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“Well, anyhow,” said I, rallying myself, and speaking with some lightness of tone, “it is clear that Mrs. Tudor is no lady, for all you thought her such a pattern-card of gentility.”

“And I have not the least doubt,” retorted my wife, “that it is equally clear to Mr. Tudor that you are no gentleman. So, on that score, the account stands fairly balanced between the two families.”

This was a pretty hard hit; and I felt a little “riled up,” as the Yankees say, but I concluded that the uttering of a few sharp sayings to my wife, under the circumstances, would not prove my claim to being a gentleman, especially against the facts of the case; so I cooled down, and walked home rather silently, and in not the best humour with myself.

On the next morning, I took up a little book from my wife’s bureau, and sat down to look over it while waiting for the breakfast bell. It was a book of aphorisms, and I opened at once to a page where a leaf was turned down. A slight dot with a pencil directed my eyes to a particular line, which read—

“He who lives in a glass house shouldn’t throw stones.”

I am not sure that Mrs. Sunderland turned down that leaf in the book, and marked the sentiment for my especial benefit; though I strongly suspected her. At any rate, I deemed it best not to ask the question.

GOING INTO MOURNING.

The weeping mother bent over the beautiful form of innocent childhood—beautiful still, though its animating spirit had fled—and kissed the pale cheek of her dear departed one. When she lifted her head, a tear glistened on the cold brow of the babe. Then the father looked his last look, and, with an effort, controlled the emotion that wellnigh mastered him. The sisters came next, with audible sobs, and cheeks suffused with tears. A moment or two they gazed upon the expressionless face of their dear little playfellow, and then the coffin lid was shut down, while each one present experienced a momentary feeling of suffocation.

As the funeral procession came out of the door, and the family passed slowly across the pavement to the carriages, a few gossiping neighbours—such as, with no particular acquaintance with the principal members of a household, know all about the internal management of every dwelling in the square—assembled close by, and thus discoursed of the events connected with the burying.

“Poor Mrs. Condy,” said one, “how can she bear the loss of that sweet little fellow!”



“Other people have lost children as well as she,” remarked a sour-looking dame. “Rich people, thank heaven! have to feel as well as we poor folks.”

No one seemed disposed to reply to this; and there was a momentary silence.

“They’ve got up mourning mighty quick,” said a third speaker. “Little Willie only died yesterday morning.”

“It’s most all borrowed, I suppose,” responded a fourth.



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“Hardly,” said the other.

“Yes, but I know that it is, though,” added the individual who made the allegation of borrowing; “because, you see, Lucy, the chambermaid, told me last night, that Mrs. Condry had sent her to borrow her sister’s black bombazine, and that the girls were all hard enough put to it to know where to get something decent to attend the funeral in.”

“No doubt, they thought more about mourning dresses, than they did about the dead child,” remarked the cynic of the group.

“It’s a shame, Mrs. Grime, for you to talk in that way about any one,” replied the woman who had first spoken.

“It’s the truth, Mrs. Myers,” retorted Mrs. Grime. “By their works ye shall know them. You needn’t tell me about people being so dreadful sorry at the loss of friends when they can make such a to-do about getting black to wear. These bombazine dresses and long black veils are truly enough called mourning—they are an excellent counterfeit, and deceive one half of the world. Ah, me! If all the money that was spent buying in mourning was given to the poor, there would be less misery in the world by a great deal.”

And while the little group, attracted by the solemn pageant, thus exercised the privilege of independent thought and free discussion, carriage after carriage was filled and moved off, and soon the whole passed out of sight.

It was near the hour of twilight when the afflicted family returned, and after partaking of supper, sparingly, and in silence, the different members retired to their chambers, and at an early hour sought relief to their troubled thoughts in sleep.

On the next morning, during the breakfast hour, Mrs. Condry broke the oppressive silence by asking of her husband the sum of fifty dollars.

“What for, Sarah?” said Mr. Condry, looking into her face with an expression of grave inquiry.

“It’s the middle of the week now, you know, and therefore no time is to be lost in getting mourning. At any rate, it will be as much as a bargain to get dresses made by Sunday. Jane and Mary will have to go out this morning and buy the goods.”

Mr. Condry did not immediately reply, but seemed lost in deep and somewhat painful thought. At length, he said, looking his wife steadily in the face, but with a kind expression on his countenance—



“Sarah, black dresses and an outside imposing show of mourning cannot make us any the more sorry for the loss of our dear little one,” and his voice gave way and slightly trembled at the last word, and the moisture dimmed his eyes.

“Yes, but, Mr. Condy, it would seem wicked and unfeeling not to put on mourning,” said his wife in an earnest voice, for the idea of non-conformity to the custom of society, so suddenly presented to her mind, obscured for the moment the heart-searching sorrow awakened by the loss of her youngest born and dearest. “How can you think of such a thing?”



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“Why, father, it would never do in the world,” added the eldest daughter, Jane. “I should feel condemned as long as I lived, if I were to neglect so binding a duty.”

“And what would people say?” asked Mary, whose simple mind perceived at once the strongest motive that operated in favour of the mourning garments.

“I don’t see, Mary,” replied Mr. Condry, “that other people have any thing at all to do in this matter. We know our grief to be real, and need no artificial incitements to keep it alive. Black garments cannot add to our sorrow.”

But Mrs. Condry shook her head, and the daughters shook their heads, and the end of the matter was, Mr. Condry’s purse-strings were loosened, and the required amount of money handed over.

After thinking a good deal about the matter, Mary suggested, about an hour after breakfast, that it would not look well for her and Jane to be seen shopping, and Willie only buried the day before; and it was agreed to send for Ellen Maynard, who always sewed in the family when there was much to do, and get her to make the purchases. This determined, Lucy was despatched for Ellen.

The reader will transfer his mental vision to a small but neat and comfortable room in another part of the town. The inmates are two. One, with a pale, thin face, and large bright eyes, reclines upon a bed. The other is seated by a window, sewing.

“I think I will try to sit up a little, Ellen,” said the former, raising herself up with an effort.

“I wouldn’t, if I were you, Margaret,” replied the other, dropping her work and coming to the bedside. “You had better keep still, or that distressing cough may come back again.”

“Indeed, sister,” returned the invalid, “I feel so restless that it is almost impossible to lie here. Let me sit up a little while, and I am sure I shall feel better.”

Ellen did not oppose her further, but assisted her to a large rocking-chair, and, after placing a pillow at her back, resumed her work.

“I can’t help thinking of Mrs. Condry’s little Willie,” said Ellen, after a pause. “Dear little fellow! How much they must all feel his loss.”

“He is better off, though,” remarked the sister; but even that idea could not keep her eyes from glistening. The thought of death always referred itself to her own near approach to the thick shadows and the dark valley.

“Yes, he is with the angels,” was the brief response of Ellen.



Just at that moment the door opened, and Mrs. Condyl's chambermaid entered.

“Good morning, Lucy, how do you do?” said Ellen, rising. “How is Mrs. Condyl and all the family?”

“They are very well, Miss Ellen,” replied Lucy. “Mrs. Condyl wants you to come there this morning and go and buy the mourning for the family. And then they want you to come and sew all this week, and part of next, too.”

Ellen glanced at her sister, involuntarily, and then said—



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"I am afraid, Lucy, that I can't go. Margaret is very poorly, and I don't see how I can possibly leave her."

"O yes, you can go, Ellen," said Margaret. "You can fix me what I want, and come home every night. I'll do well enough."

Ellen paused a few moments, and then turning to Lucy, said—

"Tell Mrs. Condy that I will come round in the course of half an hour."

Lucy went away, and Ellen, after sitting irresolute for some minutes, said—

"I don't think, sister, that I can do any thing more for Mrs. Condy than her shopping. I wouldn't like to leave you alone. You know how bad your cough is sometimes."

"I'll do well enough through the day, Ellen," replied Margaret, though her feeble voice and languid manner told too plainly that she could not do very well at any time. "You know that our rent will be due in two weeks, and that you haven't yet got enough to pay it."

"That is very true," said Ellen, somewhat sadly. "Anyhow, I'll go to Mrs. Condy's, and will think about the matter."

After dressing herself, Ellen insisted that her sister should lie down. She then placed a small table close to the bed, upon which was set a few articles of food, and a vial of cough medicine. After charging Margaret to keep very quiet, and to try to sleep, she turned upon her a look of deep and yearning affection, and then hurried away.

The sight of Ellen, and the necessary allusion to the recent afflicting loss, caused the tears of the mother and sisters to flow afresh. But these were soon dried up, and so much were the minds of each interested in the idea of the mourning dresses, and in the necessary directions to be given, that few traces of the real affliction which had wrung their hearts remained, for the time, perceptible. The orders received by Ellen were promptly filled at the store where the family usually purchased their dry-goods, and the various articles sent home. The bundles arrived about the same time that Ellen returned. Then came a careful examination of the shades of colour and quality of the goods. These proving satisfactory, Jane said—

"And now, Ellen, mother's dress, and Mary's, and mine must be done this week. We'll all help you. Mary and I can make the skirts and bind cord for you, and do a good deal on the dresses. You can get them done, easily enough?"

"Indeed, Miss Jane," replied Ellen, and her voice was not steady, "I hardly know what to say. Sister is worse than she has ever been; and I don't see how I can leave her alone."



She coughs terribly; and is so weak, that she can only sit up a little while. She has failed very fast within a week.”

“But you know this is a case particularly pressing,” said Mrs. Condy. “There seems to be no help for it. There is no one we can get but you, now; and you know we give you all our sewing, and depend on you. Lucy says that Margaret is willing to have you come, and says that she can get on very well.”



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Ellen paused a moment or two, and then replied, with an expression of sadness in her voice—"I will make the dresses for you, Mrs. Condry, but you must all help me as much as you can, so that I can get home every evening. It won't do to let Margaret be alone all night, for her cough is much worse in the evening, and before day in the morning."

Neither Mrs. Condry nor her daughters replied to this. Mentally, they deemed it impossible for Ellen to go home at night. But they did not wish to say so. It was Wednesday, and all the afternoon was consumed in cutting, fitting, and basting the dresses. Night came, and Ellen, after tea, prepared to go home. Some slight objection was made; but she was resolute. It was some time after dark when she came in sight of her chamber window. It showed that there was no light within. Instantly she sprang forward, and soon bounded up the stairs and into the room.

"Margaret!—How are you, Margaret?" she said, pressing up to the bedside, and putting her hand upon the forehead of her sister. It was cold and clammy. A violent fit of coughing prevented a reply. A light was obtained in a few minutes, and showed the countenance of Margaret slightly distorted from difficult breathing, and her forehead perceptibly corrugated.

"You are worse, sister!" exclaimed Ellen, kissing her damp forehead.

"No, not much worse. My cough is only a little troublesome," was the quiet reply.

"You have had no supper yet, of course," said Ellen. "A cup of hot tea will do you good."

This was soon prepared, and Margaret (sic) eat with a keen appetite. After tea, she was much better. The cold perspiration ceased, and her skin became dry and warm. A brief conversation passed between the sisters, when Margaret fell off into a pleasant slumber. On the next morning, with much reluctance and many misgivings as to whether it were right to leave her sister alone, Ellen went to Mrs. Condry's. Before going, however, she asked the kind neighbour who lived below, to look in occasionally, and to see that Margaret had a good cup of tea for dinner. This was promised, and she felt lighter at heart.

Ellen worked hard through that day; but when night came, with all the help she had received, the first dress was not finished. Unless one dress were finished each day, the three could not be done by Sunday; and this not being the case on the first day, how could she go home that night? for if she worked a few hours longer, the garment would be ready for the wearer.

