

**ARTHUR
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THE HOME MISSION

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The Home Mission

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T. S. Arthur

The Home Mission

PREFACE

IF it were possible to trace back to their beginnings, in each individual, those good or evil impulses that have become ruling affections, in most cases the origin would not be found until we had reached the home of childhood. Here it is that impressions are made, which become lasting as existence itself. But the influence of home is not alone salutary or baneful in early years. Wherever a home exists, there will be found the nursery of all that is excellent in social or civil life, or of all that is deformed. Every man and woman we meet in society, exhibit, in unmistakable characters, the quality of their homes. The wife, the husband, the children, the guest, bear with them daily a portion of the spirit pervading the little circle from which they have come forth. If the sun shines there, a light will be on their countenances; but shadows, if clouds are in the sky of home. If there be disorder, defect of principle, discord among the members, neglect of duty, and absence of kind offices, the sphere of those who constitute that home can hardly be salutary. They will add little to the common stock of good in the social life around them. We need not say how different will be the influence of those whose home-circle is pervaded by higher, purer, and truer principles.

A word to the wise is, we are told, sufficient. He, therefore, who speaks a true word in the ear of the wise, has planted a seed that will surely spring up and yield good fruit. May we hope that all into whose hands this little book is destined to come are wise, and that the few suggestive words spoken therein, as "hints to make home happy," will fall into good ground. If this be so, "The Home Mission" will not be fruitless. Though no annual reports of what it has accomplished are made, its silent and unobtrusive work, we trust, will be none the less effectual.

A VISION OF CONSOLATION

THE tempest of grief which, for a time, had raged so wildly in the heart of Mrs. Freeland, exhausted by its own violence, sobbed itself away, and the stricken mother passed into the land of dreams.

To the afflicted, sleep comes with a double blessing—rest is given to the wearied body and to the grieving spirit. Often, very often, the Angel of Consolation bends to the dreaming ear, and whispers words of hope and comfort that from no living lips had yet found utterance.

And it was so now with the sleeping mother. A few hours only had passed since she stood looking down, for the last time, on the fair face of her youngest born. Over his bright, blue eyes, into whose heavenly depths she had so loved to gaze, the pale lids had closed for ever. Still lingered around his lips the smile left there by the angels, as, with a kiss of love, they received his parting spirit. In the curling masses of his rich, golden hair, the shadows nestled away, as of old, while his tiny fingers held a few white blossoms, as with a living grasp. Was it death or sleep? So like a sleeping child the sweet boy lay, that it seemed every moment as if his lips would unclose, his eyes open to the light, and his voice come to the listening ear with its tones of music.

If to the mother had come this illusion, it remained not long. Wild with grief, she turned away as the sweet face she had so loved to gaze upon was hidden from her straining eyes for ever.

Hidden from her eyes, did we say? Only hidden from her natural eyes. Still he was before the eyes of her spirit in all his living beauty. But, to her natural affections, he was lost—even as he had faded from before her natural eyes; and, in the agony of bereavement, it seemed that her heart would break. Back to her darkened chamber she went. Her nearest and dearest friends gathered around, seeking lovingly to sustain her in her great affliction; but she refused to be comforted.

At length, as at first said, the tempest of grief, which, for a time, raged so violently in the heart of Mrs. Freeland, sobbed itself away, and the stricken mother passed into the land of dreams.

For the most part, dreams are fantastic. Yet they are not always so. In states of deep sorrow or strong trial, when the heart turns from the natural world, hopeless of aid or consolation, truth often comes in dreams and similitudes.

The mother found herself in the company of two beautiful maidens, in the very flower of youth; and as she gazed earnestly into their faces, which seemed transparent from an inward celestial light, she saw expectation therein—loving expectation. They stood beneath the eastern portico of a pleasant dwelling, around which stately trees—the branches vocal with the song of feathered minstrels—lifted their green tops far up into the crystal air. Flowers of a thousand hues and sweet odours were woven into forms and figures of exquisite beauty upon the carpet of living green spread over the teeming earth, while groups of little children sported one with another, and mingled their happy voices with the melody of birds.

Yet, amid all this external joy and beauty, the hand of grief still lay upon the mother's heart; and when she looked upon the sportive infants around her, she sighed for her own babe. Even as she sighed, one of the maidens turned to her and said, while her whole countenance was lit up with a glow of delight—

"It has come. A new babe is born unto heaven."

And, as she spoke, she gathered her arms quickly to her bosom, and the wondering mother saw lying thereon her own child. The other maiden was already bending over the infant—already had she greeted its coming with a kiss of love. Quickly both retired within the dwelling, and the bereaved mother went with them, eager to receive the babe she had lost.

"Oh, my child! my child!" she said. "Give me my child."

And ere the words had died upon her lips, the maiden who had received the babe gave it into her arms, when she clasped it with a wild delight, and rained tears of gladness upon its face.

For a time, the two maidens looked upon the mother in silence, and in their bright countenances love and pity were blended. At length, one of them said to her, (and she smiled sweetly, and spoke with an exquisite, penetrating tenderness,)—

"Your heart is full of love for your babe?"

"He is dearer to me than life—dearer than a thousand lives," replied the mother quickly, drawing the babe closer to her bosom.

"Love seeks to bless the object of its regard."

There was a meaning in the words and tone of the maiden, as she said this, that caused the mother to look into her face earnestly.

"This is not the land of sickness, of sorrow, of death," resumed the maiden, "but the land of eternal life and blessedness. Into this land your babe has been born. You are here only as a visitant, and must soon return to bear a few more trials and pains, a few more conflicts with evil; but the end is your preparation for these heavenly regions."

A shadow fell instantly upon the mother's heart. Tears rushed to her eyes, and she drew her arms more tightly about her babe.

"Shall we keep this babe in our heavenly home, or will you bear it with you back to the dark, cold, sad regions of mortality?"

"Do not take from me my more than life!" sobbed the mother wildly. "Oh! I cannot give you my child;" and more eagerly she hugged it to her breast.

For a time there was silence. Then one of the maidens laid gently her hand upon the mother, and she lifted her bowed head.

"Come," said the maiden.

The mother arose, and the two walked into the open air, and passing through the group of children sporting on the lawn and in the gardens, went for what seemed the space of a mile, until they came to a forest, into the depths of which they penetrated; and, for a time, the farther they went the darker and more gloomy it became, until scarcely a ray of light from the arching sky came down through the dense and tangled foliage. At last they were beyond the forest.

"Look," said the companion.

The mother lifted her eyes—the babe had strangely passed from her arms. A dwelling, familiar in aspect, stood near, and through an open window she saw a sick child lying upon a bed, and knew it as her own. Its little face was distorted by pain and flushed with fever; and as it tossed restlessly to and fro, its moans filled her ears. She stretched forth her hands, yearning to give some relief; even as she did so, the scene faded from her view, and next she saw an older child, bearing still the linaments of her own. There was the same broad, white forehead and clustering curls; the same large, bright eyes and full, ruddy lips; but, alas! not the soft vail of innocence which had given the features of the babe such a heavenly charm. The fine brow was contracted with passion; the eyes flashed with an evil light; and the lips were tightly drawn, and with something of defiance, against the teeth. The boy was resisting, with a stern determination, the will of the parents—was setting at naught those early salutary restraints which are the safeguard of youth.

"Oh! my unhappy boy!" cried the mother.

