

**ARTHUR
TIMOTHY SHAY**

AFTER A SHADOW AND
OTHER STORIES

Timothy Arthur
After a Shadow and Other Stories

*http://www.litres.ru/pages/biblio_book/?art=36366254
After a Shadow and Other Stories:*

Содержание

I	4
II	13
III	28
IV	38
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	46

T. S. Arthur

After a Shadow and Other Stories

I

AFTER A SHADOW

"ARTY! Arty!" called Mrs. Mayflower, from the window, one bright June morning. "Arty, darling! What is the child after? Just look at him, Mr. Mayflower!"

I leaned from the window, in pleasant excitement, to see what new and wonderful performance had been attempted by my little prodigy—my first born—my year old bud of beauty, the folded leaves in whose bosom were just beginning to loosen themselves, and send out upon the air sweet intimations of an abounding fragrance. He had escaped from his nurse, and was running off in the clear sunshine, the slant rays of which threw a long shadow before him.

"Arty, darling!" His mother's voice flew along and past his ear, kissing it in gentle remonstrance as it went by. But baby was in eager pursuit of something, and the call, if heard, was unheeded. His eyes were opening world-ward, and every

new phenomenon—commonplace and unheeded by us—that addressed itself to his senses, became a wonder and a delight. Some new object was drawing him away from the loving heart and protecting arm.

"Run after him, Mr. Mayflower!" said my wife, with a touch of anxiety in her voice. "He might fall and hurt himself."

I did not require a second intimation as to my duty in the case. Only a moment or two elapsed before I was on the pavement, and making rapid approaches towards my truant boy.

"What is it, darling? What is Arty running after?" I said, as I laid my hand on his arm, and checked his eager speed. He struggled a moment, and then stood still, stooping forward for something on the ground.

"O, papa see!" There was a disappointed and puzzled look in his face as he lifted his eyes to mine. He failed to secure the object of his pursuit.

"What is it, sweet?" My eyes followed his as they turned upon the ground.

He stooped again, and caught at something; and again looked up in a perplexed, half-wondering way.

"Why, Arty!" I exclaimed, catching him up in my arms. "It's only your shadow! Foolish child!" And I ran back to Mrs. Mayflower, with my baby-boy held close against my heart.

"After a shadow!" said I, shaking my head, a little soberly, as I resigned Arty to his mother. "So life begins—and so it ends! Poor Arty!"

Mrs. Mayflower laughed out right merrily.

"After a shadow! Why, darling!" And she kissed and hugged him in overflowing tenderness.

"So life begins—so it ends," I repeated to myself, as I left the house, and walked towards my store. "Always in pursuit of shadows! We lose to-day's substantial good for shadowy phantoms that keep our eyes ever in advance, and our feet ever hurrying forward. No pause—no ease—no full enjoyment of *now*. O, deluded heart!—ever bartering away substance for shadow!"

I grow philosophic sometimes. Thought will, now and then, take up a passing incident, and extract the moral. But how little the wiser are we for moralizing! we look into the mirror of truth, and see ourselves—then turn away, and forget what manner of men we are. Better for us if it were not so; if we remembered the image that held our vision.

The shadow lesson was forgotten by the time I reached my store, and thought entered into business with its usual ardor. I buried myself, amid letters, invoices, accounts, samples, schemes for gain, and calculations of profit. The regular, orderly progression of a fair and well-established business was too slow for my outreaching desires. I must drive onward at a higher speed, and reach the goal of wealth by a quicker way. So my daily routine was disturbed by impatient aspirations. Instead of entering, in a calm self-possession of every faculty, into the day's appropriate work, and finding, in its right performance, the

tranquil state that ever comes as the reward of right-doing in the right place, I spent the larger part of this day in the perpetration of a plan for increasing my gains beyond, anything heretofore achieved.

"Mr. Mayflower," said one of the clerks, coming back to where I sat at my private desk, busy over my plan, "we have a new man in from the West; a Mr. B—, from Alton. He wants to make a bill of a thousand dollars. Do you know anything about him?"

Now, even this interruption annoyed me. What was a new customer and a bill of a thousand dollars to me just at that moment of time? I saw tens of thousands in prospective.

"Mr. B—, of Alton?" said I, affecting an effort of memory. "Does he look like a fair man?"

"I don't recall him. Mr. B—? Hum-m-m. He impresses you favorably, Edward?"

"Yes, sir; but it may be prudent to send and get a report."

"I'll see to that, Edward," said I. "Sell him what he wants. If everything is not on the square, I'll give you the word in time. It's all right, I've no doubt."

"He's made a bill at Kline & Co.'s, and wants his goods sent there to be packed," said my clerk.

"Ah, indeed! Let him have what he wants, Edward. If Kline & Co. sell him, we needn't hesitate."

And turning to my desk, my plans, and my calculations, I forgot all about Mr. B—, and the trifling bill of a thousand dollars that he proposed buying. How clear the way looked ahead! As

thought created the means of successful adventure, and I saw myself moving forward and grasping results, the whole circle of life took a quicker motion, and my mind rose into a pleasant enthusiasm. Then I grew impatient for the initiatory steps that were to come, and felt as if the to-morrow, in which they must be taken, would never appear. A day seemed like a week or a month.

Six o'clock found me in not a very satisfactory state of mind. The ardor of my calculations had commenced abating. Certain elements, not seen and considered in the outset, were beginning to assume shape and consequence, and to modify, in many essential particulars, the grand result towards which I had been looking with so much pleasure. Shadowy and indistinct became the landscape, which seemed a little while before so fair and inviting. A cloud settled down upon it here, and a cloud there, breaking up its unity, and destroying much of its fair proportion. I was no longer mounting up, and moving forwards on the light wing of a castle-building imagination, but down upon the hard, rough ground, coming back into the consciousness that all progression, to be sure, must be slow and toilsome.