"I must run home a little while," said she, mentally, "and then come back again. But how can I leave Margaret all night? She may die!" The thought caused her to shudder.

At length she said to Mrs. Condry—



“I can’t leave sister all night, madam. But I can take your dress home with me, and by sitting up late, I can easily finish it. You will have no objection to my doing this, I hope?”



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Mrs. Condly paused a moment, for she did feel an objection to this being done; but humanity prevailed, and she consented. This relieved Ellen's mind very greatly, and she bundled up the dress, and hurried away with it. Margaret appeared more feeble than she was in the morning; and her cough was very troublesome. It was nearly twelve o'clock when the last stitch was taken in Mrs. Condly's dress. And then Ellen retired to her bed. But it was a long time before she could sleep. The nervous excitement, induced by protracted labour and great anxiety of mind, drove slumber from her eyelids for many hours. Towards morning she fell into a troubled sleep, and awoke at daylight unrefreshed.

This day was Friday, and Jane's dress came next in turn. Ellen applied herself with even greater assiduity than she had used on the preceding day; but, as Jane's dress required more trimming, and less assistance was given her on it, the progress she made towards its completion was in no way promising. After dinner her head began to ache, and continued its throbbing, almost blinding pain, until the evening twilight began to fall, and the darkness compelled her to suspend her work.

"Why, Ellen, Jane's dress isn't nigh done," said Mary, in tones of surprise, on coming into the room, at the moment Ellen laid the garment aside.

"No, but I'll finish it to-night," replied Ellen.

"Why, it'll take you pretty much all night to finish this," she said, lifting and examining her sister's dress. "How in the world did you get so behindhand, Ellen?"

"This is a harder dress to make than your mother's," replied Ellen; "and besides having had less help on it, my head has ached very badly all the afternoon."

Without seeming to notice the last reason given, Mary said—

"Well, if you can possibly get it done to-night, Ellen, you must do so. It would never answer in the world not to have all the dresses done by to-morrow night."

"I will have it done," was the brief reply, made in a low tone.

Jane's dress was taken home that night, unfinished by full six or seven hours' work. As Ellen had feared, she found Margaret suffering much from her cough. After preparing some food for her sister, whose appetite still remained good, she drank a cup of tea, and then sat down to work upon the mourning garment. Towards midnight, Margaret, who had fallen asleep early in the evening, began to grow restless, and to moan as if in pain. Every now and then, Ellen would pause in her work and look towards the bed, with an anxious countenance; and once or twice she got up, and stood over her sister; but she did not awake. It was three o'clock when the last stitch was taken, and then Margaret's cough had awakened her, and she seemed to suffer so much from that and

from difficult breathing, that Ellen, even after lying down, did not go to sleep for an hour. It was long after sunrise when she awoke.



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“Must you go to-day, too?” inquired Margaret, looking into her sister’s face anxiously, on seeing her, after the hastily prepared breakfast had been eaten, take up her bonnet and shawl.

“Yes, Margaret, I must go to-day. There is one more dress to be made, and that must be done. But after to-day, I won’t go out anywhere again until you are better.”

“I don’t think I shall ever be better again, Ellen,” said the sick girl. “I am getting so weak; and I feel just as if I shouldn’t stay here but a little while. You don’t know how strange I feel sometimes. Oh, I wish you didn’t have to go out to-day!” And she looked so earnestly into the face of her sister, that the tears sprung into Ellen’s eyes.

“If I can persuade them to put this last dress off until next week, and then get some one else to make it, I will,” said the sister: “but if I can’t, Margaret, try and keep up your spirits. I’ll ask Mrs. Ryland, down-stairs, to come and sit with you a little while at a time through the day; and so if I can’t; get off, you won’t be altogether without company.”

“I wish you would, sister, for I feel so lonesome sometimes,” replied Margaret, mournfully.

Mrs. Ryland consented, for she was a kind-hearted woman, and liked the sisters, and Ellen hurried away to Mrs. Condly’s.

“You are very late this morning, ain’t you?” said Mary Condly, as Ellen entered with Jane’s finished dress.

“I am a little late, Miss Mary, but I sat up until three o’clock this morning, and overslept myself in consequence.”

“Well, you’ll finish my dress to-day, of course?”

“Really, Miss Mary, I hardly know what to say about it. Sister is so very poorly, that I am almost afraid to leave her alone. Can’t you in any way put yours off until next week? I have been up nearly all night for two nights, and feel very unwell this morning.” And certainly her pale cheeks, sunken eyes, and haggard countenance fully confirmed her statement.

“It will be impossible, Ellen,” was Mary’s prompt and positive response. “I must go to church to-morrow, and cannot, of course, go out, without my black dress.”

With a sigh, Ellen sat down and resumed her needle. After a while she said—

“Miss Mary, I cannot finish your dress, unless you and your sister help me a good deal.”

“Oh, we’ll do that, of course,” replied Mary, getting up and leaving the room.



It was nearly eleven o'clock before Mary thought of helping Ellen any, and then two or three young ladies came in to pay a visit of condolence, and prevented her. Tears were shed at first; and then gradually a more cheerful tone of feeling succeeded, and so much interested were the young ladies in each other's company, that the moments passed rapidly away, and advanced the time near on to the dinner hour. It was full three o'clock before Mary and Jane sat themselves down to help Ellen. The afternoon seemed almost to fly away, and when it was nightfall, the dress was not half finished.



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“Will it be possible to get it done to-night?” asked Mrs. Condly.

“It will be hard work, madam,” said Ellen, whose heart was with her sister.

“Oh, it can be finished,” said Mary, “if we all work hard for two or three hours. The fact is, it must be done. I wouldn’t miss having it for the world.”

With a sigh, Ellen turned again to her work; though feeble nature was wellnigh sinking under the task forced upon her. It was past eleven o’clock when the dress was finished, and Ellen prepared to go home to her sister.

“But you are not going home to-night?” said Mr. Condly, who was now present.

“O yes, sir. I haven’t seen sister since morning, and she’s very ill.”

“What is the matter with your sister?” asked Mr. Condly, in a kind tone.

“I’m afraid she’s got the consump—” It was the first time Ellen had attempted to utter the word, and the sound, even though the whole of it remained unspoken, broke down her feelings, and she burst into tears.

Instinctively, Mr. Condly reached for his hat and cane, and as he saw Ellen recover, by a strong effort, her self-possession, he said—

“It is too late for you to go home alone, Ellen, and as we cannot ask you, under the circumstances, to stay all night, I will go with you.”

Ellen looked her gratitude, for she was really afraid to go into the street alone at that late hour. As they walked along, Mr. Condly, by many questions, ascertained that Ellen had been almost compelled to work day and night to make up mourning garments for his family, and to absent herself from her sick sister, while she needed her most careful attention. Arrived at her humble dwelling, his benevolent feelings prompted him to ascertain truly the condition of Margaret, for his heart misgave him that her end was very nigh.

On entering the chamber, they found Mrs. Ryland, the neighbour who lived below, supporting Margaret in the bed, who was gasping for breath as if every moment in fear of suffocation. Ellen sprung forward with a sudden exclamation, and, taking Mrs. Ryland’s place, let the head of her sister fall gently upon her bosom. Mr. Condly looked on for a moment, and then hastily retired. As soon as he reached home, he despatched a servant for the family physician, with a special request to have him visit Ellen’s sister immediately. He then went into his wife’s chamber, where the daughters, with their mother, were engaged in looking over their new morning apparel.

“I’m afraid,” said he, “that you have unintentionally been guilty of a great wrong.”



“How?” asked Mrs. Condry, looking up with sudden surprise.

“In keeping Ellen here so late from her sister, who is, I fear, at this moment dying.”

“Is it possible!” exclaimed the mother and daughters with looks of alarm.

“It is, I fear, too true. But now, all that can be done is to try and make some return. I want you, Mary, and your mother, to put on your bonnets and shawls and go with me. Something may yet be done for poor Margaret. I have already sent for the doctor.”

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On the instant Mrs. Condly and Mary prepared themselves, and the former put into a small basket some sugar and a bottle of wine, and handed it to her husband, who accompanied them, at that late hour, to the dwelling of the two sisters. On entering the chamber, they found no one present but Ellen and Margaret. The latter still reclined with her head on her sister's bosom, and seemed to have fallen into a gentle slumber, so quiet did she lay. Ellen looked up on the entrance of Mr. and Mrs. Condly, with Mary; and they saw that her eyes were filled with tears, and that two large drops stood upon her cheeks. She made a motion for them to be seated, but did not rise from her place on the bed, nor stir by the least movement of her body the still sleeper who leaned upon her breast. For nearly fifteen minutes, the most profound silence reigned throughout the chamber. The visitors understood the whole scene, and almost held their breaths, lest even the respiration, that to them seemed audible, should disturb the repose of the invalid. At the end of this time the physician entered, and broke the oppressive stillness. But neither his voice nor his step, nor the answers and explanations which necessarily took place, restored Margaret to apparent consciousness. After feeling her pulse for some time, he said—

"It will not be necessary to disturb her while she sleeps; but if she becomes restless, a little wine may be given. In the morning I will see her early," and he made a movement to go.

"Doctor," said Ellen, looking him eagerly in the face, "tell me truly—is she not dying?"

For a moment the physician looked upon the earnest, tearful girl, and read in her countenance that hope and fear held there a painful struggle.

"While there is life, there is hope," he replied briefly.

"Tell me the truth, doctor, I can bear it," she urged appealingly. "If my sister is going to die, I wish to know it."

"I have seen many recover who appeared nearer to death than she is," he replied, evasively. "As I have just said, where there is life, there is hope."

Ellen turned from him, evidently disappointed at the answer, and the doctor went downstairs, accompanied by Mr. Condly. The two remained some minutes in conversation below, and when the latter returned he found his wife and daughter standing by the bedside, and Margaret exhibiting many signs of restlessness. She kept rolling her head upon the pillow, and throwing her hands about uneasily. In a few minutes she began to moan and mutter incoherently. After a little while her eyes flew suddenly open, and she pronounced the name of Ellen quickly.

"I am here, Margaret," replied the sister, bending over her.



“Oh, Ellen, why did you stay away so long?” she said, looking up into her face half reproachfully, and seeming not to observe the presence of others. “I was so lonesome all day; and then at night I waited and waited, and you didn’t come home! You won’t go away any more—will you, Ellen?”



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“No—no, sister, I won’t leave you again,” said Ellen, soothingly, her tears starting afresh.

The words of Margaret smote upon the heart of Mary, whose great eagerness to get the mourning dress done, so that she could go out on Sunday, had been the cause of Ellen’s long detention from her sick sister. She hastily turned away from the bed, and seated herself by the window, As she sat there, the image of her baby-brother came up vividly before her mind, and with it the feeling of desolation which the loss of a dear one always occasions. And with this painful emotion of grief, there arose in her mind a distinct consciousness that, since her thoughts had become interested in the getting and making up of her mourning dress, she had felt but little of the keen sorrow that had at first overwhelmed her, and that now came back upon her mind like a flood. As she sat thus in silent communion with herself, she was enabled to perceive that, in her own mind, there had been much less of a desire to commemorate the death of her brother, in putting on mourning, than to appear before others to be deeply affected with grief. She saw that the black garments were not to remind herself of the dear departed one, but to show to others that the babe was still remembered and still mourned. In her present state of keen perception of interior and true motives, she felt deeply humbled, and inwardly resolved that, on the morrow, she would not go out for the too vain purpose of displaying her mourning apparel. Just as this resolution became fixed in her mind, a sudden movement at the bedside arrested her attention, and she again joined the group there.

Her heart throbbed with a sudden and quicker pulsation, as her eye fell upon the face of Margaret. A great change had passed upon it; death had placed his sign there, and no eye could misunderstand its import. Rapidly now did the work of dissolution go on, and just as the day dawned, Margaret sank quietly away into that deep sleep that knows no earthly waking.