The scene changed as she spoke. The boy, now grown up to manhood, once more stood before her. Alas! how had the light of innocence faded from his countenance, giving place to a shadow of evil, the very darkness of which caused a cold shudder to pass through the mother's frame.

"Look again," said the maiden, as this scene was fading.

But the mother hid her face in her hands, and turned weeping away.

"Look again." And this time there was something so heart-cheering in the maiden's voice, that the mother lifted her tearful eyes. She was back again in the beautiful place from which she had gone forth a little while before, and her babe, beautiful as innocence itself, lay sweetly sleeping in the arms

of the lovely maiden who had received it on its first entrance into heaven. With a heart full of joy, the mother now bent over the slumbering babe, kissing it again and again.

"Grieving mother," said the angel-maiden, in tones of flute-like softness, "God saw that it would not be good for your child to remain on earth, and he therefore removed it to this celestial region, where no evil can ever penetrate. To me, as an angel-mother, it has been given; and I will love it and care for it with a love as pure and tender as the love that yearns in your bosom. As its infantile mind opens, I will pour in heavenly instruction, that it may grow in wisdom and become an angel. Will you not let me have it freely?"

"But why may I not remain here and be its heavenly mother? Oh! I will love and care for it with a tenderness and devotion equal to, if not exceeding yours."

Even while the mother spoke there was a change. She saw before her other objects of affection. There was her husband, sitting in deep dejection, sorrowing for the loss of one who was dear as his own life; while three children, the sight of whom stirred her maternal heart to its profoundest depths, lay sleeping in each other's arms, the undried tears yet glistening on their lashes.

The wife and mother stretched forth her hands toward these beloved ones, eager to be with them again and turn their grief into gladness. But, in a moment, there passed another change. The pleasant home in which her children had been sheltered for years, no longer held them; the fold had been broken up and the tender lambs scattered. One of these little ones the mother saw, sitting apart from a group of sportive children, weeping over some task work. The bloom on her cheek had faded—its roundness was gone—the light of her beautiful eyes was quenched in tears. And, as she looked, a woman came to the child and spoke to her harshly. She was about springing forward, when another scene was presented. Her first-born, a noble-spirited boy, to whose future she had ever looked with pride and pleasure, stood before her. Alas! how changed. Every thing about him showed the want of a mother's care and considerate affection; and from his dear, young face had already vanished the look of joyous innocence she had so loved to contemplate.

Again the mother was in the presence of the angel-maiden, to whose loving arms a good God had confided the babe, which, in his wisdom, he had removed from the earth. And the angel-maiden, as she looked first at the babe in her arms and then at the mother, smiled sweetly and said—

"He is safe here; will you not let him remain?"

And, with a gushing heart, the mother answered, "Not for worlds would I take him with me into the outer life of nature. Oh, no! He is safe—let him remain."

"And you will return to those who still need your love and care?"

"Yes, yes," said the mother, earnestly. "Let me go to them again.

Let me be their angel on earth."

And she bent hastily to the heaven-born babe, kissing it with tearful fondness.

There came now another change. The mother was back again in her chamber of sorrow; and undried tears were yet upon her cheeks. But she was comforted and reconciled to the great affliction which had been sent for good from heaven.

Those who saw Mrs. Freeland in the first wild grief that followed the loss of her babe, wondered at her serene composure when she came again among them. And they wondered long, for she spoke not of this Vision of Consolation. It was too sacred a thing to be revealed, to any save the companion of her life.

THE STEP-MOTHER

THERE are few positions in social life of greater trial and responsibility than that of a step-mother; and it too rarely happens that the woman who assumes this position, is fitted for the right discharge of its duties. In far too many cases, the widower is accepted as a husband because he has a home, or a position to offer, while the children are considered as a drawback in the bargain. But it sometimes happens, that a true woman, from genuine affection, unites herself with a widower, and does it with a loving regard for his children, and with the purpose in her mind of being to them, as far as in her power lies, a wise and tender mother.

Such a woman was Agnes Green. She was in her thirty-second year when Mr. Edward Arnold, a widower with four children, asked her to become his wife. At twenty-two, Agnes had loved as only a true woman can love. But the object of that love proved himself unworthy, and she turned away from him. None knew how deep the heart-trial through which she passed—none knew how intensely she suffered. In part, her pale face and sobered brow witnessed, but only in part; for many said she was cold, and some even used the word heartless, when they spoke of her. From early womanhood a beautiful ideal of manly excellence had filled her mind; and with this ideal she had invested one who proved false to the high character. At once the green things of her heart withered and for a long time its surface was a barren waste. But the woman was yet strong in her. She must love something. So she came forth from her heart-seclusion, and let her affections, like a refreshing and invigorating stream, flow along many channels. She was the faithful friend, the comforter in affliction, the wise counsellor. More than once had she been approached with offers of marriage, by men who saw the excellence of her character, and felt that upon any dwelling, in which she was the presiding spirit, would rest a blessing. But none of them were able to give to the even pulses of her heart a quicker motion.

At last she met Mr. Arnold. More than three years had passed since the mother of his children was removed by death, and, since that time, he had sought, with all a father's tenderness and devotion, to fill her place to them. How imperfectly, none knew so well as himself. As time went on, the want of a true woman's affectionate care for his children was more and more felt. All were girls except the youngest, their ages ranging from twelve downward, and this made their mother's loss so much the more a calamity. Moreover, his feeling of loneliness and want of companionship, so keenly felt in the beginning, instead of diminishing, increased.

Such was his state of mind when he met Agnes Green. The attraction was mutual, though, at first, no thought of marriage came into the mind of either. A second meeting stirred the placid waters in the bosom of Agnes Green. Conscious of this, and fearful lest the emotion she strove to repress might become apparent to other eyes, she assumed a certain reserve, not seen in the beginning, which only betrayed her secret, and at once interested Mr. Arnold, who now commenced a close observation of her character. With every new aspect in which this was presented, he saw something that awakened admiration; something that drew his spirit nearer to her as one congenial. And not the less close was her observation.

When, at length, Mr. Arnold solicited the hand of Agnes Green, she was ready to respond. Not, however, in a selfish and self-seeking spirit; not in the narrow hope of obtaining some great good for herself, was her response made, but in full view of her woman's power to bless, and with an earnest, holy purpose in her heart, to make her presence in his household indeed a blessing.

"I must know your children better than I know them now, and they must know me better than they do, before I take the place you wish me to assume," was her reply to Mr. Arnold, when he spoke of an early marriage.

And so means were taken to bring her in frequent contact with the children. The first time she met them intimately, was at the house of a friend. Mary, the oldest girl, she found passionate and self-willed; Florence, the second, good-natured, but careless and slovenly; while Margaret, the third, was

in ill health, and exceedingly peevish. The little brother, Willy, was a beautiful, affectionate child, but in consequence of injudicious management, very badly spoiled. Take them altogether, they presented rather an unpromising aspect; and it is no wonder that Agnes Green had many misgivings at heart, when the new relation contemplated, and its trials and responsibilities, were pictured to her mind.

The earnestly-asked question by Mr. Arnold, after this first interview,—“What do you think of my children?”—was not an easy one to answer. A selfish, unscrupulous woman, who looked to the connection as something to be particularly desired on her own account, and who cared little about duties and responsibilities, might have replied, “Oh, they are lovely children!” or, “I am delighted with them!” Not so Agnes Green. She did not reply immediately, but mused for some moments, considerably embarrassed, and in doubt what to say. Mr. Arnold was gazing intently in her face.