I had the afternoon paper in my hands, and was running my eyes up and down the columns, not reading, but, in a half-absent way, trying to find something of sufficient interest to claim attention, when, among the money and business items, I came upon a paragraph that sent the declining thermometer of my feelings away down towards the chill of zero. It touched, in the most vital part, my scheme of gain; and the shrinking bubble

burst.

"Have the goods sold to that new customer from Alton been delivered?" I asked, as the real interest of my wasted day loomed up into sudden importance.

"Yes, sir," was answered by one of my clerks; "they were sent to Kline & Co.'s immediately. Mr. B—said they were packing up his goods, which were to be shipped to-day."

"He's a safe man, I should think. Kline & Co. sell him." My voice betrayed the doubt that came stealing over me like a chilly air.

"They sell him only for cash," said my clerk. "I saw one of their young men this afternoon, and asked after Mr. B—'s standing. He didn't know anything about him; said B—was a new man, who bought a moderate cash bill, but was sending in large quantities of goods to be packed—five or six times beyond the amount of his purchases with them."

"Is that so!" I exclaimed, rising to my feet, all awake now to the real things which I had permitted a shadow to obscure.

"Just what he told me," answered my clerk.

"It has a bad look," said I. "How large a bill did he make with us?"

The sales book was referred to. "Seventeen hundred dollars," replied the clerk.

"What! I thought he was to buy only to the amount of a thousand dollars?" I returned, in surprise and dismay.

"You seemed so easy about him, sir," replied the clerk, "that

I encouraged him to buy; and the bill ran up more heavily than I was aware until the footing gave exact figures."

I drew out my watch. It was close on to half past six.

"I think, Edward," said I, "that you'd better step round to Kline & Co.'s, and ask if they've shipped B-'s goods yet. If not, we'll request them to delay long enough in the morning to give us time to sift the matter. If B-'s after a swindling game, we'll take a short course, and save our goods."

"It's too late," answered my clerk. "B—called a little after one o'clock, and gave notes for the amount of his bill. He was to leave in the five o'clock line for Boston."

I turned my face a little aside, so that Edward might not see all the anxiety that was pictured there.

"You look very sober, Mr. Mayflower," said my good wife, gazing at me with eyes a little shaded by concern, as I sat with Arty's head leaning against my bosom that evening; "as sober as baby looked this morning, after his fruitless shadow chase."

"And for the same reason," said I, endeavoring to speak calmly and firmly.

"Why, Mr. Mayflower!" Her face betrayed a rising anxiety. My assumed calmness and firmness did not wholly disguise the troubled feelings that lay, oppressively, about my heart.

"For the same reason," I repeated, steadying my voice, and trying to speak bravely. "I have been chasing a shadow all day; a mere phantom scheme of profit; and at night-fall I not only lose my shadow, but find my feet far off from the right path, and

bemired. I called Arty a foolish child this morning. I laughed at his mistake. But, instead of accepting the lesson it should have conveyed, I went forth and wearied myself with shadow-hunting all day."

Mrs. Mayflower sighed gently. Her soft eyes drooped away from my face, and rested for some moments on the floor.

"I am afraid we are all, more or less, in pursuit of shadows," she said,— "of the unreal things, projected by thought on the canvas of a too creative imagination. It is so with me; and I sigh, daily, over some disappointment. Alas! if this were all. Too often both the shadow-good and the real-good of to-day are lost. When night falls our phantom good is dispersed, and we sigh for the real good we might have enjoyed."

"Shall we never grow wiser?" I asked.

"We shall never grow happier unless we do," answered Mrs. Mayflower.

"Happiness!" I returned, as thought began to rise into clearer perception; "is it not the shadow after which we are all chasing, with such a blind and headlong speed?"

"Happiness is no shadow. It is a real thing," said Mrs. Mayflower. "It does not project itself in advance of us; but exists in the actual and the now, if it exists at all. We cannot catch it by pursuit; that is only a cheating counterfeit, in guilt and tinsel, which dazzles our eyes in the ever receding future. No; happiness is a state of life; and it comes only to those who do each day's work peaceful self-forgetfulness, and a calm trust in the Giver of

all good for the blessing that lies stored for each one prepared to receive it in every hour of the coming time."

"Who so does each day's work in a peaceful self-forgetfulness and patient trust in God?" I said, turning my eyes away from the now tranquil face of Mrs. Mayflower.

"Few, if any, I fear," she answered; "and few, if any, are happy. The common duties and common things of our to-days look so plain and homely in their ungilded actualities, that we turn our thought and interest away from them, and create ideal forms of use and beauty, into which we can never enter with conscious life. We are always losing the happiness of our to-days; and our to-morrows never come."

I sighed my response, and sat for a long time silent. When the tea bell interrupted me from my reverie, Arty lay fast asleep on my bosom. As I kissed him on his way to his mother's arms, I said,—

"Dear baby! may it be your first and last pursuit of a shadow."

"No—no! Not yet, my sweet one!" answered Mrs. Mayflower, hugging him to her heart. "Not yet. We cannot spare you from our world of shadows."

II

IN THE WAY OF TEMPTATION

MARTIN GREEN was a young man of good habits and a good conceit of himself. He had listened, often and again, with as much patience as he could assume, to warning and suggestion touching the dangers that beset the feet of those who go out into this wicked world, and become subject to its legion of temptations. All these warnings and suggestions he considered as so many words wasted when offered to himself.

"I'm in no danger," he would sometimes answer to relative or friend, who ventured a remonstrance against certain associations, or cautioned him about visiting certain places.

"If I wish to play a game of billiards, I will go to a billiard saloon," was the firm position he assumed. "Is there any harm in billiards? I can't help it if bad men play at billiards, and congregate in billiard saloons. Bad men may be found anywhere and everywhere; on the street, in stores, at all public places, even in church. Shall I stay away from church because bad men are there?"