After rendering all such offices as were required, Mrs. Condry and Mary went home, the latter promising Ellen that she would return and remain with her through the day. At the breakfast table, Mr. Condry so directed the conversation as to give the solemn event they had been called to witness its true impression upon the minds of his family. Before the meal closed, it was resolved that Jane and Mary should go to the humble dwelling of Ellen, and remain with her through the day; and that after the funeral, the expense of which Mr. Condry said he would bear, Ellen should be offered a permanent home.

The funeral took place on Monday, and was attended by Mr. Condry’s family. On the next day Mrs. Condry called on Ellen, and invited her to come home with her, and to remain there. The offer was thankfully accepted.

During the day, and while Ellen, assisted by Jane and Mary, was at work on black dresses for the younger children, Mr. and Mrs. Condry came into the room: the latter had a piece of bombazine in her hand.



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“Here is a dress for you, Ellen,” she said, handing her the piece of bombazine.

Ellen looked up with a sudden expression of surprise; her face flushed an instant, and then grew pale.

“You will want a black dress, Ellen,” resumed Mrs. Condly, “and I have bought you one.”

“I do not wish to put on black,” said she, with a slightly embarrassed look and an effort to smile, while her voice trembled and was hardly audible.

“And why not, Ellen?” urged Mrs. Condly.

“I never liked black,” she replied evasively. “And, anyhow, it would do no good,” she added somewhat mournfully, as if the former reason struck her on the instant as being an insufficient one.

“No, child, it wouldn’t do any good,” said Mr. Condly, tenderly and with emotion. “And if you don’t care about having it, don’t take it.”

Mrs. Condly laid the proffered dress aside, and Ellen again bent silently over her work. The hearts of all present were touched by her simple and true remark, “that it would do no good,” and each one respected her the more, that she shunned all exterior manifestation of the real sorrow that they knew oppressed her spirits. And never did they array themselves in their sombre weeds, that the thought of Ellen’s unobtrusive grief did not come up and chide them.

IF THAT WERE MY CHILD!

“Ah, good evening, Mr. Pelby! Good evening, Mr. Manly! I am glad to see you! Mrs. Little and I were just saying that we wished some friends would step in.”

“Well, how do you do this evening, Mrs. Little?” said Mr. Pelby, after they were all seated. “You look remarkably well. And how is your little family?”

“We are all bright and hearty,” Mrs. Little replied, smiling. “Little Tommy has just gone off to bed. If you had come in a few minutes sooner, you would have seen the dear little fellow. He’s as lively and playful as a cricket.”

“How old is he now?” asked Mr. Manly.

“He will be two years and six months old the twenty-third of next month.”

“Just the age of my Edward. How much I should like to see him!”



"I don't think he has gone to sleep yet," said the fond mother of an only child, rising and going off to her chamber.

"You bachelors don't sympathize much with us fathers of families," said Mr. Little, laughing, to Mr. Pelby.

"How should we?"

"True enough! But then you can envy us; and no doubt do."

"It's well enough for you to think so, Little. But, after all, I expect we are the better off."

"Don't flatter yourself in any such way, Mr. Pelby. I've been"—

"Here's the darling!" exclaimed Mrs. Little, bounding gayly in the room at the moment, with Tommy, who was laughing and tossing his arms about in delight at being taken up from his bed, into which he had gone reluctantly.

"Come to pa, Tommy," said Mr. Little, reaching out his hands. "Now ain't that a fine little fellow?" he continued, looking from face to face of his two friends, and showing off Tommy to the best possible advantage that his night-gown would permit. And he was a sweet child; with rosy cheeks, bright blue eyes, and clustering golden ringlets.



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“Indeed he is a lovely child,” Mr. Manly said earnestly.

“A very fine child,” Mr. Pelby remarked, mechanically.

“We’ll match him with the town!” broke in Mrs. Little, unable to keep down the upswelling, delighted affection of her heart.

By this time, Tommy’s bewildered senses were restored, and he began to look about him with lively interest. His keen eyes soon detected Mr. Pelby’s bright gold chain and swivel, and well knowing that it betokened a watch, he slid quickly down from his father’s lap, and stood beside the knee of the nice bachelor visitor.

“He’s not afraid of strangers,” said Mrs. Little, her eyes sparkling with pleasure, as they followed every movement of her child.

“Tee watch,” said Tommy.

“It’ll bite” said Mr. Pelby.

“Tee watch!” reiterated the child, grasping the chain.

With not the best grace in the world, Mr. Pelby drew out his beautiful gold lever, and submitted it to the rude grasp, as he thought, of Tommy.

“Oh, ma! ma! Tee watch! tee watch!” cried the child, almost wild with delight—at the same time advancing towards her as far as the chain would permit, and then tugging at it as hard as he could, to the no small discomfort of the visitor, who, seeing no movement of relief on the part of either parent, was forced to slip the chain over his head, and trust Tommy to carry his favourite time-keeper to his mother.

“Tommy’ll be a watch-maker, I expect. Nothing pleases him so much as a watch,” remarked the father.

Mr. Pelby did not reply. He dared not, for he felt that, were he to trust himself to speak, he should betray feelings that politeness required him to conceal.

“There!” suddenly exclaimed the mother, catching eagerly at the watch, which Tommy had dropped, and recovering it just in time to save it from injury.

“Gim me! gim me! gim me!” cried Tommy, seizing her hands, and endeavouring to get possession again of the valuable timepiece, which had escaped so narrowly.

“There, now,” said Mrs. Little, yielding to the child’s eager importunity, and permitting him again to take possession of the watch. “But you must hold it tighter.”



Mr. Pelby was on nettles; but he dared not interfere.

“Open it,” said Tommy, endeavouring to loose the hinge of the case with his tiny thumbnail.

“Oh, no; you mustn’t open it, Tommy.”

“Open it!” resumed Tommy, in a higher and more positive tone.

“I can’t open it,” said the mother, pretending to make an earnest effort to loose the case.

“*O-pen—it!*” screamed the child, in a loud angry tone.

“Here, take it to Mr. Pelby, he will open it for you.” And the watch was again intrusted to Tommy’s care, who bore it, and, as fortune would have it, safely too, to its owner.



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Of course, Mr. Pelby could do no better, and so he displayed the jewels and internal arrangement of his skeleton lever to the curious gaze of the child. At first, Tommy was well pleased to look alone: but soon the ends of his fingers itched to touch, and touch he did, quite promptly; and, of course, Mr. Pelby very naturally drew back the hand that held the watch; and just as naturally did Tommy suddenly extend his and grasp the receding prize. With some difficulty, Mr. Pelby succeeded in disengaging the fingers of the child, and then hastily closing the watch, he slipped it into his pocket.

"There, it's gone!" said he.

"Tee de watch!" replied Tommy.

"It's gone clear off."

"Tee de watch!" said Tommy more emphatically.

"Here, come see mine," said the father.

"No," replied the child, angrily.

Mr. Pelby, to quiet Tommy, now took him upon his lap, and called his attention to a large cameo breast-pin. This pleased him at once, and he amused himself with pulling at it, and sadly rumpling the visitor's snow-white bosom. Next he began to dive into his pockets, revealing pen-knife, tooth-pick, *etc. etc.* This was worse than to let him have the watch; and so, as a lesser evil, the gold lever was again drawn from its hiding-place. The little fellow was once more wild with delight.

But Pelby was so evidently annoyed, that Mr. Little could not help observing it; and he at length said to his wife—

"Hadn't you better take Tommy up-stairs, my dear? He is too troublesome."

Mr. Pelby had it on his tongue's end to say, "Oh, no, he don't trouble me at all!" But he was afraid—not to tell a falsehood—but that the child would be suffered to remain; so he said nothing.

"Come, Tommy," said Mrs. Little, holding out her hands.

"No!" replied the child emphatically.

"Come."

"No!" still louder and more emphatic.

"Yes, come, dear."



“No, I won’t!”

“Yes, but you must!” Mrs. Little said, taking hold of him.

At this, Tommy clung around the neck of Mr. Pelby, struggling and kicking with all his might against the effort of his mother to disengage him; who finally succeeded, and bore him, screaming at the top of his voice, from the room.

“If that were my child,” said Mr. Pelby, after they had left the house, “I’d half kill him but what I’d make a better boy of him! I never saw such an ill-behaved, graceless little rascal in my life!”

“Children are children, Mr. Pelby,” quietly remarked his auditor, Mr. Manly, who had half a dozen “little responsibilities” himself.

“Hard bargains at the best, I know. But then I have seen good-behaved children; and, if parents would only take proper pains with them, all might be trained to good behaviour and obedience. If I had a child, it would act different, I know, from what that one did this evening.”



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“Old bachelors’ children, you know,” Mr. Manly said, with a smile.

“O yes, I know. But silly adages don’t excuse neglectful parents,” replied Mr. Pelby, a little touched at the allusion.

“That is true, Mr. Pelby. But what I meant you to understand by the remark was, that those who have no children of their own are too often wanting in a due consideration and forbearance towards those of other people. I have quite a house full and I know that I take great pains with them, and that the true management of them costs me much serious consideration; and yet I have known some of mine to act much worse than Tommy Little did this evening.”

“Well, all I have to say in the matter, friend Manly, is this:—If I had a child that acted as rudely as that young one did to-night, I would, teach him a lesson that he would not forget for the next twelve months.”

“You don’t know what you would do, if you had a child, Pelby. An active, restless child requires patience and continued forbearance; and, if it should be your lot to have such a one, I am sure your natural affection and good sense would combine to prevent your playing the unreasonable tyrant over it.”

“Perhaps it would. But I am sure I should not think my natural affection and good sense pledged to let my child do as he pleased, and annoy every one that came to the house.”

“You were exceedingly annoyed, then, to-night?”

“Annoyed! Why, I could hardly sit in my chair towards the last. And when the young imp came pawing me and climbing over me, I could hardly help tossing him off of my lap upon the floor.”

“You did not seem so much worried. I really thought you were pleased with the little fellow.”

“Now, that is too bad, Manly! I’d as lief had a monkey screwing and twisting about in my lap. It was as much as I could do to be civil to either his father or mother for suffering their brat to tease me as he did. First, I must be kissed by his bread and butter mouth; and then he made me suffer a kind of martyrdom in fear of my elegant lever. A watch is not the thing for a child to play with, and I am astonished at Little for suffering his young one to annoy a visitor in that way.”

“Blame them as much as you please, but don’t feel unkindly towards the child,” said Manly. “He knows no better. Your watch delighted him, and of course he wanted it, and any attempt to deprive him of it was very naturally resisted. His parents are fond of him—and well they may be—and pet him a great deal; thus he has learned to expect every



visitor to notice him, and also expects to notice and make free with every visitor. This is all very natural.”

“Natural enough, and so is it to steal; but that don’t make it right. Children should be taught, from the first, to be reserved in the presence of strangers, and never to come near them unless invited. If I had one, I’ll be bound he wouldn’t disgrace me as Little’s child did him to-night.”

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“We’ll see, one of these days, perhaps,” was Manly’s quiet remark; and the friends parted company.

Ten years often make a great difference in a man’s condition, habits, and feelings. Ten years passed away, and Mr. Pelby was a husband, and the father of three interesting children,—indulged, of course, and “pretty considerably” spoiled, yet interesting withal, and, in the eyes of their father, not to be compared for beauty, good manners, *etc.* with any other children inhabiting the same city. William, the oldest boy, had not quite completed his sixth year. Emma, a rosy-cheeked, chubby little thing, when asked her age, could say—

“Four years old last June.”