“They do not seem to have made a favourable impression,” said he, speaking with some disappointment in his tone and manner.

A feeble flush was visible in the face of Agnes Green, and also a slight quiver of the lips as she answered:

“There is too much at stake, as well in your case as my own, to warrant even a shadow of concealment. You ask what I think of your children, and you expect me to answer truly?”

“I do,” was the almost solemnly-spoken reply.

“My first hurried, yet tolerably close, observation, has shown me, in each, a groundwork of natural good.”

“As their father,” replied Mr. Arnold, in some earnestness of manner, “I know there is good in them,—much good. But they have needed a mother's care.”

“When you have said that, how much has been expressed! If the garden is not cultivated, and every weed carefully removed, how quickly is it overrun with things noxious, and how feeble becomes the growth of all things good and beautiful! It is just so with the mind. Neglect it, and bad habits and evil propensities will assuredly be quickened into being, and attain vigorous life.”

“My children are not perfect, I know, but—”

Mr. Arnold seemed slightly hurt. Agnes Green interrupted him, by saying, in a mild voice, as she laid her hand gently upon his arm:

“Do not give my words a meaning beyond what they are designed to convey. If I assume the place of a mother to your children, I take upon myself all the responsibilities that the word 'mother' involves. Is not this so?”

“Thus I understand it.”

“My duty will be, not only to train these children for a happy and useful life here, but for a happy and useful life hereafter.”

“It will.”

“It is no light thing, Mr. Arnold, to assume the place of a mother to children who, for three years, have not known a mother's affectionate care. I confess that my heart shrinks from the responsibility, and I ask myself over and over again, 'Have I the requisite wisdom, patience, and self-denial?'”

“I believe you have,” said Mr. Arnold, who was beginning to see more deeply into the heart of Agnes. “And now,” he added, “tell me what you think of my children.”

“Mary has a quick temper, and is rather self-willed, if my observation is correct, but she has a warm heart. Florence is thoughtless, and untidy in her person, but possesses a happy temper. Poor Maggy's ill health has, very naturally, soured her disposition. Ah, what can you expect of a suffering child, who has no mother? Your little Willy is a lovely boy, somewhat spoiled—who can wonder at this?—but possessing just the qualities to win for him kindness from every one.”

“I am sure you will love him,” said Mr. Arnold, warmly.

“I have no doubt on that subject,” replied Agnes Green. “And now,” she added, “after what I have said, after showing you that I am quick to see faults, once more give this matter earnest consideration. If I become your wife, and take the place of a mother to these children, I shall, at once,

—wisely and lovingly, I trust,—begin the work of removing from their minds every noxious weed that neglect may have suffered to grow there. The task will be no light one, and, in the beginning, there may be rebellion against my authority. To be harsh or hard is not in my nature. But a sense of duty will make me firm. Once more, I say, give this matter serious consideration. It is not yet too late to pause."

Mr. Arnold bent his head in deep reflection. For many minutes he sat in silent self-communion, and sat thus so long, that the heart of Agnes Green began to beat with a restricted motion, as if there was a heavy pressure on her bosom. At last Mr. Arnold looked up, his eyes suddenly brightening, and his face flushing with animation. Grasping her hands with both of his, he said:

"I have reflected, Agnes, and I do not hesitate. Yes, I will trust these dear ones to your loving guardianship. I will place in your hands their present and eternal welfare, confident that you will be to them a true mother."

And she was. As often as it could be done before the time appointed for the marriage, she was brought in contact with the children. Almost from the beginning, she was sorry to find in Mary, the oldest child, a reserve of manner, and an evident dislike toward her, which she in vain sought to overcome. The groundwork of this she did not know. It had its origin in a remark made by the housekeeper, who, having learned from some gossiping relative of Mr. Arnold that a new wife was soon to be brought home, and, also, who this new wife was to be, made an imprudent allusion to the fact, in a moment of forgetfulness.

"Your new mother will soon put you straight, my little lady," said she, one day, to Mary, who had tried her beyond all patience.

"My new mother! Who's she, pray?" was sharply demanded.

"Miss Green," replied the unreflecting housekeeper. "Your father's going to bring her home one of these days, and make her your mother, and she'll put you all right—she'll take down your fine airs, my lady!"

"Will she?" And Mary, compressing her lips tightly, and drawing up her slender form to its full height, looked the image of defiance.

From that moment a strong dislike toward Miss Green ruled in the mind of Mary; and she resolved, should the housekeeper's assertion prove true, not only to set the new authority at defiance, but to inspire, if possible, the other children with her own feelings.

The marriage was celebrated at the house of Mr. Arnold, in the presence of his own family and a few particular friends, Agnes arriving at the hour appointed.

After the ceremony, the children were brought forward, and presented to their new mother. The youngest, as if strongly drawn by invisible chords of affection, sprung into her lap, and clasped his little arms lovingly about her neck. He seemed very happy. The others were cold and distant, while Mary fixed her eyes upon the wife of her father, with a look so full of dislike and rebellion, that no one present was in any doubt as to how she regarded the new order of things.

Mr. Arnold was a good deal fretted by this unexpected conduct on the part of Mary; and, forgetful of the occasion and its claims, spoke to her with some sternness. He was recalled to self-possession by the smile of his wife, and her gently-uttered remark, that reached only his own ear:

"Don't seem to notice it. Let it be my task to overcome prejudices."

During the evening Mary did not soften in the least toward her step-mother. On the next morning, when all met, for the first time, at the breakfast table, the children gazed askance at the calm, dignified woman who presided at the table, and seemed ill at ease. On Mary's lip, and in her eye, was an expression so like contempt, that it was with difficulty her father could refrain from ordering her to her own room.

The meal passed in some embarrassment. At its conclusion, Mr. Arnold went into the parlour, and his wife, entering at once upon her duties, accompanied the children to the nursery, to see for herself that the two oldest were properly dressed for school. Mary, who had preceded the rest, was

already in contention with the housekeeper. Just as Mrs. Arnold—so we must now call her—entered the room, Mary exclaimed, sharply:

"I don't care what you say, I'm going to wear this bonnet!"

"What's the trouble?" inquired Mrs. Arnold, calmly.

"Why, you see, ma'am," replied the housekeeper, "Mary is bent on wearing her new, pink bonnet to school, and I tell her she mustn't do it. Her old one is good enough."

"Let me see the old one," said Mrs. Arnold. She spoke in a very pleasant tone of voice.

A neat, straw bonnet, with plain, unsoiled trimming, was brought forth by the housekeeper, who remarked:

"It's good enough to wear Sundays, for that matter."

"I don't care if it is, I'm not going to wear it today. So don't bother yourself any more about it."

"Oh, yes, Mary, you will," said Mrs. Arnold, very kindly, yet firmly.

"No, I won't!" was the quick, resolute answer. And she gazed, unflinchingly, into the face of her step-mother.

"I'll call your father, my young lady! This is beyond all endurance!" said the housekeeper, starting for the door.

"Hannah!" The mild, even voice of Mrs. Arnold checked the excited housekeeper. "Don't speak of it to her father,—I'm sure she doesn't mean what she says. She'll think better of it in a moment."