This last argument Martin Green considered unanswerable. Then he would say,—

"If I want a plate of oysters, I'll go to a refectory, and I'll take a glass of ale with my oysters, if it so pleases me. What harm,

I would like to know? Danger of getting into bad company, you say? Hum-m! Complimentary to your humble servant! But I'm not the kind to which dirt sticks."

So, confident of his own power to stand safely in the midst of temptation, and ignorant of its thousand insidious approaches, Martin Green, at the age of twenty-one, came and went as he pleased, mingling with the evil and the good, and seeing life under circumstances of great danger to the pure and innocent. But he felt strong and safe, confident of neither stumbling nor falling. All around him he saw young men yielding to the pressure of temptation and stepping aside into evil ways; but they were weak and vicious, while he stood firm-footed on the rock of virtue!

It happened, very naturally, as Green was a bright, social young man, that he made acquaintances with other young men, who were frequently met in billiard saloons, theatre lobbies, and eating houses. Some of these he did not understand quite as well as he imagined. The vicious, who have ends to gain, know how to cloak themselves, and easily deceive persons of Green's character. Among these acquaintances was a handsome, gentlemanly, affable young man, named Bland, who gradually intruded himself into his confidence. Bland never drank to excess, and never seemed inclined to sensual indulgences. He had, moreover, a way of moralizing that completely veiled his true quality from the not very penetrating Martin Green, whose shrewdness and knowledge of character were far less acute than

he, in his self-conceit, imagined.

One evening, instead of going with his sister to the house of a friend, where a select company of highly-intelligent ladies and gentleman were to meet, and pass an evening together, Martin excused himself under the pretence of an engagement, and lounged away to an eating and drinking saloon, there to spend an hour in smoking, reading the newspapers, and enjoying a glass of ale, the desire for which was fast growing into a habit. Strong and safe as he imagined himself, the very fact of preferring the atmosphere of a drinking or billiard saloon to that in which refined and intellectual people breathe, showed that he was weak and in danger.

He was sitting with a cigar in his mouth, and a glass of ale beside him, reading with the air of a man who felt entirely satisfied with himself, and rather proud than ashamed of his position and surroundings, when his pleasant friend, Mr. Bland, crossed the room, and, reaching out his hand, said, with his smiling, hearty manner,—

"How are you, my friend? What's the news to-day?" And he drew a chair to the table, calling at the same time to a waiter for a glass of ale.

"I never drink anything stronger than ale," he added, in a confidential way, not waiting for Green to answer his first remark. "Liquors are so drugged nowadays, that you never know what poison you are taking; besides, tipping is a bad habit, and sets a questionable example. We must, you know, have some

regard to the effect of our conduct on weaker people. Man is an imitative animal. By the way, did you see Booth's Cardinal Wolsey?"

"Yes."

"A splendid piece of acting,—was it not? You remember, after the cardinal's fall, that noble passage to which he gives utterance. It has been running through my mind ever since:—"Mark but my fall, and that that ruined me.

Cromwell, I charge thee, fling away ambition:
By that sin fell the angels; how can man, then,
The image of his Maker, hope to win by't?
Love thyself last: Cherish those hearts that hate thee:
Corruption wins not more than honesty.
Still in thy right hand carry gentle peace,
To silence envious tongues; be just, and fear not.
Let all the ends thou aim'st at be thy country's,
Thy God's, and truth's; then if thou fall'st, O Cromwell,
Thou fall'st a blessed martyr.'

"Love thyself last.—Let all the ends thou aim'st at be thy country's, thy God's, and truth's.' Could a man's whole duty in life be expressed in fewer words, or said more grandly? I think not."

And so he went on, charming the ears of Green, and inspiring him with the belief that he was a person of the purest instincts and noblest ends. While they talked, two young men, strangers

to Green came up, and were introduced by Bland as "My very particular friends." Something about them did not at first impress Martin favorably. But this impression soon wore off, they were so intelligent and agreeable, Bland, after a little while, referred again to the Cardinal Wolsey of Booth, and, drawing a copy of Shakspeare's Henry VIII. from his pocket, remarked,—

"If it wasn't so public here, I'd like to read a few of the best passages in Wolsey's part."

"Can't we get a private room?" said one of the two young men who had joined Bland and Green. "There are plenty in the house. I'll see."

And away he went to the bar.

"Come," he said, returning in a few minutes; and the party followed a waiter up stairs, and were shown into a small room, neatly furnished, though smelling villanously of stale cigar smoke.

"This is cosy," was the approving remark of Bland, as they entered. Hats and overcoats were laid aside, and they drew around a table that stood in the centre of the room under the gaslight. A few passages were read from Shakspeare, then drink was ordered by one of the the party. The reading interspersed with critical comments, was again resumed; but the reading soon gave way entire to the comments, which, in a little while, passed from the text of Shakspeare to actors, actresses, prima donnas, and ballet-dancers, the relative merits of which were knowingly discussed for some time. In the midst of this discussion, oysters,

in two or three styles, and a smoking dish of terrapin, ordered by a member of the company—which our young friend Green did not know—were brought in, followed by a liberal supply of wine and brandy. Bland expressed surprise, but accepted the entertainment as quite agreeable to himself.

After the supper, cigars were introduced, and after the cigars, cards. A few games were played for shilling stakes. Green, under the influence of more liquor than his head could bear, and in the midst of companions whose sphere he could not, in consequence, resist, yielded in a new direction for him. Of gambling he had always entertained a virtuous disapproval; yet, ere aware of the direction in which he was drifting, he was staking money at cards, the sums gradually increasing, until from shillings the ventures increased to dollars. Sometimes he won, and sometimes he lost; the winnings stimulating to new trials in the hope of further success, and the losses stimulating to new trials in order to recover, if possible; but, steadily, the tide, for all these little eddies of success, bore him downwards, and losses increased from single dollars to fives, and from fives to tens, his pleasant friend, Bland, supplying whatever he wanted in the most disinterested way, until an aggregate loss of nearly a hundred and fifty dollars sobered and appalled him.