And Henry was just the age that Tommy Little was when he so terribly annoyed Mr. Pelby. Now, as to Henry’s accomplishments, they were many and various. He could be a good boy when he felt in a pleasant humour, and could storm, and fret, and pout in a way so well understood by all parents, that it would be a work of supererogation to describe it here. But strange mutation of disposition!—Mr. Pelby could bear these fits of perverseness with a philosophy that would have astonished even himself, could he have for a moment realized his former state of mind. When Henry became ill-tempered from any cause, he had, from loving him, learned that to get into an ill-humour also would be only adding fuel to flame; and so, on such occasions, he sought affectionately to calm and soothe his ruffled feelings. If Henry, or Emma, or William, from any exuberance of happy feelings, were noisy or boisterous, he did not think it right to check them suddenly, because he was a little annoyed. He tried, rather, to feel glad with them—to partake of their joy. In short, Mr. Pelby had grown into a domestic philosopher. A wife and two or three children do wonders sometimes!

Now it so happened about this time, that Mr. and Mrs. Manly and Mr. and Mrs. Little were spending an evening with Mr. and Mrs. Pelby. William and Emma had their suppers prepared for them in the kitchen, and then, as usual, were put to bed; but “dear little Henry” was so interesting to his parents, and they naturally thought must be so interesting to their company, that he was allowed to sit up and come to the tea-table. As Mrs. Pelby had no dining-room, the back parlour was used for this purpose, and so all the progressive arrangements of the tea-table were visible.

“Oh, dinne weddy! dinne weddy!” cried little Henry, sliding down from the lap of Mrs. Little—whose collar he had been rumpling so that it was hardly fit to be seen—as soon as he saw the cloth laid; and, running for a chair, he was soon perched up in it, calling lustily for “meat.”

“Oh, no, no, Henry! dinner not ready yet!” said Mrs. Pelby, starting forward, and endeavouring to remove the child from his seat; but Henry screamed and resisted.

“Oh, let him sit, mother!” interfered Mr. Pelby. “The little dear don’t understand waiting as we do.”



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“Yes, but, father, it is time that he had learned. Tea isn’t near ready yet; and if he is allowed to sit here, he will pull and haul every thing about,” responded Mrs. Pelby.

“Oh, never mind, mother! Give him some meat, and he’ll be quiet enough. I never like to see little folks made to wait for grown people; they cannot understand nor appreciate the reason of it.”

And so little Henry was permitted to remain at the table, picking first at one thing and then at another, much to the discomfort and mortification of his mother, who could not see in this indulgence any thing very interesting. Mrs. Little was relieved, although her collar was disfigured for the evening past hope.

After a while tea was announced, and the company sat down.

“Me toffee! me toffee!” cried Henry, stretching out his hands impatiently. “Me toffee, ma! me toffee, ma!” as soon as Mrs. Pelby was seated before the tea-tray, and had commenced supplying the cups with cream and sugar.

“Yes—yes—Henry shall have coffee. H-u-s-h—there—be quiet—that’s a good boy,” she said, soothingly. But—

“Me toffee, ma! me toffee, ma! me toffee, ma!” was continued without a moment’s cessation. “Ma! ma! ma! me toffee! me toffee!”

“Yes, yes, yes! you shall have coffee in a moment; only be patient, child!” Mrs. Pelby now said, evidently worried; for Henry was crying at the top of his voice, and impatiently shaking his hands and vibrating his whole body.

But he ceased not a moment until his mother, before any of the company had been served, prepared him a cup of milk and warm water, sweetened. Placing his lips to the edge of the cup, Henry drank the whole of it off before the table was more than half served.

“Me more toffee, ma!”

Mrs. Pelby paused, and looked him in the face with an expression of half despair and half astonishment.

“Me more toffee, ma!” continued Henry.

“Yes, wait a moment, and I’ll give you more,” she said.

“More toffee, ma!” in a louder voice.

“Yes, in a moment.”



“More toffee, ma!” This time louder and more impatiently.

To keep the peace, a second cup of milk and water had to be prepared, and then Mrs. Pelby finished waiting on her company. But it soon appeared that the second cup had not really been wanted, for now that he had it, the child could not swallow more than two or three draughts. His amusement now consisted in playing in his saucer with a spoon, which being perceived by his mother, she said to him—

“There now, Henry, you didn’t want that, after all. Come, let me pour your tea back into the cup, and set the cup on the waiter, or you will spill it;” at the same time making a motion to do what she had proposed. But—

“No! no! no!” cried the child, clinging to the saucer, and attempting to remove it out of his mother’s reach. This he did so suddenly, that the entire contents were thrown into Mrs. Little’s lap.



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“Bless me, Mrs. Little!” exclaimed Mrs. Pelby, really distressed; “that is too bad! Come, Henry, you must go away from the table;” at the same time attempting to remove him. But he cried—

“No! no! no!” so loud, that she was constrained to desist.

“There, let him sit; he won’t do so any more,” said Mr. Pelby. “That was very naughty, Henry. Come, now, if you want your tea, drink it, or let me put it away.”

Henry already knew enough of his father to be convinced that when he spoke in a certain low, emphatic tone, he was in earnest; and so he very quietly put his mouth down to his saucer and pretended to drink, though it would have been as strange as pouring water into a full cup without overflowing it, as for him to have let any more go down his throat, without spilling a portion already there out at the top.

Tea was at last over, and Mrs. Little, on rising from the table, had opportunity and leisure to examine her beautiful silk, now worn for the second time. Fortunately, it was of a colour that tea would not injure, although it was by no means pleasant to have a whole front breadth completely saturated. Mrs. Pelby made many apologies, but Mr. Pelby called it a “family accident,” and one of a kind that married people were so familiar with, as scarcely to be annoyed by them.

“Come here, Henry,” said he. “Just see what you have done! Now go kiss the lady, and say, ‘I’m sorry.’”

The little fellow’s eye brightened, and going up to Mrs. Little, he pouted out his cherry lips, and, as she kissed him, he said, with a suddenly-assumed demure, penitent look—“I torry.”

“What’s Henry sorry for?” asked Mrs. Little, instantly softening towards the child, and taking him on her knee.

“I torry,” he repeated, but in a much livelier tone, at the same time that he clambered up and stood in her lap, with his little hands again crushing her beautiful French collar.

“Come here, Henry,” said Mr. Manly, who saw that Mrs. Little was annoyed at this; but Henry would not move. He had espied a comb in Mrs. Little’s head, and had just laid violent hands upon it, threatening every moment to flood that lady’s neck and shoulders with her own dishevelled tresses.

“Come and see my watch,” said Mr. Manly.

This was enough. Henry slid from Mrs. Little’s lap instantly, and in the next minute was seated on Mr. Manly’s knee, examining that gentleman’s time-keeper. Between opening and shutting the watch, holding it first to his own and then to Mr. Manly’s ear, Henry



spent full a quarter of an hour. Even that considerate, kind-hearted gentleman's patience began to be impaired, and he could not help thinking that his friend, Mr. Pelby, ought to be thoughtful enough to relieve him. Once or twice he made a movement to replace the watch in his pocket, but this was instantly perceived and as promptly resisted. The little fellow had an instinctive perception that Mr. Manly did not wish him to have the watch, and for that very reason retained possession of it long beyond the time that he would have done if it had been fully relinquished to him.



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At last he tired of the glittering toy, and returned to annoy Mrs. Little; but she was saved by the appearance of a servant with fruit and cakes.

“Dim me cake! dim me cake!” cried Henry, seizing hold of the servant’s clothes, and pulling her so suddenly as almost to cause her to let fall the tray that was in her hands.

To keep the peace, Henry was helped first of all to a slice of pound-cake.

“Mo’ cake,” he said, in a moment or two after, unable to articulate with any degree of distinctness, for his mouth was so full that each cheek stood out, and his lips essayed in vain to close over the abundant supply within. Another piece was given, and this disappeared as quickly. Then he wanted an apple, and as soon as he got one, he cried for a second and a third. Then—

But we will not chronicle the sayings and doings of little Henry further; more than to say, that he soon, from being allowed to sit up beyond the accustomed hour, grew fretful and exceedingly troublesome, preventing all pleasant intercourse between the visitors and visited, and that at nine o’clock he was carried off screaming to his bed.

“If that were my child,” said Mr. Little, pausing at his own door, and turning round to Mr. and Mrs. Manly, who had accompanied his wife thus far on their way home, “I would teach him better manners, or I would half kill him. I never saw such an ill-conditioned little imp in my life!”

“Children are children, you know,” was Mr. Manly’s quiet reply.

“Yes, but children may be made to behave, if any pains at all be taken with them. It is really unpardonable for any one to let a child like that worry visitors as he did us this evening.”

“Few children of his age, Mr. Little, unless of a remarkably quiet and obedient disposition, are much better than Pelby’s little boy.”

“As to that, Mr. Manly,” broke in Mrs. Little, “there’s our Tommy, a fine boy of twelve, as you know. He never acted like that when he was a child. I never had a bit of trouble with him when we had company. We could bring him down into the parlour when he was of Henry Pelby’s age, and he would go round and kiss all the ladies so sweetly, and then go off to bed, like a little man, as he was.”

“Ah, Mrs. Little, you forget,” said Mr. Manly, laughing.

“Oh, no, indeed, Mr. Manly. I don’t forget these things. We could do any thing with Tommy at his age, and it was because we managed him rightly. You can do any thing with children you please.”



“Indeed, then, Mrs. Little, it is more than I can say,” remarked Mrs. Manly. “If my children could be made any thing at all of, they would have been different from what they are; and yet, I believe,” she added, with a feeling of maternal pride, “they are not the worst children I have ever seen.”

“Good-nights” were now exchanged, and, after Mr. and Mrs. Manly had walked a few steps, the former said,



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“Well, this is a curious world that we live in. Ten years ago, Pelby, then a trim bachelor, as nice and particular as any of the tribe, said, in allusion to Tommy Little—’If that were my child, I would half kill him but what I’d make a better boy of him!’”

“He did?”

“Yes, those were his very words. We were spending an evening at Mr. and Mrs. Little’s, and when Tommy was about two years old or so; and Pelby was terribly annoyed by him. He acted pretty much as all children do—that is, pretty much as Henry did to-night. But Pelby couldn’t endure it with any kind of patience.”

“Ha! ha!” laughed out Mrs. Manly, in spite of herself. “How completely the tables have been turned!”

“Yes, they have been, certainly. But what is a little singular is, that neither of the parties concerned seem to have gained wisdom by their experience. Pelby forgets how other people’s children once annoyed him, and Mr. and Mrs. Little seem to be entirely unconscious that their paragon was very much like all other little boys when he was only about two or three years old. For my part, I think we should be careful not to let our children trespass upon visitors. None can feel the same interest in them that we do, or exercise the same forbearance towards their faults. Faults they all have, which need especial care in their correction; and these should be suffered to appear as rarely as possible under circumstances which prevent a salutary check being placed upon them. For this reason, you know, we have made it a matter of concert not to let our children, while, too young to understand something of propriety, be present, but for a very short time, when we had company. The moment they become rude or too familiar, they were quietly taken from the room.”

“Yes; and knowing as I do,” said Mrs. Manly, “how very restless some children with active minds are, I am never disposed to look with unfavourable eyes upon any, even when wild, turbulent, and heedless. They act as they feel; and so far as evil affections show themselves, we know they are inherited, and that it is not in the power of the child to remove them. We should then be moved, it seems to me, with a purer affection for them; with something of pity mixed with our love, and, instead of suffering their wrong actions to repulse us, we should draw towards them with a desire to teach them what is wrong, and impart to them some power to overcome evil.”

