ARTHUR TIMOTHY SHAY

HOME LIGHTS AND SHADOWS

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Содержание

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PREFACE

HOME! How at the word, a crowd of pleasant thoughts awaken. What sun-bright images are pictured to the imagination. Yet, there is no home without its shadows as well as sunshine. Love makes the home-lights and selfishness the shadows. Ah! how dark the shadow at times—how faint and fleeting the sunshine. How often selfishness towers up to a giant height, barring out from our dwellings every golden ray. There are few of us, who do not, at times, darken with our presence the homes that should grow bright at our coming. It is sad to acknowledge this; yet, in the very acknowledgement is a promise of better things, for, it is rarely that we confess, without a resolution to overcome the evil that mars our own and others' happiness. Need we say, that the book now presented to the reader is designed to aid in the work of overcoming what is evil and selfish, that home-lights may dispel home-shadows, and keep them forever from our dwellings.

RIGHTS AND WRONGS

IT is a little singular—yet certainly true—that people who are very tenacious of their own rights, and prompt in maintaining them, usually have rather vague notions touching the rights of others. Like the too eager merchant, in securing their own, they are very apt to get a little more than belongs to them.

Mrs. Barbara Uhler presented a notable instance of this. We cannot exactly class her with the "strong-minded" women of the day. But she had quite a leaning in that direction; and if not very strong-minded herself, was so unfortunate as to number among her intimate friends two or three ladies who had a fair title to the distinction.

Mrs. Barbara Uhler was a wife and a mother. She was also a woman; and her consciousness of this last named fact was never indistinct, nor ever unmingled with a belligerent appreciation of the rights appertaining to her sex and position.

As for Mr. Herman Uhler, he was looked upon, abroad, as a mild, reasonable, good sort of a man. At home, however, he was held in a very different estimation. The "wife of his bosom" regarded him as an exacting domestic tyrant; and, in opposing his will, she only fell back, as she conceived, upon the first and most sacred law of her nature. As to "obeying" him, she had scouted that idea from the beginning. The words, "honor and obey," in the marriage service, she had always declared, would

have to be omitted when she stood at the altar. But as she had, in her maidenhood, a very strong liking for the handsome young Mr. Uhler, and, as she could not obtain so material a change in the church ritual, as the one needed to meet her case, she wisely made a virtue of necessity, and went to the altar with her lover. The difficulty was reconciled to her own conscience by a mental reservation.

It is worthy of remark that above all other of the obligations here solemnly entered into, this one, *not* to honor and obey her husband, ever after remained prominent in the mind of Mrs. Barbara Uhler. And it was no fruitless sentiment, as Mr. Herman Uhler could feelingly testify.

From the beginning it was clearly apparent to Mrs. Uhler that her husband expected too much from her; that he regarded her as a kind of upper servant in his household, and that he considered himself as having a right to complain if things were not orderly and comfortable. At first, she met his looks or words of displeasure, when his meals, for instance, were late, or so badly cooked as to be unhealthy and unpalatable, with—

"I'm sorry, dear; but I can't help it."

"Are you sure you can't help it, Barbara?" Mr. Uhler at length ventured to ask, in as mild a tone of voice as his serious feelings on the subject would enable him to assume.

Mrs. Uhler's face flushed instantly, and she answered, with dignity:

"I *am* sure, Mr. Uhler."

It was the first time, in speaking to her husband, that she had said "Mr. Uhler," in her life the first time she had ever looked at him with so steady and defiant an aspect.

Now, we cannot say how most men would have acted under similar circumstances; we can only record what Mr. Uhler said and did:

"And I am *not* sure, Mrs. Uhler," was his prompt, impulsive reply, drawing himself up, and looking somewhat sternly at his better half.

"You are not?" said Mrs. Uhler; and she compressed her lips tightly.

"I am not," was the emphatic response.

"And what do you expect me to do, pray?" came next from the lady's lips.

"Do as I do in my business," answered the gentleman. "Have competent assistance, or see that things are done right yourself."

"Go into the kitchen and cook the dinner, you mean, I suppose?"