The salary of Martin Green was only four hundred dollars, every cent of which was expended as fast as earned. A loss of a hundred and fifty dollars was, therefore, a serious and embarrassing matter.

"I'll call and see you to-morrow, when we can arrange this little matter," said Mr. Bland, "on parting with Green at his own door. He spoke pleasantly, but with something in his voice that chilled the nerves of his victim. On the next day while Green stood at his desk, trying to fix his mind upon his work, and do it correctly, his employer said,—

"Martin, there's a young man in the store who has asked for you."

Green turned and saw the last man on the earth he desired to meet. His pleasant friend of the evening before had called to "arrange that little matter."

"Not too soon for you, I hope," remarked Bland, with his courteous, yet now serious, smile, as he took the victim's hand.

"Yes, you *are*, too soon," was soberly answered.

The smile faded off of Bland's face.

"When will you arrange it?"

"In a few days."

"But I want the money to-day. It was a simple loan, you know."

"I am aware of that, but the amount is larger than I can manage at once," said Green.

"Can I have a part to-day?"

"Not to-day."

"To-morrow, then?"

"I'll do the best in my power."

"Very well. To-morrow, at this time, I will call. Make up the whole sum if possible, for I want it badly."

"Do you know that young man?" asked Mr. Phillips, the employer of Green, as the latter came back to his desk. The face of Mr. Phillips was unusually serious.

"His name is Bland."

"Why has he called to see you?" The eyes of Mr. Phillips were fixed intently on his clerk.

"He merely dropped in. I have met him a few times in company."

"Don't you know his character?"

"I never heard a word against him," said Green.

"Why, Martin!" replied Mr. Phillips, "he has the reputation of being one of the worst young men in our city; a base gambler's stool-pigeon, some say."

"I am glad to know it, sir," Martin had the presence of mind, in the painful confusion that overwhelmed him, to say, "and shall treat him accordingly." He went back to his desk, and resumed his work.

It is the easiest thing in the world to go to astray, but always difficult to return, Martin Green was astray, but how was he to get into the right path again? A barrier that seemed impassable was now lying across the way over which he had passed, a little while before, with lightest footsteps. Alone and unaided, he could not safely get back. The evil spirits that lure a man from virtue never counsel aright when to seek to return. They magnify the perils that beset the road by which alone is safety, and suggest other ways that lead into labyrinths of evil from which escape

is sometimes impossible. These spirits were now at the ear of our unhappy young friend, suggesting methods of relief in his embarrassing position.

If Bland were indeed such a character as Mr. Phillips had represented him, it would be ruin, in his employer's estimation, to have him call again and again for his debt. But how was he to liquidate that debt? There was nothing due him on account of salary, and there was not a friend or acquaintance to whom he could apply with any hope of borrowing.

"Man's extremity is the devil's opportunity." It was so in the present case, Green had a number of collections to make on that day, and his evil counsellors suggested his holding back the return of two of these, amounting to his indebtedness, and say that the parties were not yet ready to settle their bills. This would enable him to get rid of Bland, and gain time. So, acting upon the bad suggestion, he made up his return of collections, omitting the two accounts to which we have referred.

Now it so happened that one of the persons against whom these accounts stood, met Mr. Phillips as he was returning from dinner in the afternoon, and said to him,—

"I settled that bill of yours to-day."

"That's right. I wish all my customers were as punctual," answered Mr. Phillips.

"I gave your young man a check for a hundred and five dollars."

"Thank you."

And the two men passed their respective ways.

On Mr. Phillips's return to his store, Martin rendered his account of collections, and, to the surprise of his employer, omitted the one in regard to which he had just been notified.

"Is this all?" he asked, in a tone that sent a thrill of alarm to the guilty heart of his clerk.

"Yes, sir," was the not clearly outspoken answer.

"Didn't Garland pay?"

"N-n-o, sir!" The suddenness of this question so confounded Martin, that he could not answer without a betraying hesitation.

"Martin!" Astonishment, rebuke, and accusation were in the voice of Mr. Phillips as he pronounced his clerk's name. Martin's face flushed deeply, and then grew very pale. He stood the image of guilt and fear for some moments, then, drawing out his pocket book, he brought therefrom a small roll of bank bills, and a memorandum slip of paper.

"I made these collections also." And he gave the money and memorandum to Mr. Phillips.

"A hundred and fifty dollars withheld! Martin! Martin! what *does* this mean?"

"Heaven is my witness, sir," answered the young man, with quivering lips, "that I have never wronged you out of a dollar, and had no intention of wronging you now. But I am in a fearful strait. My feet have become suddenly mired, and this was a desperate struggle for extrication—a temporary expedient only, not a premeditated wrong against you."

"Sit down, Martin," said Mr. Phillips, in a grave, but not severe, tone of voice. "Let me understand the case from first to last. Conceal nothing, if you wish to have me for a friend."

Thus enjoined, Martin told his humiliating story.

"If you had not gone into the way of temptation, the betrayer had not found you," was the remark of Mr. Phillips, when the young man ended his confession. "Do you frequent these eating and drinking saloons?"

"I go occasionally, sir."

"They are neither safe nor reputable, Martin. A young man who frequents them must have the fine tone of his manhood dimmed. There is an atmosphere of impurity about these places. Have you a younger brother?"

"Yes, sir."

"Would you think it good for him, as he emerged from youth to manhood, to visit refectories and billiard saloons?"

"No, sir, I would do all in my power to prevent it."

"Why?"

"There's danger in them, sir."

"And, knowing this, you went into the way of danger, and have fallen!"

Martin dropped his eyes to the floor in confusion.

"Bland is a stool-pigeon and you were betrayed."

"What am I to do?" asked the troubled young man. "I am in debt to him."