“If all thought as you, Mary,” said Mr. Manly, as they gained their own doors, “we should hear no one railing out against other people’s children, while he indulged his own. A fault too common with most parents.”

I WILL!



“YOU look sober, Laura. What has thrown a veil over your happy face?” said Mrs. Cleaveland to her niece, one morning, on finding her alone and with a very thoughtful countenance.

“Do I really look sober?” and Laura smiled as she spoke.



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“You did just now. But the sunshine has already dispelled the transient cloud. I am glad that a storm was not portended.”

“I felt sober, aunt,” Laura said, after a few moments—her face again becoming serious.

“So I supposed, from your looks.”

“And I feel sober still.”

“Why?”

“I am really discouraged, aunt.”

“About what?”

The maiden’s cheek deepened its hue, but she did not reply.

“You and Harry have not fallen out, like a pair of foolish lovers, I hope.”

“Oh, no!” was the quick and emphatic answer.

“Then what has troubled the quiet waters of your spirit? About what are you discouraged?”

“I will tell you,” the maiden replied. “It was only about a week after my engagement with Harry that I called upon Alice Stacy, and found her quite unhappy. She had not been married over a few months. I asked what troubled her, and she said, ‘I feel as miserable as I can be.’ ‘But what makes you miserable, Alice?’ I inquired. ‘Because William and I have quarrelled—that’s the reason,’ she said, with some levity, tossing her head and compressing her lips, with a kind of defiance. I was shocked—so much so, that I could not speak. ‘The fact is,’ she resumed, before I could reply, ‘all men are arbitrary and unreasonable. They think women inferior to them, and their wives as a higher order of slaves. But I am not one to be put under any man’s feet. William has tried that trick with me, and failed. Of course, to be foiled by a woman is no very pleasant thing for one of your lords of creation. A tempest in a teapot was the consequence. But I did not yield the point in dispute; and, what is more, have no idea of doing so. He will have to find out, sooner or later, that I am his equal in every way; and the quicker he can be made conscious of this, the better for us both. Don’t you think so?’ I made no answer. I was too much surprised and shocked. ‘All men,’ she continued, ‘have to be taught this. There never was a husband who did not, at first, attempt to lord it over his wife. And there never was a woman, whose condition as a wife was at all above that of a passive slave, who did not find it necessary to oppose herself at first, with unflinching perseverance.’



“To all this, and a great deal more, I could say nothing. It choked me up. Since then, I have met her frequently, at home and elsewhere, but she has never looked happy. Several times she has said to me, in company, when I have taken a seat beside her, and remarked that she seemed dull, ‘Yes, I am dull; but Mr. Stacy, there, you see, enjoys himself. Men always enjoy themselves in company—apart from their wives, of course.’ I would sometimes oppose to this a sentiment palliative of her husband; as, that, in company, a man very naturally wished to add his mite to the general joyousness, or something of a like nature. But it only excited her, and drew forth remarks that shocked my feelings. Up to this day, they do not appear to be on any better terms. Then, there is Frances Glenn—married only three months, and as fond of carping at her husband for his arbitrary, domineering spirit, as is Mrs. Stacy. I could name two or three others, who have been married, some a shorter and some a longer period, that do not seem to be united by any closer bonds.



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“It is the condition of these young friends, aunt, that causes me to feel serious. I am to be married in a few weeks. Can it be possible that my union with Henry Armour will be no happier, no more perfect than theirs? This I cannot believe. And yet, the relation that Alice and Frances hold to their husbands, troubles me whenever I think of it. Henry, as far as I have been able to understand him, has strong points in his character. From a right course of action,—or, from a course of action that he thinks right,—no consideration, I am sure, would turn him. I, too, have mental characteristics somewhat similar. There is, likewise, about me, a leaven of stubbornness. I tremble when the thought of opposition between us, upon any subject, crosses my mind. I would rather die—so I feel about it—than ever have a misunderstanding with my husband.”

Laura ceased, and her aunt, who was, she now perceived, much agitated, arose and left the room without speaking. The reason of this to Laura was altogether unaccountable. Her aunt Cleaveland, always so mild, so calm, to be thus strongly disturbed! What could it mean? What could there be in her maidenly fears to excite the feelings of one so good, and wise, and gentle? An hour afterwards, and while she yet sat, sober and perplexed in mind, in the same place where Mrs. Cleaveland had left her, a domestic came in and said that her aunt wished to see her in her own room. Laura attended her immediately. She found her calm and self-possessed, but paler than usual. “Sit down beside me, dear,” Mrs. Cleaveland said, smiling faintly, as her niece came in.

“What you said this morning, Laura,” she began, after a few moments, “recalled my own early years so vividly, that I could not keep down emotions I had deemed long since powerless. The cause of those emotions it is now, I clearly see, my duty to reveal—that is, to you. For years I have carefully avoided permitting my mind to go back to the past, in vain musings over scenes that bring no pleasant thoughts, no glad feelings. I have, rather, looked into the future with a steady hope, a calm reliance. But, for your sake, I will draw aside the veil. May the relation I am now about to give you have the effect I desire! Then shall I not suffer in vain. How vividly, at this moment, do I remember the joyful feelings that pervaded my bosom, when, like you, a maiden, I looked forward to my wedding-day. Mr. Cleaveland was a man, in many respects, like Henry Armour. Proud, firm, yet gentle and amiable when not opposed;—a man with whom I might have been supremely happy;—a man whose faults I might have corrected—not by open opposition to them—not by seeming to notice them—but by leading him to see them himself. But this course I did not pursue. I was proud; I was self-willed; I was unyielding. Elements like these can never come into opposition without a victory on either side being as disastrous as the defeats. We were married. Oh, how



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sweet was the promise of my wedding-day! Of my husband I was very fond. Handsome, educated, and with talents of a high order, there was every thing about him to make the heart of a young wife proud. Tenderly we loved each other. Like days in Elysium passed the first few months of our wedded life. Our thoughts and wishes were one. After that, gradually a change appeared to come over my husband. He deferred less readily to my wishes. His own will was more frequently opposed to mine, and his contentions for victory longer and longer continued. This surprised and pained me. But it did not occur to me, that my tenaciousness of opinion might seem as strange to him as did his to me. It did not occur to me, that there would be a propriety in my deferring to him—at least so far as to give up opposition. I never for a moment reflected that a proud, firm-spirited man, might be driven off from an opposing wife, rather than drawn closer and united in tenderer bonds. I only perceived my rights as an equal assailed. And, from that point of view, saw his conduct as dogmatical and overbearing, whenever he resolutely set himself against me, as was far too frequently the case.

“One day,—we had then been married about six months,—he said to me, a little seriously, yet smiling as he spoke, ‘Jane, did not I see you on the street, this morning?’ ‘You did,’ I replied. ‘And with Mrs. Corbin?’ ‘Yes.’ My answer to this last question was not given in a very pleasant tone. The reason was this. Mrs. Corbin, a recent acquaintance, was no favourite with my husband; and he had more than once mildly suggested that she was not, in his view, a fit associate for me. This rather touched my pride. It occurred to me, that I ought to be the best judge of my female associates, and that for my husband to make any objections was an assumption on his part, that, as a wife, I was called upon to resist. I did not, on previous occasions, say any thing very decided, contenting myself with parrying his objections laughingly. This time, however, I was in a less forbearing mood. ‘I wish you would not make that woman your friend’ he said, after I had admitted that he was right in his observation. ‘And why not, pray?’ I asked, looking at him quite steadily. ‘For reasons before given, Jane,’ he replied, mildly, but firmly. ‘There are reports in circulation touching her character, that I fear are’—‘They are false!’ I interrupted him. ‘I know they are false!’ I spoke with a sudden excitement. My voice trembled, my cheek burned, and I was conscious that my eye shot forth no mild light. ‘They are true—I know they are true!’ Mr. Cleaveland said, sternly, but apparently unruffled. ‘I don’t believe it,’ I retorted. ‘I know her far better. She is an injured woman.’

“‘Jane,’ my husband now said, his voice slightly trembling, ‘you are my wife. As such, your reputation is as dear to me as the apple of my eye. Suspicion has been cast upon Mrs. Corbin, and that suspicion I have good reason for believing well founded. If you associate with her—if you are seen upon the street with her, your fair fame will receive a taint. This I cannot permit.’



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“There was, to my mind, a threat contained in the last sentence—a threat of authoritative intervention. At this my pride took fire.

“‘Cannot permit!’ I said, drawing myself up. ‘What do you mean, Mr. Cleveland?’

“The brow of my husband instantly flushed. He was silent for a moment or two. Then he said, with forced calmness, yet in a resolute, meaning tone—

“‘Jane, I do not wish you to keep company with Mrs. Corbin.’

“‘I WILL!’ was my indignant reply.

“His face grew deadly pale. For a moment his whole frame trembled as if some fearful struggle were going on within. Then he quietly arose, and, without looking at me, left the room. Oh! how deeply did I regret uttering those unhappy words the instant they were spoken! But repentance came too late. For about the space of ten minutes, pride struggled with affection and duty. At the end of that time the latter triumphed, and I hastened after my husband to ask his forgiveness for what I said. But he was not in the parlours. He was not in the house! I asked a servant if she had seen him, and received for reply that he had gone out.

“Anxiously passed the hours until nightfall. The sad twilight, as it gathered dimly around, threw a deeper gloom over my heart. My husband usually came home before dark. Now he was away beyond his accustomed hour. Instead of returning gladly to meet his young wife, he was staying away, because that young wife had thrown off the attractions of love and presented to him features harsh and repulsive. How anxiously I longed to hear the sound of his footsteps—to see his face—to hear his voice! The moment of his entrance I resolved should be the moment of my humble confession of wrong—of my faithful promise never again to set up my will determinedly in opposition to his judgment. But minute after minute passed after nightfall—hours succeeded minutes—and these rolled on until the whole night wore away, and he came not back to me. As the gray light of morning stole into my chamber, a terrible fear took hold of me, that made my heart grow still in my bosom—the fear that he would never return—that I had driven him off from me. Alas! this fear was too nigh the truth. The whole of that day passed, and the next and the next, without any tidings. No one had seen him since he left me. An anxious excitement spread among all his friends. The only account I could give of him, was, that he had parted from me in good health, and in a sane mind.

“A week rolled by, and still no word came. I was nearly distracted. What I suffered, no tongue can tell, no heart conceive. I have often wondered that I did not become insane but from this sad condition I was saved. Through all, my reason, though often trembling, did not once forsake me. It was on the tenth day from that upon which we had jarred so heavily as to be driven widely asunder, that a letter came to me, post-marked New York, and endorsed



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'In haste.' My hands trembled so that I could with difficulty break the seal. The contents were to the effect that my husband had been lying for several days at one of the hotels there, very ill, but now past the crisis of his disease, and thought by the physician to be out of danger. The writer urged me, from my husband, to come on immediately. In eight hours from the time I received that letter, I was in New York. Alas! it was too late; the disease had returned with double violence, and snapped the feeble thread of life. I never saw my husband's living face again."

The self-possession of Mrs. Cleaveland, at this part of her narrative, gave way. Covering her face with her hands, she sobbed violently, while the tears came trickling through her fingers.

"My dear Laura," she resumed, after the lapse of many minutes, looking up as she spoke, with a clear eye, and a sober, but placid countenance, "it is for your sake that I have turned my gaze resolutely back. May the painful history I have given you make a deep impression upon your heart; let it warn you of the sunken rock upon which my bark foundered. Avoid carefully, religiously avoid setting yourself in opposition to your husband; should he prove unreasonable or arbitrary, nothing is to be gained, and every thing lost by contention. By gentleness, by forbearance, by even suffering wrong at times, you will be able to win him over to a better spirit: an opposite course will assuredly put thorns in your pillow as you adopt it. Look at the unhappy condition of the friends you have named; their husbands are, in their eyes, exacting, domineering tyrants. But this need not be. Let them act truly the woman's part. Let them not oppose, but yield, and they will find that their present tyrants' will become their lovers. Above all, never, under any circumstances, either jestingly or in earnest, say '*I will*,' when you are opposed. That declaration is never made without its robbing the wife of a portion of her husband's confidence and love; its utterance has dimmed the fire upon many a smiling hearth-stone."