"You can put my meaning into any form of words you please, Barbara. You have charge of this household, and it is your place to see that everything due to the health and comfort of its inmates is properly cared for. If those to whom you delegate so important a part of domestic economy as the preparation of food, are ignorant or careless, surely it is your duty to go into the kitchen daily, and see that it is properly done. I never trust wholly to any individual in my employment. There is no department of the

business to which I do not give personal attention. Were I to do so my customers would pay little regard to excuses about ignorant workmen and careless clerks. They would soon seek their goods in another and better conducted establishment."

"Perhaps you had better seek your dinners elsewhere, if they are so little to your fancy at home."

This was the cool, defiant reply of the outraged Mrs. Uhler.

Alas, for Mr. Herman Uhler; he had, so far as his wife was concerned, committed the unpardonable sin; and the consequences visited upon his transgression were so overwhelming that he gave up the struggle in despair. Contention with such an antagonist, he saw, from the instinct of self-preservation, would be utterly disastrous. While little was to be gained, everything was in danger of being lost.

"I have nothing more to say," was his repeated answer to the running fire which his wife kept up against him for a long time. "You are mistress of the house; act your own pleasure. Thank you for the suggestion about dinner. I may find it convenient to act thereon."

The last part of this sentence was extorted by the continued irritating language of Mrs. Uhler. Its utterance rather cooled the lady's indignant ardor, and checked the sharp words that were rattling from her tongue. A truce to open warfare was tacitly agreed upon between the parties. The antagonism was not, however, the less real. Mrs. Uhler knew that her husband expected of her a degree of personal attention to household

matters that she considered degrading to her condition as a wife; and, because he *expected* this, she, in order to maintain the dignity of her position, gave even less attention to these matters than would otherwise have been the case. Of course, under such administration of domestic affairs, causes for dissatisfaction on the part of Mr. Uhler, were ever in existence. For the most part he bore up under them with commendable patience; but, there were times when weak human nature faltered by the way—when, from heart-fulness the mouth would speak. This was but to add new fuel to the flame. This only gave to Mrs. Uhler a ground of argument against her husband as an unreasonable, oppressive tyrant; as one of the large class of men who not only regard woman as inferior, but who, in all cases of weak submission, hesitate not to put a foot upon her neck.

Some of the female associates, among whom Mrs. Uhler unfortunately found herself thrown, were loud talkers about woman's rights and man's tyranny; and to them, with a most unwife-like indelicacy of speech, she did not hesitate to allude to her husband as one of the class of men who would trample upon a woman if permitted to do so. By these ladies she was urged to maintain her rights, to keep ever in view the dignity and elevation of her sex, and to let man, the tyrant, know, that a time was fast approaching when his haughty pride would be humbled to the dust.

And so Mrs. Uhler, under this kind of stimulus to the maintainance of her own rights against the imaginary aggressions

of her husband, trampled upon his rights in numberless ways.

As time wore on, no change for the better occurred. A woman does not reason to just conclusions, either from facts or abstract principles like man; but takes, for the most part, the directer road of perception. If, therefore her womanly instincts are all right, her conclusions will be true; but if they are wrong, false judgment is inevitable. The instincts of Mrs. Uhler were wrong in the beginning, and she was, in consequence, easily led by her associates, into wrong estimates of both her own and her husband's position.

One day, on coming home to dinner, Mr. Uhler was told by a servant, that his wife had gone to an anti-slavery meeting, and would not get back till evening, as she intended dining with a friend. Mr. Uhler made no remark on receiving this information. A meagre, badly-cooked dinner was served, to which he seated himself, alone, not to eat, but to chew the cud of bitter fancies. Business, with Mr. Uhler, had not been very prosperous of late; and he had suffered much from a feeling of discouragement. Yet, for all this, his wife's demands for money, were promptly met—and she was not inclined to be over careful as to the range of her expenditures.

There was a singular expression on the face of Mr. Uhler, as he left his home on that day. Some new purpose had been formed in his mind, or some good principle abandoned. He was a changed man—changed for the worse, it may well be feared.

It was late in the afternoon when Mrs. Uhler returned. To

have inquired of the servant whether Mr. Uhler had made any remark, when he found that she was absent at dinner time, she would have regarded as a betrayal to that personage of a sense of accountability on her part. No; she stooped not to any inquiry of this kind—compromised not the independence of the individual.