"He will be here to-morrow."

"Yes, sir."

"I will have a policeman ready to receive him."

"O, no, no, Sir. Pray don't do that!" answered Martin, with a distressed look.

"Why not?" demanded Mr. Phillips.

"It will ruin me."

"How?"

"Bland will denounce me."

"Let him."

"I shall be exposed to the policeman."

"An evil, but a mild one, compared with that to which you were rushing in order to disentangle yourself. I must have my way, sir. This matter has assumed a serious aspect. You are in my power, and must submit."

On the next day, punctual to the hour, Bland called.

"This is your man," said Mr. Phillips to his clerk. "Ask him into the counting-room." Bland, thus invited, walked back. As he entered, Mr. Phillips said,—

"My clerk owes you a hundred and fifty dollars, I understand."

"Yes, sir;" and the villain bowed.

"Make him out a receipt," said Mr. Phillips.

"When I receive the money," was coldly and resolutely answered. Martin glanced sideways at the face of Bland, and the sudden change in its expression chilled him. The mild, pleasant, virtuous aspect he could so well assume was gone, and he looked more like a fiend than a man. In pictures he had seen eyes such

as now gleamed on Mr. Phillips, but never in a living face before.

The officer, who had been sitting with a newspaper in his hand, now gave his paper a quick rattle as he threw it aside, and, coming forward, stood beside Mr. Phillips, and looked steadily at the face of Bland, over which passed another change: it was less assured, but not less malignant.

Mr. Phillips took out his pocket-book, and, laying a twenty-dollar bill on the desk by which they were standing, said,—

"Take this and sign a receipt."

"No, sir!" was given with determined emphasis. "I am not to be robbed in this way!"

"Ned," the officer now spoke, "take my advice, and sign a receipt."

"It's a cursed swindle!" exclaimed the baffled villain.

"We will dispense with hard names, sir!" The officer addressed him sternly. "Either take the money, or go. This is not a meeting for parley. I understand you and your operations."

A few moments Bland stood, with an irresolute air; then, clutching desperately at a pen, he dashed off a receipt, and was reaching for the money, when Mr. Phillips drew it back, saying,

"Wait a moment, until I examine the receipt." He read it over, and then, pushing it towards Bland, said,—

"Write 'In full of all demands.'" A growl was the oral response. Bland took the pen again, and wrote as directed.

"Take my advice, young man, and adopt a safer and more

honorable business," said Mr. Phillips, as he gave him the twenty-dollar bill.

"Keep your advice for them that ask it!" was flung back in his face. A look of hate and revenge burned in the fellow's eyes. After glaring at Mr. Phillips and Martin in a threatening way for several moments, he left more hurriedly than he had entered.

"And take my advice," said the officer, laying his hand on Martin's arm,—he spoke in a warning tone,—"and keep out of that man's way. He'll never forgive you. I know him and his prowling gang, and they are a set of as hardened and dangerous villains as can be found in the city. You are 'spotted' by them from this day, and they number a dozen at least. So, if you would be safe, avoid their haunts. Give drinking saloons and billiard rooms a wide berth. One experience like this should last you a life-time."

Thus Martin escaped from his dangerous entanglement, but never again to hold the unwavering confidence of his employer. Mr. Phillips pitied, but could not trust him fully. A year afterwards came troublesome times, losses in business, and depression in trade. Every man had to retrench. Thousands of clerks lost their places, and anxiety and distress were on every hand. Mr. Phillips, like others, had to reduce expenses, and, in reducing, the lot to go fell upon Martin Green. He had been very circumspect, had kept away from the old places where danger lurked, had devoted himself with renewed assiduity to his employer's interests; but, for all this, doubts were forever arising

in the mind of Mr. Phillips, and when the question, "Who shall go?" came up, the decision was against Martin. We pity him, but cannot blame his employer.

III

ANDY LOVELL

ALL the village was getting out with Andy Lovell, the shoemaker; and yet Andy Lovell's shoes fitted so neatly, and wore so long, that the village people could ill afford to break with him. The work made by Tompkins was strong enough, but Tompkins was no artist in leather. Lyon's fit was good, and his shoes neat in appearance, but they had no wear in them. So Andy Lovell had the run of work, and in a few years laid by enough to make him feel independent. Now this feeling of independence is differently based with different men. Some must have hundreds of thousands of dollars for it to rest upon, while others find tens of thousands sufficient. A few drop below the tens, and count by units. Of this last number was Andy Lovell, the shoemaker.

When Andy opened his shop and set up business for himself, he was twenty-four years of age. Previous to that time he had worked as journeyman, earning good wages, and spending as fast as he earned, for he had no particular love of money, nor was he ambitious to rise and make an appearance in the world. But it happened with Andy as with most young men he fell in love; and as the village beauty was compliant, betrothal followed. From this time he was changed in many things, but most of all in his regard for money. From a free-handed young man, he became

prudent and saving, and in a single year laid by enough to warrant setting up business for himself. The wedding followed soon after.

The possession of a wife and children gives to most men broader views of life. They look with more earnestness into the future, and calculate more narrowly the chances of success. In the ten years that followed Andy Lovell's marriage no one could have given more attention to business, or devoted more thought and care to the pleasure of customers. He was ambitious to lay up money for his wife's and children's sake, as well as to secure for himself the means of rest from labor in his more advancing years. The consequence was, that Andy served his neighbors, in his vocation, to their highest satisfaction. He was useful, contented, and thrifty.

A sad thing happened to Andy and his wife after this. Scarlet fever raged in the village one winter, sweeping many little ones into the grave. Of their three children, two were taken; and the third was spared, only to droop, like a frost-touched plant, and die ere the summer came. From that time, all of Andy Lovell's customers noted a change in the man; and no wonder. Andy had loved these children deeply. His thought had all the while been running into the future, and building castles for them to dwell in. Now the future was as nothing to him; and so his heart beat feebly in the present. He had already accumulated enough for himself and his wife to live on for the rest of their days; and, if no more children came, what motive was there for a man of his views and temperament to devote himself, with the old ardor, to business?