Laura could not reply; the relation of her aunt had deeply shocked her feelings. But the words she had uttered sank into her heart; and when her trial came—when she was tempted to set her will in opposition to her husband's, and resolutely to contend for what she deemed right, a thought of Mrs. Cleaveland's story would put a seal upon her lips. It was well. The character of Henry Armour too nearly resembled that of Mr. Cleaveland: he could illy have brooked a wife's opposition; but her tenderness, her forbearance, her devoted love, bound her to him with cords that drew closer and closer each revolving year. She never opposed him further than to express a difference of opinion when such a difference existed, and its utterance was deemed useful; and she carefully avoided, on all occasions, the doing of any thing of which he in the smallest degree disapproved. The consequence was, that



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her opinion was always weighed by him carefully, and often deferred to. A mutual confidence and a mutual dependence upon each other gradually took the place of early reserves, and now they sweetly draw together—now they smoothly glide along the stream of life blessed indeed in all their marriage relations. Who will say that Laura did not act a wise part? Who will say that in sacrificing pride and self-will, she did not gain beyond all calculation? No one, surely. She is not her husband's slave, but his companion and equal. She has helped to reform and remodel his character, and make him less arbitrary, less self-willed, less disposed to be tyrannical. In her mild forbearance, he has seen a beauty more attractive far than lip or cheek, or beaming eye.

Instead of looking upon his wife as below him, Henry Armour feels that she is his superior, and as such he tenderly regards and lovingly cherishes her. He never thinks of obedience from her, but rather studies to conform himself to her most lightly-spoken wish. To be thus united, what wife will not for a time sacrifice her feelings when her young self-willed husband so far forgets himself as to become exacting! The temporary loss will turn out in the future to be a great gain.

A MOTHER'S INFLUENCE.

"THERE come the children from school," said Aunt Mary, looking from the window. "Just see that Clarence! he'll have Henry in the gutter. I never saw just such another boy; why can't he come quietly along like other children? There! now he must stop to throw stones at the pigs. That boy'll give you the heart-ache yet, Anna."

Mrs. Hartley made no reply, but laid aside her work quietly and left the room to see that their dinner was ready. In a few minutes the street-door was thrown open, and the children came bounding in full of life, and noisy as they could be.

"Where is your coat, Clarence?" she asked, in a pleasant tone, looking her oldest boy in the face.

"Oh, I forgot!" he replied, cheerfully; and turning quickly, he ran down stairs, and lifting his coat from where, in his thoughtlessness, he had thrown it upon the floor, hung it up in its proper place, and then sprang up the stairs.

"Isn't dinner ready yet?" he said, with fretful impatience, his whole manner changing suddenly. "I'm hungry."

"It will be ready in a few minutes, Clarence."

"I want it now. I'm hungry."



“Did you ever hear of the man,” said Mrs. Hartley, in a voice that showed no disturbance of mind, “who wanted the sun to rise an hour before its time?”

“No, mother. Tell me about it, won’t you?”

All impatience had vanished from the boy’s face.

“There was a man who had to go upon a journey; the stage-coach was to call for him at sun-rise. More than an hour before it was time for the sun to be up, the man was all ready to go, and for the whole of that hour he walked the floor impatiently, grumbling at the sun because he did not rise. ‘I’m all ready, and I want to be going,’ he said. ‘It’s time the sun was up, long ago.’ Don’t you think he was a very foolish man?”



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Clarence laughed, and said he thought the man was very foolish indeed.

“Do you think he was more foolish than you were just now for grumbling because dinner wasn’t ready?”

Clarence laughed again, and said he did not know. Just then Hannah, the cook, brought in the waiter with the children’s dinner upon it. Clarence sprang for a chair, and drew it hastily and noisily to the table.

“Try and see if you can’t do that more orderly, my dear,” his mother said, in a quiet voice, looking at him, as she spoke, with a steady eye.

The boy removed his chair, and then replaced it gently.

“That is much better, my son.”

And thus she corrected his disorderly habits, quieted his impatient temper, and checked his rudeness, without showing any disturbance. This she had to do daily. At almost every meal she found it necessary to repress his rude impatience. It was line upon line, and precept upon precept. But she never tired, and rarely permitted herself to show that she was disturbed, no matter how deeply grieved she was at times over the wild and reckless spirit of her boy.

On the next day she was not very well; her head ached badly all the morning. Hearing the children in the passage when they came in from school at noon, she was, rising from the bed where she had lain down, to attend to them and give them their dinners, when Aunt Mary said—“Don’t get up, Anna, I will see to the children.”

It was rarely that Mrs. Hartley let any one do for them what she could do herself, for no one else could manage the unhappy temper of Clarence; but so violent was the pain in her head, that she let Aunt Mary go, and sank back upon the pillow from which she had arisen. A good deal of noise and confusion continued to reach her ears, from the moment the children came in. At length a loud cry and passionate words from Clarence caused her to rise up quickly and go over to the dining-room. All was confusion there, and Aunt Mary out of humour and scolding prodigiously. Clarence was standing up at the table, looking defiance at her, on account of some interference with his strong self-will. The moment the boy saw his mother, his countenance changed, and a look of confusion took the place of anger.

“Come over to my room, Clarence,” she said, in a low voice; there was sadness in its tones, that made him feel sorry that he had given vent so freely to his ill-temper.

“What was the matter, my son?” Mrs. Hartley asked, as soon as they were alone, taking Clarence by the hand and looking steadily at him.



“Aunt Mary wouldn’t help me when I asked her.”

“Why not?”

“She would help Henry first.”

“No doubt she had a reason for it. Do you know her reason?”

“She said he was youngest.” Clarence pouted out his lips, and spoke in a very disagreeable tone.

“Don’t you think that was a very good reason?”



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"I've as good a right to be helped first as he has."

"Let us see if that is so. You and Marien and Henry came in from school, all hungry and anxious for your dinners. Marien is oldest—she, one would suppose, from the fact that she is oldest, would be better able to feel for her brothers, and be willing to see their wants supplied before her own. You are older than Henry, and should feel for him in the same way. No doubt this was Aunt Mary's reason for helping Henry first. Had she helped Marien?"

"No, ma'am."

"Did Marien complain?"

"No, ma'am."

"No one complained but my unhappy Clarence. Do you know why you complained? I can tell you, as I have often told you before; it is because you indulge in very selfish feelings. All who do so, make themselves miserable. If, instead of wanting Aunt Mary to help you first, you had, from a love of your little brother, been willing to see him first attended to, you would have enjoyed a real pleasure. If you had said—'Aunt Mary, help Harry first,' I am sure Henry would have said instantly—' No, Aunt Mary, help brother Clarence first.' How pleasant this would have been! how happy would all of us have felt at thus seeing two little brothers generously preferring one another!"

There was an unusual degree of tenderness, even sadness in the voice of his mother, that affected Clarence; but he struggled with his feelings. When, however, she resumed, and said—"I have felt quite sick all the morning; my head has ached badly—so badly that I have had to lie down. I always give you your dinners when you come home, and try to make you comfortable. To-day I let Aunt Mary do it, because I felt so sick; but I am sorry that I did not get up, sick as I was, and do it myself; then I might have prevented this unhappy outbreak of my boy's unruly temper, that has made not only my head ache ten times as badly as it did, but my heart ache also"—

Clarence burst into tears, and throwing his arms round his mother's neck, wept bitterly.

"I will try and be good, dear mother," he said. "I do try sometimes, but it seems that I can't."

"You must always try, my dear son. Now dry up your tears, and go out and get your dinner. Or, if you would rather I should go with you, I will do so."

"No, dear mother," replied the boy, affectionately, "you are sick; you must not go. I will be good."

Clarence kissed his mother again, and then returned quietly to the dining-room.

“Naughty boy!” said Aunt Mary, as he entered, looking sternly at him.

A bitter retort came instantly to the tongue of Clarence, but he checked himself with a strong effort, and took his place at the table. Instead of soothing the quick-tempered boy, Aunt Mary chafed him by her words and manner during the whole meal, and it was only the image of his mother’s tearful face, and the remembrance that she was sick, that restrained an outbreak of his passionate temper.



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When Clarence left the table, he returned to his mother's room, and laid his head upon the pillow where her's was resting.

"I love you, mother," he said, affectionately, "you are good. But I hate Aunt Mary."

"Oh, no, Clarence; you must not say that you hate Aunt Mary, for Aunt Mary is very kind to you. You mustn't hate anybody."

"She isn't kind to me, mother. She calls me a bad boy, and says every thing to make me angry when I want to be good."

"Think, my son, if there is not some reason for Aunt Mary calling you a bad boy. You know yourself, that you act very naughtily sometimes, and provoke Aunt Mary—a great deal."

"But she said I was a naughty boy when I went out just now, and I was sorry for what I had done, and wanted to be good."

"Aunt Mary didn't know that you were sorry, I am sure. When she called you 'naughty boy,' what did you say?"

"I was going to say 'You're a fool!' but I didn't. I tried hard not to let my tongue say the bad words, though it wanted to."

"Why did you try not to say them?"

"Because it would have been wrong, and would have made you feel sorry; and I love you." Again the repentant boy kissed her. His eyes were full of tears, and so were the eyes of his mother.

While talking over this incident with her husband, Mrs. Hartley said—"Were not all these impressions so light, I would feel encouraged. The boy has warm and tender feelings, but I fear that his passionate temper and selfishness will, like evil weeds, completely check their growth."

"The case is bad enough, Anna, but not so bad, I hope, as you fear. These good affections are never active in vain. They impress the mind with an indelible impression. In after years the remembrance of them will revive the states they produced, and give strength to good desires and intentions. Amid all his irregularities and wanderings from good, in after-life, the thoughts of his mother will restore the feelings he had to-day, and draw him back from evil with cords of love that cannot be broken. The good now implanted will remain, and, like ten just men, save the city. In most instances where men abandon themselves finally to evil courses, it will be found that the impressions made in childhood were not of the right kind; that the mother's influence was not what it should have been. For myself, I am sure that a different mother would have made me a



different man. When a boy, I was too much like Clarence; but the tenderness with which my mother always treated me, and the unimpassioned but earnest manner in which she reproved and corrected my faults, subdued my unruly temper. When I became restless or impatient, she always had a book to read to me, or a story to tell, or had some device to save me from myself. My father was neither harsh nor indulgent towards me; I cherish his memory with respect and love; but I have different feelings when I think



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of my mother. I often feel, even now, as if she were near me—as if her cheek were laid to mine. My father would place his hand upon my head caressingly, but my mother would lay her cheek against mine. I did not expect my father to do more—I do not know that I would have loved him had he done more; for him it was a natural expression of affection; but no act is too tender for a mother. Her kiss upon my cheek, her warm embrace, are all felt now; and the older I grow, the more holy seem the influences that surrounded me in childhood.”

THE POWER OF PATIENCE.

I HAVE a very excellent friend, who married some ten years ago, and now has her own cares and troubles in a domestic establishment consisting of her husband and herself, five children, and two servants. Like a large majority of those similarly situated, Mrs. Martinet finds her natural stock of patience altogether inadequate to the demand therefor; and that there is an extensive demand will be at once inferred when I mention that four of her five children are boys.