The usual tea hour was at hand—but, strange to say, the punctual Mr. Uhler did not make his appearance. For an hour the table stood on the floor, awaiting his return, but he came not. Then Mrs. Uhler gave her hungry, impatient little ones their suppers—singularly enough, she had no appetite for food herself—and sent them to bed.

Never since her marriage had Mrs. Uhler spent so troubled an evening as that one proved to be. A dozen times she rallied herself—a dozen times she appealed to her independence and individuality as a woman, against the o'er-shadowing concern about her husband, which came gradually stealing upon her mind. And with this uncomfortable feeling were some intruding and unwelcome thoughts, that in no way stimulated her self-approval.

It was nearly eleven o'clock when Mr. Uhler came home; and then he brought in his clothes such rank fumes of tobacco, and his breath was so tainted with brandy, that his wife had no need of inquiry as to where he had spent his evening. His countenance wore a look of vacant unconcern.

"Ah! At home, are you?" said he, lightly, as he met his wife. "Did you have a pleasant day of it?"

Mrs. Uhler was—frightened—shall we say? We must utter the word, even though it meet the eyes of her "strong minded" friends, who will be shocked to hear that one from whom they had hoped so much, should be frightened by so insignificant a creature as a husband. Yes, Mrs. Uhler was really frightened by this new aspect in which her husband presented himself. She felt that she was in a dilemma, to which, unhappily, there was not a single horn, much less choice between two.

We believe Mrs. Uhler did not sleep very well during the night. Her husband, however, slept "like a log." On the next morning, her brow was overcast; but his countenance wore a careless aspect. He chatted with the children at the breakfast table, goodnaturedly, but said little to his wife, who had penetration enough to see that he was hiding his real feelings under an assumed exterior.

"Are you going to be home to dinner to-day?" said Mr. Uhler, carelessly, as he arose from the table. He had only sipped part of a cup of bad coffee.

"Certainly I am," was the rather sharp reply. The question irritated the lady.

"You needn't on my account," said Mr. Uhler. "I've engaged to dine at the Astor with a friend."

"Oh, very well!" Mrs. Uhler bridled and looked dignified. Yet, her flashing eyes showed that cutting words were ready to leap from her tongue. And they would have come sharply on the air, had not the manner of her husband been so unusual and really

mysterious. In a word, a vague fear kept her silent.

Mr. Uhler went to his store, but manifested little of his usual interest and activity. Much that he had been in the habit of attending to personally, he delegated to clerks. He dined at the Astor, and spent most of the afternoon there, smoking, talking, and drinking. At tea-time he came home. The eyes of Mrs. Uhler sought his face anxiously as he came in. There was a veil of mystery upon it, through which her eyes could not penetrate. Mr. Uhler remained at home during the evening, but did not seem to be himself. On the next morning, as he was about leaving the house, his wife said—

"Can you let me have some money to-day?"

Almost for the first time in her life, Mrs. Uhler asked this question in a hesitating manner; and, for the first time, she saw that her request was not favorably received.

"How much do you want?" inquired the husband.

"I should like to have a hundred dollars," said Mrs. Uhler.

"I'm sorry; but I can't let you have it," was answered. "I lost five hundred dollars day before yesterday through the neglect of one of my clerks, while I was riding out with some friends."

"Riding out!" exclaimed Mrs. Uhler.

"Yes. You can't expect me to be always tied down to business. I like a little recreation and pleasant intercourse with friends as much as any one. Well, you see, a country dealer, who owed me five hundred dollars, was in the city, and promised to call and settle on the afternoon of day before yesterday. I explained to

one of my clerks what he must do when the customer came in, and, of course, expected all to be done right. Not so, however. The man, when he found that he had my clerk, and not me, to deal with, objected to some unimportant charge in his bill, and the foolish fellow, instead of yielding the point, insisted that the account was correct. The customer went away, and paid out all his money in settling a bill with one of my neighbors. And so I got nothing. Most likely, I shall lose the whole account, as he is a slippery chap, and will, in all probability, see it to be his interest to make a failure between this and next spring. I just wanted that money to-day. Now I shall have to be running around half the morning to make up the sum I need."