Mary was hardly prepared for this. Even while she stood with unchanged exterior, she felt grateful to her step-mother for intercepting the complaint about to be made to her father. She expected some remark or remonstrance from Mrs. Arnold. But in this she was mistaken. The latter, as if nothing unpleasant had occurred, turned to Florence, and after a light examination of her dress, said to the housekeeper:

"This collar is too much soiled; won't you bring me another?"

"Oh, it's clean enough," replied Florence, knitting her brows, and affecting impatience. But, even as she spoke, the quick, yet gentle hands of her step-mother had removed the collar from her neck.

"Do you think it clean enough now?" said she, as she placed the soiled collar beside a fresh one, which the housekeeper had brought.

"It *is* rather dirty," replied Florence, smiling.

And now Mrs. Arnold examined other articles of her dress, and had them changed, re-arranged her hair, and saw that her teeth were properly brushed. While this was progressing, Mary stood a little apart, a close observer of all that passed. One thing she did not fail to remark, and that was the gentle firmness of her step-mother, which was in strong contrast with the usual scolding, jerking, and impatience of the housekeeper, as manifested on these occasions.

By the time Florence was ready for school, Mary's state of mind had undergone considerable change, and she half regretted the exhibition of ill temper and insulting disobedience she had shown. Yet was she in no way prepared to yield. To her surprise, after Florence was all ready, her step-mother turned to her and said, in a mild, cheerful voice, as if nothing unpleasant had occurred,

"Have you a particular reason for wishing to wear your new bonnet, this morning, Mary?"

"Yes, ma'am, I have." The voice of Mary was changed considerably, and her eyes fell beneath the mild, but penetrating, gaze of her step-mother.

"May I ask you the reason?"

There was a pause of some moments; then Mary replied:

"I promised one of the girls that I'd wear it. She asked me to. She wanted to see it."

"Did you tell Hannah this?"

"No, ma'am. It wouldn't have been any use. She never hears to reason."

"But you'll find me very different, Mary," said Mrs. Arnold, tenderly. "I shall ever be ready to hear reason."

All this was so far from what Mary had anticipated, that her mind was half bewildered. Her step-mother's clear sight penetrated to her very thoughts.

Taking her hand, she drew her gently to her side. An arm was then placed lovingly around her.

"My dear child,"—it would have been a hard heart, indeed, that could have resisted the influence of that voice, "let us understand each other in the beginning. You seem to look upon me as an enemy, and yet I wish to be the very best friend you have in the world. I have come here, not as an exacting and overbearing tyrant, but to seek your good and promote your happiness in every possible way. I will love you; and may I not expect love in return? Surely you will not withhold that."

As Mrs. Arnold spoke thus, she felt a slight quiver in the hand she had taken in her own. She continued:

"I cannot hope to fill the place of your dear mother, now in heaven. Yet even as she loved you, would I love you, my child." The voice of Mrs. Arnold had become unsteady, through excess of feeling. "As she bore with your faults, I will bear with them; as she rejoiced over every good affection born in your heart, so will I rejoice."

Outraged by the conduct of Mary, the housekeeper had gone to Mr. Arnold, whom she found in the parlour, and repeated to him, with a colouring of her own, the insolent language his child had used. The father hurried up stairs in a state of angry excitement. No little surprised was he, on entering the nursery, to see Mary sobbing on the breast of her step-mother, whose gentle hands were softly pressed upon the child's temples, and whose low, soothing voice was speaking to her words of comfort for the present, and cheerful hope for the future.

Unobserved by either, Mr. Arnold stood for a moment, and then softly retired, with a gush of thankfulness in his heart, that he had found for his children so true and good a mother.

With Mary there was no more trouble. From that hour, she came wholly under the influence of her step-mother, learning day by day, as she knew her better, to love her with a more confiding tenderness. Wonderful was the change produced on the children of Mr. Arnold in a single year. They had, indeed, found a mother.

It is painful to think how different would have been the result, had the step-mother not been a true woman. Wise and good she was in her sphere; loving and unselfish; and the fruit of her hand was sweet to the taste, and beautiful to look upon.

How few are like her! How few who assume the position of step-mother,—a position requiring patience, long-suffering, and unflinching self-denial,—are fitted for the duties they so lightly take upon themselves! Is it any wonder their own lives are made, at times, miserable, or that they mar, by passion or exacting tyranny, the fair face of humanity, in the children committed to their care? Such lose their reward.

POWER OF KINDNESS.

"TOM! Here!" said a father to his boy, speaking in tones of authority.

The lad was at play. He looked toward his father, but did not leave his companions.

"Do you hear me, sir?" spoke the father, more sternly than at first.

With an unhappy face and reluctant step, the boy left his play and approached his parent.

"Why do you creep along at a snail's pace?" said the latter, angrily. "Come quickly, I want you. When I speak, I look to be obeyed instantly. Here, take this note to Mr. Smith, and see that you don't go to sleep by the way. Now run as fast as you can go."

The boy took the note. There was a cloud upon his brow. He moved away, but at a slow pace.

"You, Tom! Is that doing as I ordered? Is that going quickly?" called the father, when he saw the boy creeping away. "If you are not back in half an hour, I will punish you."

But the words had but little effect. The boy's feelings were hurt by the unkindness of the parent. He experienced a sense of injustice; a consciousness that wrong had been done him. By nature he was like his father, proud and stubborn; and these qualities of his mind were aroused, and he indulged in them, fearless of consequences.

"I never saw such a boy," said the father, speaking to a friend who had observed the occurrence. "My words scarcely make an impression on him."

"Kind words often prove most powerful," said the friend. The father looked surprised.

"Kind words," continued the friend, "are like the gentle rain and the refreshing dews; but harsh words bend and break like the angry tempest. The first develop and strengthen good affections, while the others sweep over the heart in devastation, and mar and deform all they touch. Try him with kind words; they will prove a hundred fold more powerful."

The latter seemed hurt by the reproof; but it left him thoughtful. An hour passed away ere his boy returned. At times during his absence he was angry at the delay, and meditated the infliction of punishment. But the words of remonstrance were in his ears, and he resolved to obey them. At last the lad came slowly in with a cloudy countenance, and reported the result of his errand. Having stayed far beyond his time, he looked for punishment, and was prepared to receive it with an angry defiance. To his surprise, after delivering the message he had brought, his father, instead of angry reproof and punishment, said kindly, "Very well, my son; you can go out to play again."

The boy went out, but was not happy. He had disobeyed and disobliged his father, and the thought of this troubled him. Harsh words had not clouded his mind nor aroused a spirit of reckless anger. Instead of joining his companions, he went and sat down by himself, grieving over his act of disobedience. As he thus sat, he heard his name called. He listened.

"Thomas, my son," said his father, kindly. The boy sprang to his feet, and was almost instantly beside his parent.

"Did you call, father?"

"I did, my son. Will you take this package to Mr. Long for me?"

There was no hesitation in the boy's manner. He looked pleased at the thought of doing his father a service, and reached out his hand for the package. On receiving it, he bounded away with a light step.

"There is a power in kindness," said the father, as he sat musing, after the lad's departure. And even while he sat musing over the incident, the boy came back with a cheerful, happy face, and said—

"Can I do any thing else for you, father?"

Yes, there is the power of kindness. The tempest of passion can only subdue, constrain, and break; but in love and gentleness there is the power of the summer rain, the dew, and the sunshine.