I do not think Mrs. Martinet's family government by any means perfect, though she has certainly very much improved it, and gets on with far more comfort to herself and all around her than she did. For the improvement at which I have hinted, I take some credit to myself, though I am by no means certain, that, were I situated as my friend is, I should govern my family as well as she governs hers. I am aware that a maiden lady, like myself, young or old, it matters not to tell the reader which, can look down from the quiet regions where she lives, and see how easy it would be for the wife and mother to reduce all to order in her turbulent household. But I am at the same time conscious of the difficulties that beset the wife and mother in the incessant, exhausting, and health-destroying nature of her duties, and how her mind, from these causes, must naturally lose its clear-seeing qualities when most they are needed, and its calm and even temper when its exercise is of most consequence. Too little allowance, I am satisfied, is made for the mother, who, with a shattered nervous system, and suffering too, often, from physical prostration, is ever in the midst of her little family of restless spirits, and compelled to administer to their thousand wants, to guide, guard, protect, govern, and restrain their evil passions, when of all things, repose and quiet of body and mind, for even a brief season, would be the greatest blessing she could ask.

I have seen a wife and mother, thus situated, betrayed into a hasty expression, or lose her self-command so far as to speak with fretful impatience to a child who rather needed to be soothed by a calmly spoken word; and I have seen her even-minded husband, who knew not what it was to feel a pain, or to suffer from nervous prostration, reprove that wife with a look that called the tears to her eyes. She was wrong, but he

was wrong in a greater degree. The over-tried wife needed her husband's sustaining patience, and gently spoken counsel, not his cold reproof.



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Husbands, as far as my observation gives me the ability to judge, have far less consideration for, and patience with their wives, than they are entitled to receive. If any should know best the wife's trials, sufferings, and incessant exhausting duties, it is the husband, and he, of all others, should be the last to censure, if, from very prostration of body and mind, she be sometimes betrayed into hasty words, that generally do more harm among children and domestics than total silence in regard to what is wrong. But this is a digression.

One day, I called to see Mrs. Martinet, and found her in a very disturbed state of mind.

"I am almost worried to death, Kate!" she said, soon after I came in.

"You look unhappy," I returned. "What has happened?"

"What is always happening," she replied. "Scarcely a day passes over my head that my patience is not tried to the utmost. I must let every body in the house do just as he or she likes, or else there is a disturbance. I am not allowed to speak out my own mind, without some one's being offended."

"It is a great trial, as well as responsibility to have the charge of a family," I remarked.

"Indeed, and you may well say that. No one knows what it is but she who has the trial. The greatest trouble is with your domestics. As a class, they are, with few exceptions, dirty, careless, and impudent. I sometimes think it gives them pleasure to interfere with your household arrangements and throw all into disorder. This seems especially to be the spirit of my present cook. My husband is particular about having his meals at the hour, and is never pleased when irregularities occur, although he does not often say any thing; this I told Hannah, when she first came, and have scolded her about being behindhand a dozen times since; and yet we do not have a meal at the hour oftener than two or three times a week.

"This morning, Mr. Martinet asked me if I wouldn't be particular in seeing that dinner was on the table exactly at two o'clock. As soon as he was gone, I went down into the kitchen and said, 'Do, for mercy's sake, Hannah, have dinner ready at the hour to-day. Mr. Martinet particularly desires it.' Hannah made no answer. It is one of her disagreeable habits, when you speak to her. 'Did you hear me?' I asked, quite out of patience with her. The creature looked up at me with an impudent face and said, pertly, 'I'm not deaf.' 'Then, why didn't you answer me when I spoke? It's a very ugly habit that you have of not replying when any one addresses you. How is it to be known that you hear what is said?' The spirit in which Hannah met my request to have dinner ready in time, satisfied me that she would so manage as to throw it off beyond the regular hour. I left the kitchen feeling, as you may well suppose, exceedingly worried."



Just then the door of the room in which we were sitting was thrown open with a bang, and in bounded Harry, Mrs. Martinet's eldest boy—a wild young scape-grace of a fellow—and whooping out some complaint against his sister. His mother, startled and annoyed by the rude interruption, ordered him to leave the room instantly. But Harry stood his ground without moving an eyelash.



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“Do you hear?” And Mrs. Martinet stamped with her foot, to give stronger emphasis to her words.

“Lizzy snatched my top-cord out of my hands, and won’t give it to me!”

“Go out of this room!”

“Shan’t Lizzy give me my top-cord?”

“Go out, I tell you!”

“I want my top-cord.”

“Go out!”

My poor friend’s face was red, and her voice trembling with passion. With each renewed order for the child to leave the room, she stamped with her foot upon the floor. Harry, instead of going out as he was directed to do, kept advancing nearer and nearer, as he repeated his complaint, until he came close up to where we were sitting.

“Didn’t I tell you to go out!” exclaimed his mother, losing all patience.

As she spoke, she arose hastily, and seizing him by the arm, dragged, rather than led him from the room.

“I never saw such a child!” she said, returning after closing the door upon Harry. “Nothing does but force. You might talk to him all day without moving him an inch, when he gets in one of these moods.”

Bang went the door open, and, “I (sic) wan’t my top-cord!” followed in louder and more passionate tones than before.

“Isn’t it beyond all endurance!” cried my friend, springing up and rushing across the room.

The passionate child, who had been spoiled by injudicious management, got a sound whipping and was shut up in a room by himself. After performing this rather unpleasant task, Mrs. Martinet returned to the parlour, flushed, excited, and trembling in every nerve.

“I expect that boy will kill me yet,” she said, as she sank, panting, into a chair. “It is surprising how stubborn and self-willed he grows. I don’t know how to account for it. He never has his own way—I never yield an inch to him when he gets in these terrible humours. Oh, dear! I feel sometimes like giving up in despair.”



I did not make a reply, for I could not say any thing that would not have been a reproof of her impatient temper. After my friend had grown calmer, she renewed her narrative about the dinner.

“As I was saying, when that boy interrupted us, I left the kitchen very much worried, and felt worried all the morning. Several times I went down to see how things were coming on, but it was plain that Hannah did not mean to have dinner at the hour. When it was time to put the meat on to roast, the fire was all down in the range. Half an hour was lost in renewing it. As I expected, when my husband came home for his dinner, at the regular time, the table was not even set.

“‘Bless me!’ he said, ‘isn’t dinner ready? I told you that I wished it at the hour, particularly. I have a business engagement at half-past two, that must be met. It is too bad! I am out of all patience with these irregularities. I can’t wait, of course.’



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“And saying this, Mr. Martinet turned upon his heel and left the house. As you may suppose, I did not feel very comfortable, nor in a very good humour with Hannah. When she made her appearance to set the table, which was not for a quarter of an hour, I gave her about as good a setting down, I reckon, as she ever had in her life. Of course, I was paid back in impudence which I could not stand, and therefore gave her notice to quit. If ever a woman was tried beyond endurance, I am. My very life is becoming a burden to me. The worst part of it is, there is no prospect of a change for the better. Things, instead of growing better, grow worse.”

“It is not so bad as that, I hope,” I could not help remarking. “Have you never thought of a remedy for the evils of which you complain?”

“A remedy, Kate! What remedy is there?”

Mrs. Martinet looked at me curiously.

“If not a remedy, there is, I am sure, a palliative,” I returned, feeling doubtful of the effect of what I had it in my mind to express.

“What is the remedy or palliative of which you speak. Name it, for goodness’ sake! Like a drowning man, I will clutch it, if it be but a straw.”

“The remedy is *patience*.” My voice slightly faltered as I spoke.

Instantly the colour deepened on the face of Mrs. Martinet. But our close intimacy, and her knowledge of the fact that I was really a friend, prevented her from being offended.

“Patience!” she said, after she had a little recovered herself. “Patience is no remedy. To endure is not to cure.”

“In that, perhaps, you are mistaken,” I returned. “The effect of patience is to cure domestic evils. A calm exterior and a gentle, yet firm voice, will in nine cases in ten, effect more than the most passionate outbreak of indignant feelings. I have seen it tried over and over again, and I am sure of the effect.”

“I should like to have seen the effect of a gentle voice upon my Harry, just now.”

“Forgive me for saying,” I answered to this, “that in my opinion, if you had met his passionate outbreak at the wrong he had suffered in losing his top-cord, in a different manner from what you did, that the effect would have been of a like different character.”

My friend’s face coloured more deeply, and her lips trembled. But she had good sense, and this kept her from being offended at what I said. I went on—



“There is no virtue more necessary in the management of a household than patience. It accomplishes almost every thing. Yet it is a hard virtue to practise, and I am by no means sure that, if I were in your place, I would practise it any better than you do. But it is of such vital importance to the order, comfort, and well-being of a family, to be able patiently and calmly to meet every disturbing and disorderly circumstance, that it is worth a struggle to attain the state of mind requisite to do so.



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To meet passion with passion does no good, but harm. The mind, when disturbed from any cause, is disturbed more deeply when it meets an opposing mind in a similar state. This is as true of children as of grown persons, and perhaps more so, for their reason is not matured, and therefore there is nothing to balance their minds. It is also more true of those who have not learned, from reason, to control themselves, as is the case with too large a portion of our domestics; who need to be treated with almost as much forbearance and consideration as children."

These remarks produced a visible effect upon Mrs. Martinet. She became silent and reflective, and continued so, to a great extent, during the half-hour that I remained.

Nearly two weeks elapsed before I called upon my friend again. I found her, happily, in a calmer state of mind than upon my previous visit. We were in the midst of a pleasant conversation, half an hour after I had come in, when one of the children, a boy between seven and eight years old, came into the room and made some complaint against his brother. The little fellow was excited, and broke in upon our quiet chitchat with a rude jar that I felt quite sensibly. I expected, of course, to hear him ordered from the room instantly. That had been my friend's usual proceeding when these interruptions occurred; at least it had been so when I happened to be a visitor. But instead of this, she said in a low, mild, soothing voice,

"Well, never mind, Willy. You stay in the parlour with us, where Harry can't trouble you."

This was just the proposition, above all others, to please the child. His face brightened, and he came and nestled up closely to his mother, who was sitting on a corner of the sofa. Drawing an arm around him, she went on with the remarks she happened to be making when the interruption of his entrance occurred. No very long time elapsed before the parlour door flew open, and Harry entered, asking, as he did so, in a loud voice, for Willy.

"Willy is here. What do you want with him?" said the mother, in a quiet, but firm tone.

"I want him to come and play."

"You were not kind to Willy, and he doesn't wish to play with you."

"Come, Willy, and play, and I will be kind," said Harry.

"Will you let me be the master sometimes?" asked the little fellow, raising himself up from where he remained seated beside his mother.

"Yes, you shall be master, sometimes."



“Then I’ll play,” and Willy sprang from the sofa and bounded from the room, as happy as he could be.

The mother smiled, and looking into my face, as soon as we were alone, said—

“You see, Kate, that I am trying your remedy, patience.”

“With most happy results, I am glad to see.”



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“With better results than I could have believed, certainly. Gentleness, consideration, and firmness, I find do a great deal, and their exercise leaves my own mind in a good state. There is a power in patience that I did not believe it possessed. I can do more by a mildly spoken word, than by the most emphatic command uttered in a passion. This is the experience of a few weeks. But, alas! Kate, to be able to exercise patience—how hard a thing that is! It requires constant watchfulness and a constant effort. Every hour I find myself betrayed into the utterance of some hasty word, and feel its powerlessness compared to those that are most gently spoken.”

“Do you get on with your domestics any better than you did?”

“Oh, yes! Far better.”

“I suppose you sent Hannah away some time ago?”

“No. I have her yet.”

“Indeed!”

“Yes, and she does very well.”