"But how could you go away under such circumstances, and trust all to a clerk?" said Mrs. Uhler warmly, and with reproof in her voice.

"How could I!" was the quick response. "And do you suppose I am going to tie myself down to the store like a slave! You are mistaken if you do; that is all I have to say! I hire clerks to attend to my business."

"But suppose they are incompetent? What then?" Mrs. Uhler was very earnest.

"That doesn't in the least alter my character and position." Mr. Uhler looked his wife fixedly in the face for some moments after saying this, and then retired from the house without further remark.

The change in her husband, which Mrs. Uhler at first tried to

make herself believe was mere assumption or caprice, proved, unhappily, a permanent state. He neglected his business and his home for social companions; and whenever asked by his wife for supplies of cash, invariably gave as a reason why he could not supply her want, the fact of some new loss of custom, or money, in consequence of neglect, carelessness, or incompetency of clerks or workmen, when he was away, enjoying himself.

For a long time, Mrs. Uhler's independent spirit struggled against the humiliating necessity that daily twined its coils closer and closer around her. More and more clearly did she see, in her husband's wrong conduct, a reflection of her own wrong deeds in the beginning. It was hard for her to acknowledge that she had been in error—even to herself. But conviction lifted before her mind, daily, its rebuking finger, and she could not shut the vision out.

Neglect of business brought its disastrous consequences. In the end there was a failure; and yet, to the end, Mr. Uhler excused his conduct on the ground that he wasn't going to tie himself down like a galley slave to the oar—wasn't going to stoop to the drudgery he had employed clerks to perform. This was all his wife could gain from him in reply to her frequent remonstrances.

Up to this time, Mr. Uhler had resisted the better suggestions which, in lucid intervals, if we may so call them, were thrown into her mind. Pride would not let her give to her household duties that personal care which their rightful performance demanded; the more particularly, as, in much of her husband's conduct, she

plainly saw rebuke.

At last, poverty, that stern oppressor, drove the Uhlers out from their pleasant home, and they shrunk away into obscurity, privation, and want. In the last interview held by Mrs. Uhler with the "strong minded" friends, whose society had so long thrown its fascinations around her, and whose views and opinions had so long exercised a baleful influence over her home, she was urgently advised to abandon her husband, whom one of the number did not hesitate to denounce in language so coarse and disgusting, that the latent instincts of the wife were shocked beyond measure. Her husband was not the brutal, sensual tyrant this refined lady, in her intemperate zeal, represented him. None knew the picture to be so false as Mrs. Uhler, and all that was good and true in her rose up in indignant rebellion.

To her poor, comfortless home, and neglected children, Mrs. Uhler returned in a state of mind so different from anything she had experienced for years, that she half wondered within herself if she were really the same woman. Scales had fallen suddenly from her eyes, and she saw every thing around her in new aspects and new relations.

"Has my husband really been an exacting tyrant?" This question she propounded to herself almost involuntarily. "Did he trample upon my rights in the beginning, or did I trample upon his? He had a right to expect from me the best service I could render, in making his home comfortable and happy. Did I render that service? did I see in my home duties my highest obligation

as a wife? have I been a true wife to him?"

So rapidly came these rebuking interrogations upon the mind of Mrs. Uhler, that it almost seemed as if an accuser stood near, and uttered the questions aloud. And how did she respond? Not in self justification. Convinced, humbled, repentant, she sought her home.

It was late in the afternoon, almost evening, when Mrs. Uhler passed the threshold of her own door. The cry of a child reached her ears the moment she entered, and she knew, in an instant, that it was a cry of suffering, not anger or ill nature. Hurrying to her chamber, she found her three little ones huddled together on the floor, the youngest with one of its arms and the side of its face badly burned in consequence of its clothes having taken fire. As well as she could learn, the girl in whose charge she had left the children, and who, in the reduced circumstances of the family, was constituted doer of all work, had, from some pique, gone away in her absence. Thus left free to go where, and do what they pleased, the children had amused themselves in playing with the fire. When the clothes of the youngest caught in the blaze of a lighted stick, the two oldest, with singular presence of mind, threw around her a wet towel that hung near, and thus saved her life.