So the change noticed by his customers continued. He was less anxious to accommodate; disappointed them oftener; and grew impatient under complaint or remonstrance. Customers, getting discouraged or offended, dropped away, but it gave Andy no concern. He had, no longer, any heart in his business; and worked in it more like an automaton than a live human being.

At last, Andy suddenly made up his mind to shut up his shop, and retire from business. He had saved enough to live on—why should he go on any longer in this halting, miserable way—a public servant, yet pleasing nobody?

Mrs. Lovell hardly knew what to say in answer to her husband's suddenly formed resolution. It was as he alleged; they had laid up sufficient; to make them comfortable for the rest of their lives; and, sure enough, why should Andy worry himself any longer with the shop? As far as her poor reason went, Mrs. Lovell had nothing to oppose; but all her instincts were on the other side—she could not feel that it would be right.

But Andy, when he made up his mind to a thing, was what people call hard-headed. His "I won't stand it any longer," meant more than this common form of speech on the lips of ordinary men. So he gave it out that he should quit business; and it was soon all over the village. Of course Tompkins and Lyon were well enough pleased, but there were a great many who heard of the shoemaker's determination with regret. In the face of all difficulties and annoyances, they had continued to depend on him for foot garniture, and were now haunted by unpleasant

images of cramped toes, corns, bunyons, and all the varied ill attendant on badly made and badly fitting shoes, boots, and gaiters. The retirement of Andy, cross and unaccommodating as he had become, was felt, in many homes, to be a public calamity.

"Don't think of such a thing, Mr. Lovell," said one.

"We can't do without you," asserted another.

"You'll not give up altogether," pleaded a third, almost coaxingly.

But Andy Lovell was tired of working without any heart in his work; and more tired of the constant fret and worry attendant upon a business in which his mind had ceased to feel interest. So he kept to his resolution, and went on with his arrangements for closing the shop.

"What are you going to do?" asked a neighbor.

"Do?" Andy looked, in some surprise, at his interrogator.

"Yes. What are you going to do? A man in good health, at your time of life, can't be idle. Rust will eat him up."

"Rust?" Andy looked slightly bewildered.

"What's this?" asked the neighbor, taking something from Andy's counter.

"An old knife," was the reply. "It dropped out of the window two or three months ago and was lost. I picked it up this morning."

"It's in a sorry condition," said the neighbor. "Half eaten up with rust, and good for nothing."

"And yet," replied the shoemaker, "there was better stuff in

that knife, before it was lost, than in any other knife in the shop."

"Better than in this?" And the neighbor lifted a clean, sharp-edged knife from Andy's cutting-board.

"Worth two of it."

"Which knife is oldest?" asked the neighbor.

"I bought them at the same time."

"And this has been in constant use?"

"Yes."

"While the other lay idle, and exposed to the rains and dews?"

"And so has become rusted and good for nothing. Andy, my friend, just so rusted, and good for nothing as a man, are you in danger of becoming. Don't quit business; don't fall out of your place; don't pass from useful work into self-corroding idleness, You'll be miserable—miserable."

The pertinence of this illustration struck the mind of Andy Lovell, and set him to thinking; and the more he thought, the more disturbed became his mental state. He had, as we have seen, no longer any heart in his business. All that he desired was obtained—enough to live on comfortably; why, then, should he trouble himself with hard-to-please and ill-natured customers? This was one side of the question.

The rusty knife suggested the other side. So there was conflict in his mind; but only a disturbing conflict. Reason acted too feebly on the side of these new-coming convictions. A desire to be at once, and to escape daily work and daily troubles, was stronger than any cold judgement of the case.

"I'll find something to do," he said, within himself, and so pushed aside unpleasantly intruding thoughts. But Mrs. Lovell did not fail to observe, that since, her husband's determination to go out of business, he had become more irritable than before, and less at ease in every way.

The closing day came at last. Andy Lovell shut the blinds before the windows of his shop, at night-fall, saying, as he did so, but in a half-hearted, depressed kind of a way, "For the last time;" and then going inside, sat down in front of the counter, feeling strangely and ill at ease. The future looked very blank. There was nothing in it to strive for, to hope for, to live for. Andy was no philosopher. He could not reason from any deep knowledge of human nature. His life had been merely sensational, touching scarcely the confines of interior thought. Now he felt that he was getting adrift, but could not understand the why and the wherefore.

As the twilight deepened, his mental obscurity deepened also. He was still sitting in front of his counter, when a form darkened his open door. It was the postman, with a letter for Andy's wife. Then he closed the door, saying in his thought, as he had said when closing the shutters, "For the last time," and went back into the house with the letter in his hand. It was sealed with black. Mrs. Lovell looked frightened as she noticed this sign of death. The contents were soon known. An only sister, a widow, had died suddenly, and this letter announced the fact. She left three young children, two girls and a boy. These, the letter stated, had been

dispensed among the late husband's relatives; and there was a sentence or two expressing a regret that they should be separated from each other.

Mrs. Lovell was deeply afflicted by this news, and abandoned herself, for a while, to excessive grief. Her husband had no consolation to offer, and so remained, for the evening, silent and thoughtful. Andy Lovell did not sleep well that night. Certain things were suggested to his mind, and dwelt upon, in spite of many efforts to thrust them aside. Mrs. Lovell was wakeful also, as was evident to her husband from her occasional sighs, sobs, and restless movements; but no words passed between them. Both rose earlier than usual.

Had Andy Lovell forgotten that he opened his shop door, and put back the shutters, as usual? Was this mere habit-work, to be corrected when he bethought himself of what he had done? Judging from his sober face and deliberate manner—no. His air was not that of a man acting unconsciously.