BEAR AND FORBEAR

"DON'T talk to me in such a serious strain, Aunt Hannah. One would really think, from what you say, that James and I would quarrel before we were married a month."

"Not so soon as that, Maggy dear. Heaven grant that it may not come so soon as that! But, depend upon it, child, if you do not make 'bear and forbear' your motto, many months will not have passed, after your wedding-day, without the occurrence of some serious misunderstanding between you and your husband."

"If anybody else were to say that to me, Aunt Hannah, I would be very angry."

"For which you would be a very foolish girl. But it is generally the way that good advice is taken, it being an article of which none think they stand in need."

"But what in the world can there be for James and I to have differences about? I am sure that I love him most truly; and I am sure he loves me as fondly as I love him. In mutual love there can be no strife—no emulation, except in the performance of good offices. Indeed, aunt, I think you are far too serious."

"Over the bright sky bending above you, my dear niece, I would not, for the world, bring a cloud even as light as the filmy, almost viewless gossamer. But I know that clouds must hide its clear, calm, passionless blue, either earlier or later in life. And what I say now, is with the hope of giving you the prescience required to avoid some of the storms that may threaten to break upon your head."

"Neither cloud nor storm will ever come from that quarter of the sky from which you seem to apprehend danger."

"Not if both you and James learn to bear and forbear in your conduct toward each other."

"We cannot act otherwise."

"Then there will be no danger."

Margaret Percival expressed herself sincerely. She could not believe that there was the slightest danger of a misunderstanding ever occurring between her and James Canning, to whom she was shortly to be married. The well-meant warning of her aunt, who had seen and felt more in life than she yet had, went therefore for nothing.

A month elapsed, and the young and lovely Maggy pledged her faith at the altar. As the bride of Canning, she felt that she was the happiest creature in the world. Before her was a path winding amid green and flowery places, and lingering by the side of still waters; while a sunny sky bent over all.

James Canning was a young lawyer of some talent, and the possessor of a good income independent of his profession. Like others, he had his excellencies and his defects of character. Naturally, he was of a proud, impatient spirit, and, from a child, had been restless under dictation. As an offset to this, he was a man of strict integrity, generous in his feelings, and possessed of a warm heart. Aunt Hannah had known him since he was a boy, and understood his character thoroughly; and it was this knowledge that caused her to feel some concern for the future happiness of her niece, as well as to speak to her timely words of caution. But these words were not understood.

"We've not quarrelled yet, Aunt Hannah, for all your fears," said the young wife, three or four months after her marriage.

"For which I am truly thankful," replied Aunt Hannah. "Still, I would say now, as I did before, 'Bear and forbear.'"

"That is, I must BEAR every thing and FORBEAR in every thing. I hardly think that just, aunt. I should say that James ought to do a little of this as well as me."

"Yes, it is his duty as well as yours. But you should not think of his duty to you, Maggy, only of your duty to him. That is the most dangerous error into which you can fall, and one that will be almost certain to produce unhappiness."

"Would you have a wife never think of herself?"

"The less she thinks of herself, perhaps, the better; for the more she thinks of herself, the more she will love herself. But the more she thinks of her husband, the more she will love him and seek to make him happy. The natural result of this will be, that her husband will feel the warmth and perceive the unselfishness of her love; this will cause him to lean toward her with still greater tenderness, and prompt him to yield to her what otherwise he might have claimed for himself."

"Then it is the wife who must act the generous, self-sacrificing part?"

"If I could speak as freely to James as I can speak to you, Maggy, I should not fail to point out his duty of bearing and forbearing, as plainly as I point out yours. All should be mutual, of course. But this can never be, if one waits for the other. If you see your duty, it is for you to do it, even if he should fail in his part."

"I don't know about that, aunt. I think, as you said just now, that all this is mutual."

"I am sorry you cannot or will not understand me, Maggy," replied

Aunt Hannah.

"I am sorry too, aunt; but I certainly do not. However, don't, pray, give yourself any serious concern about James and me. I assure you that we are getting along exceedingly well; and why this should not continue is more than I can make out."

"Well, dear, I trust that it may. There is no good reason why it should not. You both have virtues enough to counterbalance all defects of character."

On the evening of that very day, as the young couple sat at the tea-table, James Canning said, as his wife felt, rather unkindly, at the same time that there was a slight contraction of his brow—

"You seem to be very much afraid of your sugar, Maggy. I never get a cup of tea or coffee sweet enough for my taste."

"You must have a sweet palate. I am sure it is like syrup, for I put in several large lumps of sugar," replied Margaret, speaking in a slightly offended tone.

"Taste it, will you?" said Canning, pushing his cup across the table with an impatient air.

Margaret sipped a little from the spoon, and then, with an expression of disgust in her face, said—

"Pah! I'd as lief drink so much molasses. But here's the sugar bowl.

Sweeten it to your taste."

Canning helped himself to more sugar. As he did so his wife noticed that his hand slightly trembled, and also that his brow was drawn down, and his lips more arched than usual.

"It's a little matter to get angry about," she thought to herself. "Things are coming to a pretty pass, if I'm not to be allowed to speak."

The meal was finished in silence. Margaret felt in no humour to break the oppressive reserve, although she would have been glad, indeed, to have heard a pleasant word from the lips of her husband. As for Canning, he permitted himself to brood over the words and manner of his wife, until he became exceedingly fretted. They were so unkind and so uncalled for. The evening passed unsocially. But morning found them both in a better state of mind. Sleep has a wonderful power in restoring to the mind its lost balance, and in calming down our blinding passions. During the day, our thoughts and feelings, according with our natural state, are more or less marked by the disturbances that selfish purposes ever bring; but in sleep, while the mind rests and our governing ends lie dormant, we come into purer spiritual associations, and the soul, as well as the body, receives a healthier tone.

The morning, therefore, found Canning and his wife in better states of mind. They were as kind and as affectionate as usual in their words and conduct, although, when they sat down to the breakfast table, they each experienced a slight feeling of coldness on being reminded, too sensibly, of the unpleasant occurrence of the previous evening. Margaret thought she would be sure to please her husband in his coffee, and therefore put into his cup an extra quantity of sugar, making it so very sweet that he could with difficulty swallow it. But a too vivid recollection of what had taken place on the night before, caused him to be silent about it. The second cup was still sweeter. Canning managed

to sip about one-third of this, but his stomach refused to take any more. Noticing that her husband's coffee, an article of which he was very fond, stood, nearly cup-full, beside his plate, after he had finished his breakfast, Margaret said—

"Didn't your coffee suit you?"

"It was very good; only a little too sweet."

"Then why didn't you say so?" she returned, in a tone that showed her to be hurt at this reaction upon what she had said on the previous evening. "Give me your cup, and let me pour you out some more."

"No, I thank you, Margaret, I don't care about any more."

"Yes, you do. Come, give me your cup. I shall be hurt if you don't. I'm sure there is no necessity for drinking the coffee, if not to your taste. I don't know what's come over you, James."

"And I'm sure I don't know what's come over you," Canning thought, but did not say. He handed up his cup, as his wife desired. After filling it with coffee, she handed it back, and then reached him the sugar and cream.

"Sweeten it to your own taste," she said, a little fretfully; "I'm sure I tried to make it right."

Canning did as he was desired, and then drank the coffee, but it was with the utmost difficulty that he could do so.