"Has your father been home?" asked Mrs. Uhler, as soon as she comprehended the scene before her.

"Yes, ma'am," was answered.

"Where is he?"

"He's gone for the doctor," replied the oldest of the children.

"What did he say?" This question was involuntary. The child hesitated for a moment, and then replied artlessly—

"He said he wished we had no mother, and then he'd know how to take care of us himself."

The words came with the force of a blow. Mrs. Uhler staggered backwards, and sunk upon a chair, weak, for a brief time, as an infant. Ere yet her strength returned, her husband came in with a doctor. He did not seem to notice her presence; but she soon made that apparent. All the mother's heart was suddenly alive in her. She was not over officious—had little to say; but her actions were all to the purpose. In due time, the little sufferer was in a comfortable state and the doctor retired.

Not a word had, up to this moment, passed between the husband and wife. Now, the eyes of the latter sought those of Mr. Uhler; but there came no answering glance. His face was sternly averted.

Darkness was now beginning to fall, and Mrs. Uhler left her husband and children, and went down into the kitchen. The fire had burned low; and was nearly extinguished. The girl had not returned; and, from what Mrs. Uhler gathered from the children would not, she presumed, come back to them again. It mattered not, however; Mrs. Uhler was in no state of mind to regard this as a cause of trouble. She rather felt relieved by her absence. Soon the fire was rekindled; the kettle simmering; and, in due time, a comfortable supper was on the table, prepared by her own hands,

and well prepared too.

Mr. Uhler was a little taken by surprise, when, on being summoned to tea, he took his place at the usually uninviting table, and saw before him a dish of well made toast, and a plate of nicely boiled ham. He said nothing; but a sensation of pleasure, so warm that it made his heart beat quicker, pervaded his bosom; and this was increased, when he placed the cup of well made, fragrant tea to his lips, and took a long delicious draught. All had been prepared by the hands of his wife—that he knew. How quickly his pleasure sighed itself away, as he remembered that, with her ample ability to make his home the pleasantest place for him in the world, she was wholly wanting in inclination.

Usually, the husband spent his evenings away. Something caused him to linger in his own home on this occasion. Few words passed between him and his wife; but the latter was active through all the evening, and, wherever her hand was laid, order seemed to grow up from disorder; and the light glinted back from a hundred places in the room, where no cheerful reflection had ever met his eyes before.

Mr. Uhler looked on, in wonder and hope, but said nothing. Strange enough, Mrs. Uhler was up by day-dawn on the next morning; and in due time, a very comfortable breakfast was prepared by her own hands. Mr. Uhler ventured a word of praise, as he sipped his coffee. Never had he tasted finer in his life, he said. Mrs. Uhler looked gratified; but offered no response.

At dinner time Mr. Uhler came home from the store, where he

was now employed at a small salary, and still more to his surprise, found a well cooked and well served meal awaiting him. Never, since his marriage, had he eaten food at his own table with so true a relish—never before had every thing in his house seemed so much like home.

And so things went on for a week, Mr. Uhler wondering and observant, and Mrs. Uhler finding her own sweet reward, not only in a consciousness of duty, but in seeing a great change in her husband, who was no longer moody and ill-natured, and who had not been absent once at meal time, nor during an evening, since she had striven to be to him a good wife, and to her children a self denying mother.

There came, now, to be a sort of tacit emulation of good offices between the wife and husband, who had, for so many years, lived in a state of partial indifference. Mr. Uhler urged the procuring of a domestic, in place of the girl who had left them, but Mrs. Uhler said no—their circumstances would not justify the expense. Mr. Uhler said they could very well afford it, and intimated something about an expected advance in his salary.

"I do not wish to see you a mere household drudge," he said to her one day, a few weeks after the change just noted. "You know so well how every thing ought to be done, that the office of director alone should be yours. I think there is a brighter day coming for us. I hope so. From the first of next month, my salary is to be increased to a thousand dollars. Then we will move from this poor place, into a better home."