Absorbed in her grief, and troubled with thoughts of her sister's orphaned children, Mrs. Lovell did not, at first, regard the opening of her husband's shop as anything unusual. But, the truth flashing across her mind, she went in where Lovell stood at his old place by the cutting-board, on which was laid a side of morocco, and said,—

"Why, Andy! I thought you had shut up the shop for good and all."

"I thought so last night, but I've changed my mind," was the

low-spoken but decided answer.

"Changed your mind! Why?"

"I don't know what you may think about it, Sally; but my mind's made up." And Andy squared round, and looked steadily into his wife's face. "There's just one thing we've got to do; and it's no use trying to run away from it. That letter didn't come for nothing. The fact is, Sally, them children mustn't be separated. I've been thinking about it all night, and it hurts me dreadfully."

"How can we help it? Mary's dead, and her husband's relations have divided the children round. I've no doubt they will be well cared for," said Mrs. Lovell.

She had been thinking as well as her husband, but not to so clear a result. To bring three little children into her quiet home, and accept years of care, of work, of anxiety, and responsibility, was not a thing to be done on light consideration. She had turned from the thought as soon as presented, and pushed it away from every avenue through which it sought to find entrance. So she had passed the wakeful night, trying to convince herself that her dead sister's children would be happy and well cared for.

"If they are here, Sally, we can be certain that they are well cared for," replied Andy.

"O, dear! I can never undertake the management of three children!" said Mrs. Lovell, her countenance expressing the painful reluctance she felt.

Andy turned partly away from his wife, and bent over the cutting-board. She saw, as he did so, an expression of

countenance that rebuked her.

"A matter like this should be well considered," remarked Mrs. Lovell.

"That's true," answered her husband. "So take your time. They're your flesh and blood, you know, and if they come here, you'll have the largest share of trouble with them."

Mrs. Lovell went back into the house to think alone, while Andy commenced cutting out work, his hands moving with the springs of a readier will than had acted through them for a long time.

It took Mrs. Lovell three or four days to make up her mind to send for the children, but the right decision came at last. All this while Andy was busy in his shop—cheerfully at work, and treating the customers, who, hearing that he had changed his mind, were pressing in upon him with their orders, much after the pleasant fashion in which he had treated them in years gone by. He knew that his wife would send for the children; and after their arrival, he knew that he would have increased expenses. So, there had come a spur to action, quickening the blood in his veins; and he was at work once more, with heart and purpose, a happier man, really, than he had been for years.

Two or three weeks passed, and then the long silent dwelling of Andy Lovell was filled with the voices of children. Two or three years have passed since then. How is it with Andy? There is not a more cheerful man in all the village, though he is in his shop early and late. No more complaints from customers. Every one is

promptly and cheerfully served. He has the largest run of work, as of old; and his income is sufficient not only to meet increased expenses, but to leave a surplus at the end of every year. He is the bright, sharp knife, always in use; not the idle blade, which had so narrowly escaped, falling from the window, rusting to utter worthlessness in the dew and rain.

IV

A MYSTERY EXPLAINED

"GOING to the Falls and to the White Mountains!"

"Yes, I'm off next week."

"How long will you be absent?"

"From ten days to two weeks."

"What will it cost?"

"I shall take a hundred dollars in my pocket-book! That will carry me through."

"A hundred dollars! Where did you raise that sum? Who's the lender? Tell him he can have another customer."

"I never borrow."

"Indeed! Then you've had a legacy."

"No, and never expect to have one. All my relations are poor."

"Then unravel the mystery. Say where the hundred dollars came from."

"The answer is easy. I saved it from my salary."

"What?"

"I saved it during the last six months for just this purpose, and now I am to have two weeks of pleasure and profit combined."

"Impossible!"

"I have given you the fact."

"What is your salary, pray?"

"Six hundred a year."

"So I thought. But you don't mean to say that in six months you have saved one hundred dollars out of three hundred?"

"Yes; that is just what I mean to say."

"Preposterous. I get six hundred, and am in debt."

"No wonder."

"Why no wonder?"

"If a man spends more than he receives, he will fall in debt."

"Of course he will. But on a salary of six hundred, how is it possible for a man to keep out of debt?"

"By spending less than he receives."

"That is easily said."

"And as easily done. All that is wanted is prudent forethought, integrity of purpose, and self-denial. He must take care of the pennies, and the pounds will take care of themselves."

"Trite and obsolete."

"True if trite; and never obsolete. It is as good doctrine to-day as it was in poor Richard's time. Of that I can bear witness."

"I could never be a miser or a skinflint."

"Nor I. But I can refuse to waste my money in unconsidered trifles, and so keep it for more important things; for a trip to Niagara and the White Mountains, for instance."

The two young men who thus talked were clerks, each receiving the salary already mentioned—six hundred dollars. One of them, named Hamilton, understood the use of money; the other, named Hoffman, practised the abuse of this important

article. The consequence was, that while Hamilton had a hundred dollars saved for a trip during his summer vacation, Hoffman was in debt for more than two or three times that amount.

The incredulous surprise expressed by Hoffman was sincere. He could not understand the strange fact which had been announced. For an instant it crossed his mind that Hamilton might only have advanced his seeming impossible economy as a cover to dishonest practices. But he pushed the thought away as wrong.

"Not much room for waste of money on a salary of six hundred a year," answered Hoffman.

"There is always room for waste," said Hamilton. "A leak is a leak, be it ever so small. The quart flagon will as surely waste its precious contents through a fracture that loses only a drop at a time, as the butt from which a constant stream is pouring. The fact is, as things are in our day, whether flagon or butt, leakage is the rule not the exception."

"I should like to know where the leak in my flagon is to be found," said Hoffman. "I think it would puzzle a finance committee to discover it."

"Shall I unravel for you the mystery?"

"You unravel it! What do you know of my affairs?"

"I have eyes."

"Do I waste my money?"