“Does she get your meals ready in time?”

“She is punctual to the minute.”

“Really she must have changed for the better! And is this, too, the result of patience and forbearance on your part?”

“I suppose so. What you said in regard to having patience, at your last visit, struck me forcibly, and caused me to feel humbled and self-condemned. The more I thought of it, the more satisfied was I that you were right. But it was one thing to see the use of patience, and another thing to exercise it. To be patient amid the turbulence, ill-temper, and disobedience of children, and the irregularities, carelessness and neglect of domestics, seemed a thing impossible. I was in this state of doubt as to my ability to exercise the virtue so much needed in my household, when Hannah came to the door of the room where I was sitting in no very happy mood, and notified me of some want in the kitchen in an exceedingly provoking way. I was about replying sharply and angrily; but suddenly checking myself, I said in a quiet, mild way, ‘Very well, Hannah. I will see that it is supplied.’

“The girl stood for some moments, looking at me with an expression of surprise on her face, and then walked away. This was a victory over myself, and I felt, also, a victory over her. Not half an hour elapsed, before, on passing near the kitchen, she said to me, in a very respectful manner:



“I forgot to tell you, this morning, that the tea was all out. But I can run round to the store and get some in a few minutes.’

“Do so, if you please, Hannah,’ I returned, without evincing the slightest feeling of annoyance at her neglect; ’and try, if you can, to have tea ready precisely at six o’clock.’

“I will have it ready, ma’am,’ she replied. And it was ready.

“Had I not exercised patience and self-control, the interview would have been something after this fashion: about ten minutes before tea-time, Hannah would have come to me and said, with provoking coolness—



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“The tea's all out.’

“To which I would have replied sharply—

“Why, in the name of goodness, did not you say so this morning? You knew that you had used the last drawing! I declare you are the most provoking creature I ever knew. You'll have to go to the store and get some.’

“I'm not fit to be seen in the street,’ she would in all probability have replied.

“And then I, losing all patience, would have soundly scolded her, and gained nothing but a sick-headache, perhaps, for my pains. Tea, in all probability, would have been served at about eight o'clock. You see the difference.”

“And a very material one it is.”

“Isn't it? As you well said, there is a power in patience undreamed of by those who seek not its exercise. Next morning, when I had any occasion to speak to Hannah, I did so with much mildness, and if I had occasion to find fault, requested a change rather than enunciated a reproof. The girl changed as if by magic. She became respectful in her manner toward me, and evinced a constant anxiety to do every thing as I wished to have it done. Not once since have we had a meal as much as ten minutes later than the appointed time.”

I could not but express the happiness I felt at the change, and urge my excellent friend to persevere. This she has done, and the whole aspect of things in her family has changed.

There are times, however, when, from ill-health, or a return of old states, she recedes again into fretfulness; but the reaction upon her is so immediate and perceptible, that she is driven in self-defence to patience and forbearance, the result of which is order and quiet in her family just in the degree that patience and forbearance are exercised.

AN OLD MAN'S RECOLLECTIONS.

“I AM not a *very* old man,” said a venerable friend to me, one day, “yet my head has become whitened and my cheeks furrowed:—and often, as I pause and lean upon my staff, at the corners of the streets, the present reality gives place to dreams of the past, and I see here, instead of the massive pile of brick and marble, the low frame dwelling, and there, in place of the lines of tall warehouses, humble tenements. If, in my aimless wanderings about the city, I turn my steps towards the suburbs, I find that change, too, has been there. I miss the woods and fields where once, with the gay companions of early years, I spent many a summer hour. Beautiful dwellings have sprung up, it seems

to me as if by magic, where but yesterday I plucked fruit from overladen branches, or flung myself to rest among the tall grass or ripening grain.



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“But other changes than this have marked the passage of time. Changes that cause them to sink into obscurity in comparison. Thousands in our goodly city have passed from the cradle to the grave, during the years that have been allotted to me; and thousands have proved that all the promises of early years were vain. All external mutations would attract but little attention, did they not recall other and more important changes. Thought and feeling have put on forms, as new and strange, but not, alas! so full of happy indications. Prosperity has crowned the toil and enterprise of our citizens; but how few of the many who were prosperous when I was in my prime are among the wealthy now! How few of the families that filled the circles of fashion then, have left any of their scattered members to grace the glittering circles now! The wheel of fortune has ceased not its revolutions for a moment. Hopes that once spread their gay leaves to the pleasant airs have been blighted and scattered by the chilling winds of adversity.

“Pausing and leaning upon my staff, as I have said, I often muse thus, when some object recalls the memory of one and another who have finished their course and been gathered to their fathers. In every city and village, wherever there is human life, with its evil passions and good affections, there are histories to stir the heart and unseal the fountains of tears. Truth, it is said, is strange, stranger than fiction; and never was there a truer sentiment uttered. In all the fictions that I have read, nothing has met my eye so strange and heart-stirring as the incidents in real life that have transpired in the families of some of our own citizens. Any one, of years and observation, in any city, will bear a like testimony. The circumstance of their actual occurrence, and the fact that the present reality diminishes, from many causes, our surprise at events, tend to make us think lightly of what is going on around us. And, besides this, we ordinarily see only the surface of society. The writer of fiction unveils the mind and heart of those he brings into action, and we see all. We perceive their thoughts and feel their emotions. But, if we could look into the bosoms of those we meet daily, and read there the hopes and fears that excite or depress, we should perceive all around us living histories of human passion and emotion that would awaken up our most active sympathies. All this, however, is hidden from our eyes. And it is only, in most instances, when the present becomes the past, that we are permitted to lift the veil, and look at the reality beneath.”

We were sitting near a window overlooking one of the principal streets of our city, and a slight noise without, at this time, attracted our attention.

“There she is again. Poor Flora! How my heart aches for you!” my companion suddenly ejaculated, in a tone of deep sympathy, after gazing into the street for a moment or two.



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“Who is it?” I asked.

“Do you see that poor creature, slowly moving along just opposite?”

“Yes.”

“Twenty years ago, there was not a gayer girl in the city; nor one more truly beloved by all.”

“She?”

“Yes. Nor one of fairer hopes.”

“Hope has indeed sadly mocked her!” said I, giving almost involuntary utterance to the thought that instantly passed through my mind. Just then I caught a glimpse of her face, that was partly turned towards us. Though marked by disease and sorrow, it was yet no common face. It still bore traces of womanly beauty, that no eye could mistake.

“Poor Flora! what a history of disappointed hopes and crushed affections is thine! What a lesson for the young, the thoughtless, the innocent!” the old man said, as he retired from the window.

“Who is she?” I asked, after a brief pause.

“You have seen that beautiful old mansion that stands in—street, just above—?”

“Yes.”

“It is now used as an extensive boarding-house; but in my younger days, it was one of the most princely establishments in the city. It then stood alone, and had attached to it beautifully laid-out grounds, stocked with the rarest and richest plants, all in the highest state of cultivation. No American workman could produce furniture good enough for its aristocratic owner. Every thing was bought in Paris, and upon the most extensive scale. And truly, the internal arrangement of Mr. T—’s dwelling was magnificent, almost beyond comparison at the time.”

“And was that the daughter of Mr. T—?” I asked, in surprise.

“Yes, that was Flora T—,” the old man said, in a voice that had in it an expression of sad feeling, evidently conjured up by the reminiscence.

“You knew her in her better days?”

“As well as I knew my own sister. She was one of the gentlest of her sex. No one could meet her without loving her.”



“She married badly?”

“Yes. That tells the whole secret of her present wretched condition. Alas! how many a sweet girl have I seen dragged down, by a union with some worthless wretch, undeserving the name of a man! There is scarcely a wealthy family in our city, into which some such an one has not insinuated himself, destroying the peace of all, and entailing hopeless misery upon one all unfit to bear her changed lot. The case of Flora is an extreme one. Her husband turned out to be a drunkard, and her father’s family became reduced in circumstances, and finally every member of it either passed from this world, or sank into a state of indigence, little above that of her own. But the worst feature in this history of wretchedness is the fact, that Flora, in sinking so low externally, lost that sweet spirit of innocence which once gave a tone of so much loveliness to her character. Her husband not only debased her condition, but corrupted her mind. Oh, what a wreck she has become!”



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“How few families there are,” said I, after a few moments, “as you have justly remarked, the happiness of which has not been destroyed by the marriage of a much loved and fondly cherished daughter and sister, to one all unworthy of the heart whose best affections had been poured out upon him like water.”

“The misery arising from this cause,” the old man said, “is incalculable. Nor does it always show itself in the extreme external changes that have marked Flora T—’s sad history. I could take you to many houses, fine houses too, and richly arrayed within, where hearts are breaking in the iron grasp of a husband’s unfeeling hand, that contracts with a slow, torturing cruelty, keeping its victim lingering day after day, week after week, month after month, and year after year, looking and longing for the hour when the deep quiet of the grave shall bring peace—sweet peace.”

* * *

“As I thus look back through a period of some twenty, thirty, and forty years,” continued the old man, “noting the changes that have taken place, and counting over the hopes that have been given like chaff to the winds, I feel sad. And yet, amid all this change and disappointment, there is much to stir the heart with feelings of pleasure. A single instance I will relate:

“A very intimate friend, a merchant, had three daughters, to whom he gave an education the best that could be obtained. When the eldest was but twenty, and the youngest fourteen, Mr. W—failed in business. Every thing passed from his hands, and he was left entirely penniless. Well advanced in years, with his current of thoughts, from long habit, going steadily in one way, this shock almost entirely prostrated him. He could not find courage to explain to his daughters his condition, and the change that awaited them. But they loved their father too well not to perceive that something was wrong. Suspecting the true cause, the eldest, unknown to him, waited upon one of his clerks at his residence, and received from him a full statement of her father’s affairs. She begged that nothing might be concealed; and so obtained all the information that the clerk could give, from which she saw plainly that the family would be entirely broken up, and worse than all, perhaps scattered, the children from their father.

“On returning home, she took her younger sisters, and fully explained to them the gloomy prospect in view. Then she explained to them her plan, by which the force of the storm might be broken. In it they all gladly acquiesced. This plan, they proceeded, unknown to their father, to put into execution.

“It was about one week after, that the old man came home so much troubled in mind that he was compelled to leave the tea-table, his food untasted. As he arose, his children arose also, and followed him into the parlours.

“Dear father!’ said the eldest, coming up to his side, and drawing her arm around his neck—’do not be troubled. We know it all, and are prepared for the worst.’



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“Know what, my child?’ he asked in surprise.

“Know that our condition is changed. And know more—that we are prepared to meet that change with brave, true hearts.’

“The tears came into the daughter’s eyes as she said this—not tears for her changed prospect—but tears for her father.

“And we are all prepared to meet it,’ broke in the other two, gathering around the old man.

“God bless you, my children!’ Mr. W—murmured, with a voice choked with emotion. ‘But, you know not how low you have fallen. I am a beggar!’

“Not quite,’ was the now smiling reply of his eldest child. ‘We learned it all—and at once determined that we would do our part. For two weeks, we have been out among our friends, and freely related our plans and the reason for adopting them. The result is, we obtained forty scholars to a school we have determined to open, for teaching music, French, drawing, &c. You are not a beggar, dear father! And never shall be, while you have three daughters to love you!’

“The old man’s feelings gave way, and he wept like a child. He could not object to the proposition of his children. The school was at once opened, and is still conducted by the two youngest. It proved a means of ample support to the family. To some men, the fact that their children had been compelled to resort to daily labour, in any calling, for a support, would have been deeply humiliating. Not so to Mr. W—. That evidence of his daughters’ love to him compensated for all the changes which circumstances, uncontrolled by himself, had effected.”

THE END.

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