There was a blending of hopefulness and tenderness in the voice of Mr. Uhler, that touched his wife deeply. Overcome by her feelings, she laid her face upon his bosom, and wept.

"Whether the day be brighter or darker," she said, when she could speak calmly, "God helping me, I will be to you a true wife, Herman. If there be clouds and storms without, the hearth shall only burn the brighter for you within. Forgive me for the past, dear husband! and have faith in me for the future. You shall not be disappointed."

And he was not. Mrs. Uhler had discovered her true relation, and had become conscious of her true duties. She was no longer jealous of her own rights, and therefore never trespassed on the rights of her husband.

The rapidity with which Mr. Uhler rose to his old position in business, sometimes caused a feeling of wonder to pervade the mind of his wife. From a clerk of one thousand, he soon came into the receipt of two thousand a year, then rose to be a partner in the business, and in a singularly short period was a man of wealth. Mrs. Uhler was puzzled, sometimes, at this, and so were other people. It was even hinted, that he had never been as poor as was pretended. Be that as it may, as he never afterwards trusted important matters to the discretion of irresponsible clerks, his business operations went on prosperously; and, on the other hand, as Mrs. Uhler never again left the comfort and health of her family entirely in the hands of ignorant and careless domestics, the home of her husband was the pleasantest place in the world

for him, and his wife, not a mere upper servant, but a loving and intelligent companion, whom he cared for and cherished with the utmost tenderness.

THE HUMBLED PHARISEE

"WHAT was that?" exclaimed Mrs. Andrews, to the lady who was seated next to her, as a single strain of music vibrated for a few moments on the atmosphere.

"A violin, I suppose," was answered.

"A violin!" An expression almost of horror came into the countenance of Mrs. Andrews. "It can't be possible."

It was possible, however, for the sound came again, prolonged and varied.

"What does it mean?" asked Mrs. Andrews, looking troubled, and moving uneasily in her chair.

"Cotillions, I presume," was answered, carelessly.

"Not dancing, surely!"

But, even as Mrs. Andrews said this, a man entered, carrying in his hand a violin. There was an instant movement on the part of several younger members of the company; partners were chosen, and ere Mrs. Andrews had time to collect her suddenly bewildered thoughts, the music had struck up, and the dancers were in motion.

"I can't remain here. It's an outrage!" said Mrs. Andrews, making a motion to rise.

The lady by whom she was sitting comprehended now more clearly her state of mind, and laying a hand on her arm, gently restrained her.

"Why not remain? What is an outrage, Mrs. Andrews?" she asked.

"Mrs. Burdick knew very well that I was a member of the church." The lady's manner was indignant.

"All your friends know that, Mrs. Andrews," replied the other. A third person might have detected in her tones a lurking sarcasm. But this was not perceived by the individual addressed. "But what is wrong?"

"Wrong! Isn't that wrong?" And she glanced towards the mazy wreath of human figures already circling on the floor. "I could not have believed it of Mrs. Burdick; she knew that I was a professor of religion."

"She doesn't expect you to dance, Mrs. Andrews," said the lady.

"But she expects me to countenance the sin and folly by my presence."

"Sin and folly are strong terms, Mrs. Andrews."

"I know they are, and I use them advisedly. I hold it a sin to dance."

"I know wise and good people who hold a different opinion."

"Wise and good!" Mrs. Andrews spoke with strong disgust. "I wouldn't give much for their wisdom and goodness—not I!"

"The true qualities of men and women are best seen at home. When people go abroad, they generally change their attire—mental as well as bodily. Now, I have seen the home-life of certain ladies, who do not think it sin to dance, and it was

full of the heart's warm sunshine; and I have seen the home-life of certain ladies who hold dancing to be sinful, and I have said to myself, half shudderingly: "What child can breathe that atmosphere for years, and not grow up with a clouded spirit, and a fountain of bitterness in the heart!"

"And so you mean to say," Mrs. Andrews spoke with some asperity of manner, "that dancing makes people better?—Is, in fact, a means of grace?"

"No. I say no such thing."

"Then what do you mean to say? I draw the only conclusion I can make."

"One may grow better or worse from dancing," said the lady. "All will depend on the spirit in which the recreation is indulged. In itself the act is innocent."