This was the first little cloud that darkened the sky of their wedded life; And it did not fairly pass away for nearly a week. Nor then did the days seem as bright as before. The cause was slight—very slight—but how small a thing will sometimes make the heart unhappy. How trifling are the occurrences upon which we often lay, as upon a foundation, a superstructure of misery! Had the earnestly urged precept of Aunt Hannah been regarded,—had the lesson—"Bear and Forbear," been well learned and understood by Margaret, this cloud had never dimmed the sun of their early love. A pleasant word, in answer to her husband's momentary impatience, would have made him sensible that he had not spoken with propriety, and caused him to be more careful in future. As it was, both were more circumspect, but it was from pride instead of love,—and more to protect self than from a tender regard for each other.

Only a month or two passed before there was another slight collision. It made them both more unhappy than they were before. But the breach was quickly healed. Still scars remained, and there were times when the blood flowed into these cicatrices so feverishly as to cause pain. Alas! wounds of the spirit do not close any more perfectly than do wounds of the body—the scars remain forever.

And thus the weeks and months went by. Neither of the married partners had learned the true secret of happiness in their holy relation,—neither of them felt the absolute necessity of bearing and forbearing. Little inequalities of character, instead of being smoothed off by gentle contact, were suffered to strike against each other, and produce, sometimes, deep and painful wounds—healing, too often, imperfectly; and too often remaining as festering sores.

And yet Canning and his wife loved each other tenderly, and felt, most of their time, that they were very happy. There were little things in each that each wished the other would correct, but neither felt the necessity of self-correction.

The birth of a child drew them together at a time when there was some danger of a serious rupture. Dear little Lilian, or "Lilly," as she was called, was a chord of love to bind them in a closer union.

"I love you more than ever, Maggy," Canning could not help saying to his wife, as he kissed first her lips and then the soft cheek of his child, a month after the babe was born.

"And I am sure I love you better than I did, if that were possible," returned Margaret, looking into her husband's face with a glance of deep affection.

As the babe grew older the parent's love for it continued to increase, and, with this increase, their happiness. The chord which had several times jarred harshly between them, slept in profound peace.

But, after this sweet calm, the surface of their feelings became again ruffled. One little incongruity of character after another showed itself in both, and there was no genuine spirit of forbearance in either of them to meet and neutralize any sudden effervescence of the mind. Lilly was not a year old, before they had a serious misunderstanding that made them both unhappy for weeks. It had its origin in a mere trifle, as such things usually have. They had been taking tea and spending an evening with a friend, a widow lady, for whom Mrs. Canning had a particular friendship. As there was no gentleman present during the evening, the time passed rather heavily to Canning, who could not get interested in the conversation of the two ladies. Toward nine o'clock he began to feel restless and impatient, and to wonder if his wife would not soon be thinking about going home. But the time passed wearily until ten o'clock, and still the conversation between the two ladies was continued with undiminished interest, and, to all appearance, was likely to continue until midnight.

Canning at length became so restless and wearied that he said, thinking that his wife did not probably know how late it was,—

"Come, Margaret, isn't it 'most time to go home?"

Mrs. Canning merely looked into her husband's face, but made no answer.

More earnestly than ever the ladies now appeared to enter upon the various themes for conversation that presented themselves, all of which were very frivolous to the mind of Canning, who was exceedingly chafed by his wife's indifference to his suggestion about going home. He determined, however, to say no more if she sat all night. Toward eleven o'clock she made a movement to depart, and after lingering in the parlor before she went up stairs to put on her things, and in the chamber after her things were on, and on the stairs, in the passage, and at the door, she finally took the arm of her husband and started for home. Not a word was uttered by either until they had walked the distance of two squares, when Margaret, unable to keep back what she wanted to say any longer, spoke thus,—

"James, I will thank you, another time, when we are spending an evening out, not to suggest as publicly as you did to-night that it is time to go home. It's very bad manners, let me tell you, in the first place; and in the second place, I don't like it at all. I do not wish people to think that I have to come and go just at your beck or nod. I was about starting when you spoke to me, but sat an hour longer just on purpose."

The mind of Canning, already fretted, was set on fire by this.

"You did?" he said.

"Yes, I did. And I can tell you, once for all, that I wish this to be the last time you speak to me as you did to-night."

It was as much as the impatient spirit of Canning could do to keep from replying—

"It's the last time I will ever speak to you at all," and then leaving her in the street, with the intention of never seeing her again. But suddenly he thought of Lilly, and the presence of the child in his mind kept back the mad words from his lips. Not one syllable did he utter during their walk home, although his wife said much to irritate rather than soothe him. Nor did a sentence pass his lips that night.

At the breakfast table on the next morning, the husband and wife were coldly polite to each other. When the meal was completed, Canning retired to his office, and his wife sought her chamber to weep. The latter half repented of what she had done, but her contrition was not hearty enough to prompt to a confession of her fault. The fact that she considered her husband to blame, stood in the way of this.

Reserve and coldness marked the intercourse of the unhappy couple for several weeks; and then the clouds began to break, and there were occasional glimpses of sunshine.

But, before there was a clear sky, some trifling occurrence put them again at variance. From this time, unhappily, one circumstance after another transpired to fret them with each other, and to separate, rather than unite them. Daily, Canning grew more cold and reserved, and his wife met

him in a like uncompromising spirit. Even their lovely child—their darling blue-eyed Lilly—with her sweet little voice and smiling face, could not soften their hearts toward each other.

To add fuel to this rapidly enkindling fire of discord, was the fact that Mrs. Canning was on particularly intimate terms with the wife of a man toward whom her husband entertained a settled and well-grounded dislike, and visited her more frequently than she did any one of her friends. He did not interfere with her in the matter, but it annoyed him to hear her speak, occasionally, of meeting Mr. Richards at his house, and repeating the polite language he used to her, when he detested the character of Richards, and had not spoken to him for more than a year.

One day Mrs. Canning expressed a wish to go in the evening to a party.

"It will be impossible for me to go to-night, or, indeed, this week," Canning said. "I am engaged in a very important case, which will come up for trial on Friday, and it will take all my time properly to prepare for it. I shall be engaged every evening, and perhaps late every night."

Mrs. Canning looked disappointed, and said she thought he might spare her one evening.

"You know I would do so, Margaret, with pleasure," he replied, "but the case is one involving too much to be endangered by any consideration. Next week we will go to a party."

When Canning came home to tea, he found his wife dressed to go out.

"I'm going to the party, for all you can't go with me," said she.

"Indeed! With whom are you going?"

"Mrs. Richards came in to see me after dinner, when I told her how much disappointed I was about not being able to go to the party to-night. She said that she and her husband were going, and that it would give them great pleasure to call for me. Am I not fortunate?"

"But you are not going with Mr. and Mrs. Richards?"

"Indeed I am! Why not?"

"Margaret! You must not go."

"Must not, indeed! You speak in quite a tone of authority, Mr.

Canning;" and the wife drew herself up haughtily.

"Authority, or no authority, Margaret"—Canning now spoke calmly, but his lips were pale—"I will never consent that my wife shall be seen in a public assembly with Richards. You know my opinion of the man."

"I know you are prejudiced against him, though I believe unjustly."

"Madness!" exclaimed Canning, thrown off his guard. "And this from you?"