"Yes, if you have not saved as much as I have during the last six months; and yes, if my eyes have given a true report."

"What have your eyes reported?"

"A system of waste, in trifles, that does not add anything substantial to your happiness and certainly lays the foundation for a vast amount of disquietude, and almost certain embarrassment in money affairs, and consequent humiliations."

Hoffman shook his head gravely answering, "I can't see it."

"Would you like to see it?"

"O, certainly, if it exists."

"Well, suppose we go down into the matter of expenditures, item by item, and make some use of the common rules of arithmetic as we go along. Your salary, to start with, is six hundred dollars, and you play the same as I do for boarding and washing, that is, four and a half dollars per week, which gives the sum of two hundred and thirty-four dollars a year. What do your clothes cost?"

"A hundred and fifty dollars will cover everything!"

"Then you have two hundred and sixteen dollars left. What becomes of that large sum?"

Hoffman dropped his eyes and went to thinking. Yes, what had become of these two hundred and sixteen dollars? Here was the whole thing in a nutshell.

"Cigars," said Hamilton. "How many do you use in a day?"

"Not over three. But these are a part of considered expenses. I am not going to do without cigars."

"I am only getting down to the items," answered the friend. "We must find out where the money goes. Three cigars a day,

and, on an average, one to a friend, which makes four."

"Very well, say four."

"At six cents apiece."

Hamilton took a slip of paper and made a few figures.

"Four cigars a day at six cents each, cost twenty-four cents. Three hundred and sixty-five by twenty-four gives eighty-seven dollars and sixty cents, as the cost of your cigars for a year."

"O, no! That is impossible," returned Hoffman, quickly.

"There is the calculation. Look at it for yourself," replied Hamilton, offering the slip of paper.

"True as I live!" ejaculated the other, in unfeigned surprise. "I never dreamed of such a thing. Eighty-seven dollars. That will never do in the world. I must cut this down."

"A simple matter of figures. I wonder you had not thought of counting the cost. Now I do not smoke at all. It is a bad habit, that injures the health, and makes us disagreeable to our friends, to say nothing of the expense. So you see how natural the result, that at the end of the year I should have eighty-seven dollars in hand, while you had puffed away an equal sum in smoke. So much for the cigar account. I think you take a game of billiards now and then."

"Certainly I do. Billiards are innocent. I am very fond of the game, and must have some recreation."

"Exactly so. The question now is, What do they cost?"

"Nothing to speak of. You can't make out a case here."

"We shall see. How often do you play?"

"Two or three times a week."

"Say twice a week."

"Yes."

"Very well. Let it be twice. A shilling a game must be paid for use of the table?"

"Which comes from the loser's pocket. I, generally, make it a point to win."

"But lose sometimes."

"Of course. The winning is rarely all on one side."

"One or two games a night?"

"Sometimes."

"Suppose we put down an average loss of three games in a week. Will that be too high?"

"No. Call it three games a week."

"Or, as to expense, three shillings. Then, after the play, there comes a glass of ale—or, it may be oysters."

"Usually."

"Will two shillings at week, taking one week with another, pay for your ale and oysters?"

Hoffman did not answer until he had reflected for a few moments, Then he said,—

"I'm afraid neither two nor four shillings will cover this item. We must set it down at six."

"Which gives for billiards, ale and oysters, the sum of one dollar and a shilling per week. Fifty-two by a dollar twelve-and-a-half, and we have the sum of fifty-eight dollars and fifty

cents. Rather a serious item this, in the year's expense, where the income is only six hundred dollars!"

Hoffman looked at his friend in a bewildered kind of way. This was astounding.

"How often do you go to the theatre and opera?" Hamilton went on with his questions.

"Sometimes once a week. Sometimes twice or thrice, according to the attraction."

"And you take a lady now and then?"

"Yes."

"Particularly during the opera season?"

"Yes. I'm not so selfish as always to indulge in these pleasures alone."

"Very well. Now for the cost. Sometimes the opera is one dollar. So it costs two dollars when you take a lady."

"Which is not very often."

"Will fifty cents a week, averaging the year, meet this expense?"

After thinking for some time, Hoffman said yes, he thought that fifty cents a week would be a fair appropriations.

"Which adds another item of twenty-six dollars a year to your expenses."

"But would you cut off everything?" objected Hoffman. "Is a man to have no recreations, no amusements?"

"That is another question," coolly answered Hamilton. "Our present business is to ascertain what has become of the two

hundred and sixteen dollars which remained of your salary after boarding and clothing bills were paid. That is a handsome gold chain. What did it cost?"

"Eighteen dollars."

"Bought lately?"

"Within six months."

"So much more accounted for. Is that a diamond pin?"

Hoffman colored a little as he answered,—

"Not a very costly one. Merely a scarf-pin, as you see. Small, though brilliant. Always worth what I paid for it."

"Cost twenty-five or thirty dollars?"

"Twenty-five."

"Shall I put that down as one of the year expenses?"

"Yes, you may do so."

"What about stage and car hire? Do you ride or walk to and from business?"

"I ride, of course. You wouldn't expect me to walk nearly a mile four times a day."

"I never ride, except in bad weather. The walk gives me just the exercise I need. Every man, who is confined in a store or counting-room during business hours, should walk at least four miles a day. Taken in installments of one mile at a time, at good intervals, there is surely no hardship in this exercise. Four rides, at six-pence a ride and we have another item of twenty-five cents at day. You go down town nearly every evening?"

"Yes."

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

Текст предоставлен ООО «ЛитРес».

Прочитайте эту книгу целиком, [купив полную легальную версию](#) на ЛитРес.

Безопасно оплатить книгу можно банковской картой Visa, MasterCard, Maestro, со счета мобильного телефона, с платежного терминала, в салоне МТС или Связной, через PayPal, WebMoney, Яндекс.Деньги, QIWI Кошелек, бонусными картами или другим удобным Вам способом.