"I don't see that you have any cause for getting into a passion, Mr. Canning," said his wife, with provoking coolness. "And, I must say, that you interfere with my freedom rather more than a husband has any right to do. But, to cut this matter short, let me tell you, once for all, that I am going to the assembly to-night with Mr. and Mrs. Richards. Having promised to do so, I mean to keep my promise."

"Margaret, I positively forbid your going!" said Canning, in much excitement.

"I deny your right to command me! In consenting to become your wife, I did not make myself your slave; although it is clear from this, and other things that have occurred since our marriage, that you consider me as occupying that position."

"Then it is your intention to go with this man?" said Canning, again speaking in a calm but deep voice.

"Certainly it is."

"Very well. I will not make any threat of what I will do, Margaret. But this I can assure you, that lightly as you may think of this matter, if persevered in, it will cause you more sorrow than you have ever known. Go! Go against my wish—against my command, if you will have it so—and when you feel the consequence, lay the blame upon no one but yourself. And now let me say to you, Margaret, that your conduct as a wife has tended rather to estrange your husband's heart from you than to win his love. I say this now, because I may not have—"

"James! It is folly for you to talk to me after that fashion," exclaimed Margaret, breaking in upon him. "I—"

But before she could finish the sentence, Canning had left the room, closing the door hard after him.

Just an hour from this time, Mr. and Mrs. Richards called in their carriage for Mrs. Canning, who went with them to the assembly. An hour was a long period for reflection, and ought to have afforded sufficient time for the wife of Canning to come to a wiser determination than that from which she acted.

Not half a dozen revolutions of the carriage wheels had been made, however, before Margaret repented of what she had done. But it was now too late. The pleasure of the entertainment passed before her, but it found no response in her breast. She saw little but the pale, compressed lip and knit brow of her husband, and heard little but his word of disapproval. Oh! how she did long for the confused pageant that was moving before her, and the discordant mingling of voices and instruments, to pass away, that she might return and tell him that she repented of all that she had done.

At last the assembly broke up, and she was free to go back again to the home that had not, alas! proved as pleasant a spot to her as her imagination had once pictured it.

"And that it has not been so," she murmured to herself, "he has not been all to blame."

On being left at the door, Mrs. Canning rang the bell impatiently. As soon as admitted, she flew up stairs to meet her husband, intending to confess her error, and beg him earnestly to forgive her for having acted so directly in opposition to his wishes. But she did not find him in the chamber. Throwing off her bonnet and shawl, she went down into the parlours, but found all dark there.

"Where is Mr. Canning?" she asked of a servant.

"He went away about ten o'clock, and has not returned yet," was replied.

This intelligence caused Mrs. Canning to lean hard on the stair-railing for support. She felt in an instant weak almost as an infant.

Without further question, she went back to her chamber, and looked about fearfully on bureaus and tables for a letter addressed to her in her husband's handwriting. But nothing of this met her eye. Then she sat down to await her husband's return. But she waited long. Daylight found her an anxious watcher; he was still away.

The anguish of mind experienced during that unhappy night, it would be vain for us to attempt to picture. In the morning, on descending to the parlour, she found on one of the pier-tables a letter bearing her name. She broke the seal tremblingly. It did not contain many words, but they fell upon her heart with an icy coldness.

"MARGARET: Your conduct to-night has decided me to separate myself from a woman who I feel neither truly loves nor respects me. The issue which I have for some time dreaded has come. It is better for us to part than to live in open discord. I shall arrange every thing for your comfortable support, and then leave the city, perhaps for ever. You need not tell our child that her father lives. I would rather she would think him dead than at variance with her mother.

'JAMES CANNING.'"

These were the words. Their effect was paralyzing. Mrs. Canning had presence of mind enough to crush the fatal letter into her bosom, and strength enough to take her back to her chamber. When there, she sunk powerless upon her bed, and remained throughout the day too weak in both body and mind to rise or think. She could do little else but feel.

Five years from the day of that unhappy separation, we find Mrs. Canning in the unobtrusive home of Aunt Hannah, who took the almost heart-broken wife into the bosom of her own family, after the passage of nearly a year had made her almost hopeless of ever seeing him again. No one knew where he was. Only once did Margaret hear from him, and that was on the third day after he had parted from her, when he appeared in the court-room, and made a most powerful argument in favour of the client whose important case had prevented his going with his wife to the assembly. After that

he disappeared, and no one could tell aught of him. A liberal annuity had been settled upon his wife, and the necessary papers to enable her to claim it transmitted to her under a blank envelope.

Five years had changed Margaret sadly. The high-spirited, blooming, happy woman, was now a meek, quiet, pale-faced sufferer. Lilly had grown finely, all unconscious of her mother's suffering, and was a very beautiful child. She attracted the notice of everyone.

"Aunt Hannah," said Margaret, one day after this long, long period of suffering, "I have what you will call a strange idea in my mind. It has been visiting me for weeks, and now I feel much inclined to act from its dictates. You know that Mr. and Mrs. Edwards are going to Paris next month. Ever since Mrs. Edwards mentioned it to me, I have felt a desire to go with them. I don't know why, but so it is. I think it would do me good to go to Paris and spend a few months there. When a young girl, I always had a great desire to see London and Paris; and this desire is again in my mind."

"I would go, then," said Aunt Hannah, who thought favourably of any thing likely to divert the mind of her niece from the brooding melancholy in which it was shrouded.

To Paris Mrs. Canning went, accompanied by her little daughter, who was the favourite of every one on board the steamer in which they sailed. In this gray city, however, she did not attain as much relief of mind as she had anticipated. She found it almost impossible to take interest in any thing, and soon began to long for the time to come when she could go back to the home and heart of her good Aunt Hannah. The greatest pleasure she took was in going with Lilly to the Gardens of the Tuileries, and amid the crowd there to feel alone with nature in some of her most beautiful aspects. Lilly was always delighted to get there, and never failed to bring something in her pocket for the pure white swans that floated so gracefully in the marble basin into which the water dashed cool and sparkling from beautiful fountains.

One day, while the child was playing at a short distance from her mother, a man seated beside a bronze statue, over which drooped a large orange tree, fixed his eyes upon her admiringly, as hundreds of others had done. Presently she came up and stood close to him, looking up into the face of the statue. The man said something to her in French, but Lilly only smiled and shook her head.

"What is your name, dear?" he then said in English.

"Lilly," replied the child.

A quick change passed over the man's face. With much more interest in his voice, he said—

"Where do you live? In London?"

"Oh no, sir; I live in America."

"What is your name besides Lilly?"

"Lilly Canning, sir."

The man now became strongly agitated. But he contended vigorously with his feelings.

"Where is your mother, dear?" he asked, taking her hand as he spoke, and gently pressing it between his own.

"She is here, sir," returned Lilly, looking inquiringly into the man's face.

"Here!"

"Yes, sir. We come here every day."

"Where is your mother now?"

"Just on the other side of the fountain. You can't see her for the lime-tree."

"Is your father here, also?" continued the man.

"No, I don't know where my father is." "Is he dead?" "No, sir; mother says he is not dead, and that she hopes he will come home soon. Oh! I wish he would come home. We would all love him so!"

The man rose up quickly, and turning from the child, walked hurriedly away. Lilly looked after him for a moment or two, and then ran back to her mother.

On the next day Lilly saw the same man sitting under the bronze statue. He beckoned to her, and she went to him.

"How long have you been in Paris, dear?" he asked.

"A good many weeks," she replied.

"Are you going to stay much longer?"

"I don't know. But mother wants to go home."

"Do you like to live in Paris?"

"No, sir. I would rather live at home with mother and Aunt Hannah."

"You live with Aunt Hannah, then?"

"Yes, sir. Do you know Aunt Hannah?" and the child looked up wonderingly into the man's face.

"I used to know her," he replied.

Just then Lilly heard her mother calling her, and she started and ran away in the direction from which the voice came. The man's face grew slightly pale, and he was evidently much agitated. As he had done on the evening previous, he rose up hastily and walked away. But in a short time he returned, and appeared to be carefully looking about for some one. At length he caught sight of Lilly's mother. She was sitting with her eyes upon the ground, the child leaning upon her, and looking into her face, which he saw was thin and pale, and overspread with a hue of sadness. Only for a few moments did he thus gaze upon her, and then he turned and walked hurriedly from the garden.

Mrs. Canning sat alone with her child that evening, in the handsomely-furnished apartments she had hired on arriving in Paris.

"He told you that he knew Aunt Hannah?" she said, rousing up from a state of deep thought.

"Yes, ma. He said he used to know her."

"I wonder"—

A servant opened the door, and said that a gentleman wished to see

Mrs. Canning.

"Tell him to walk in," the mother of Lilly had just power to say. In breathless suspense she waited for the space of a few seconds, when the man who had spoken to Lilly in the Gardens of the Tuileries entered and closed the door after him.

Mrs. Canning raised her eyes to his face. It was her husband! She did not cry out nor spring forward. She had not the power to do either.

"That's him now, mother!" exclaimed Lilly.

"It's your father!" said Mrs. Canning, in a deeply breathed whisper.

The child sprung toward him with a quick bound and was instantly clasped in his arms.

"Lilly, dear Lilly!" he sobbed, pressing his lips upon her brow and cheeks. "Yes! I am your father!"

The wife and mother sat motionless and tearless with her eyes fixed upon the face of her husband. After a few passionate embraces, Canning drew the child's arms from about his neck, and setting her down upon the floor, advanced slowly toward his wife. Her eyes were still tearless, but large drops were rolling over his face.

"Margaret!" he said, uttering her name with great tenderness.

He was by her side in time to receive her upon his bosom, as she sunk forward in a wild passion of tears.

All was reconciled. The desolate hearts were again peopled with living affections. The arid waste smiled in greenness and beauty.

In their old home, bound by threefold cords of love, they now think only of the past as a severe lesson by which they have been taught the heavenly virtue of forbearance. Five years of intense suffering changed them both, and left marks that after years can never efface. But selfish impatience and pride were all subdued, and their hearts melted into each other, until they became almost like one heart. Those who meet them now, and observe the deep, but unobtrusive affection with which they regard each other, would never imagine, did they not know their previous history, that love, during one period of that married life, had been so long and so totally eclipsed.

THE SOCIAL SERPENT

A LADY, whom we will call Mrs. Harding, touched with the destitute condition of a poor, sick widow, who had three small children, determined, from an impulse of true humanity, to awaken, if possible, in the minds of some friends and neighbours, an interest in her favour. She made a few calls, one morning, with this end in view, and was gratified to find that her appeal made a favourable impression. The first lady whom she saw, a Mrs. Miller, promised to select from her own and children's wardrobe a number of cast-off garments for the widow, and to aid her in other respects, at the same time asking Mrs. Harding to call in on the next day, when she would be able to let her know what she could do.

Pleased with her reception, and encouraged to seek further aid for the widow, Mrs. Harding withdrew and took her way to the house of another acquaintance. Scarcely had she left, when a lady, named Little, dropped in to see Mrs. Miller. To her the latter said, soon after her entrance:

"I've been very much interested in the case of a poor widow this morning. She is sick, with three little children dependent on her, and destitute of almost every thing. Mrs. Harding was telling me about it."

"Mrs. Harding!" The visitor's countenance changed, and she looked unutterable things. "I wonder!" she added, in well assumed surprise, and then was silent.

"What's the matter with Mrs. Harding?" asked Mrs. Miller.

"I should think," said Mrs. Little, "that she was in nice business, running around, gossiping about indigent widows, when some of her own relatives are so poor they can hardly keep soul and body together."

"Is this really so?" asked Mrs. Miller.

"Certainly it is. I had it from my chambermaid, whose sister is cook next door to where a cousin of Mrs. Harding's lives, and she says they are, one half of their time, she really believes, in a starving condition."

"But does Mrs. Harding know this?"

"She ought to know it, for she goes there sometimes, I hear."

"She didn't come merely to gossip about the poor widow," said Mrs. Miller. "Her errand was to obtain something to relieve her necessities."

"Did you give her any thing?" asked Mrs. Little.

"No; but I told her to call and see me to-morrow, when I would have something for her."

"Do you want to know my opinion of this matter?" said Mrs. Little, drawing herself up, and assuming a very important air.

"What is your opinion?"

"Why, that there is no poor widow in the case at all."

"Mrs. Little!"

"You needn't look surprised. I'm in earnest. I never had much faith in Mrs. Harding, at the best."

"I *am* surprised. If there was no poor widow in the case, what did she want with charity?"

"She has poor relations of her own, for whom, I suppose, she's ashamed to beg. So you see my meaning now."

"You surely wrong her."

"Don't believe a word of it. At any rate, take my advice, and be the almoner of your own bounty. When Mrs. Harding comes again, ask her the name of this poor widow, and where she resides. If she gives you a name and residence, go and see for yourself."

"I will act on your suggestion," said Mrs. Miller. "Though I can hardly make up my mind to think so meanly of Mrs. Harding; still, from the impression your words produce, I deem it only prudent to be, as you term it, the almoner of my own bounty."

The next lady upon whom Mrs. Harding called, was a Mrs. Johns, and in her mind she succeeded in also awakening an interest for the poor widow.

"Call and see me to-morrow," said Mrs. Johns, "and I'll have something for you."

Not long after Mrs. Harding's departure, Mrs. Little called, in her round of gossiping visits, and to her Mrs. Johns mentioned the case of the poor widow, that matter being, for the time, uppermost in her thoughts.

"Mrs. Harding's poor widow, I suppose," said Mrs. Little, in a half-sneering, half-malicious tone of voice.

Mrs. Johns looked surprised, as a matter of course.

"What do you mean?" she asked.

"Oh, nothing, much. Only I've heard of this destitute widow before."

"You have?"

"Yes, and between ourselves,"—the voice of Mrs. Little became low and confidential—"it's the opinion of Mrs. Miller and myself, that there is no poor widow in the case."

"Mrs. Little! You astonish me! No poor widow in the case! I can't understand this. Mrs. Harding was very clear in her statement. She described the widow's condition, and very much excited my sympathies. What object can she have in view?"

"Mrs. Miller and I think," said the visitor, "and with good reason, that this poor widow is only put forward as a cover."

"As a cover to what?"

"To some charities that she has reasons of her own for not wishing to make public."

"Still in the dark. Speak out more plainly."

"Plainly, then, Mrs. Johns, we have good reasons for believing, Mrs. Miller and I, that she is begging for some of her own poor relations. Mrs. Miller is going to see if she can find the widow."

"Indeed! That's another matter altogether. I promised to do something in the case, but shall now decline. I couldn't have believed such a thing of Mrs. Harding! But so it is; you never know people until you find them out."

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