Mrs. Andrews shook her head.

"In what does its sin consist?"

"It is an idle waste of time."

"Can you say nothing worse of it?"

"I could, but delicacy keeps me silent."

"Did you ever dance?"

"Me? What a question! No!"

"I have danced often. And, let me say, that your inference on the score of indelicacy is altogether an assumption."

"Why everybody admits that."

"Not by any means."

"If the descriptions of some of the midnight balls and

assemblies that I have heard, of the waltzing, and all that, be true, then nothing could be more indelicate,—nothing more injurious to the young and innocent."

"All good things become evil in their perversions," said the lady. "And I will readily agree with you, that dancing is perverted, and its use, as a means of social recreation, most sadly changed into what is injurious. The same may be said of church going."

"You shock me," said Mrs. Andrews. "Excuse me, but you are profane."

"I trust not. For true religion—for the holy things of the church—I trust that I have the most profound reverence. But let me prove what I say, that even church going may become evil."

"I am all attention," said the incredulous Mrs. Andrews.

"You can bear plain speaking."

"Me!" The church member looked surprised.

"Yes, you."

"Certainly I can. But why do you ask?"

"To put you on your guard,—nothing more."

"Don't fear but what I can bear all the plain speaking you may venture upon. As to church going being evil, I am ready to prove the negative against any allegations you can advance. So speak on."

After a slight pause, to collect her thoughts, the lady said:

"There has been a protracted meeting in Mr. B–'s church."

"I know it. And a blessed time it was."

"You attended?"

"Yes, every day; and greatly was my soul refreshed and strengthened."

"Did you see Mrs. Eldridge there?"

"Mrs. Eldridge? No indeed, except on Sunday. She's too worldly-minded for that."

"She has a pew in your church."

"Yes; and comes every Sunday morning because it is fashionable and respectable to go to church. As for her religion, it isn't worth much and will hardly stand her at the last day."

"Why Mrs. Andrews! You shock me! Have you seen into her heart? Do you know her purposes? Judge not, that ye be not judged, is the divine injunction."

"A tree is known by its fruit," said Mrs. Andrews, who felt the rebuke, and slightly colored.

"True; and by their fruits shall ye know them," replied the lady. "But come, there are too many around us here for this earnest conversation. We will take a quarter of an hour to ourselves in one of the less crowded rooms. No one will observe our absence, and you will be freed from the annoyance of these dancers."

The two ladies quietly retired from the drawing rooms. As soon as they were more alone, the last speaker resumed.

"By their fruits ye shall know them. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Let me relate what I saw and heard in the families of two ladies during this protracted meeting.

One of these ladies was Mrs. Eldridge. I was passing in her neighborhood about four o'clock, and as I owed her a call, thought the opportunity a good one for returning it. On entering, my ears caught the blended music of a piano, and children's happy voices. From the front parlor, through the partly opened door, a sight, beautiful to my eyes, was revealed. Mrs. Eldridge was seated at the instrument, her sweet babe asleep on one arm, while, with a single hand, she was touching the notes of a familiar air, to which four children were dancing. A more innocent, loving, happy group I have never seen. For nearly ten minutes I gazed upon them unobserved, so interested that I forgot the questionable propriety of my conduct, and during that time, not an unkind word was uttered by one of the children, nor did anything occur to mar the harmony of the scene. It was a sight on which angels could have looked, nay, did look with pleasure; for, whenever hearts are tuned to good affections, angels are present. The music was suspended, and the dancing ceased, as I presented myself. The mother greeted me with a happy smile, and each of the children spoke to her visitor with an air at once polite and respectful.

"'I've turned nurse for the afternoon, you see,' said Mrs. Eldridge, cheerfully. 'It's Alice's day to go out, and I never like to trust our little ones with the chambermaid, who is n't over fond of children. We generally have a good time on these occasions, for I give myself up to them entirely. They've read, and played, and told stories, until tired, and now I've just brightened them

up, body and mind, with a dance.'

"And bright and happy they all looked.

"'Now run up into the nursery for a little while, and build block houses,' said she, 'while I have a little pleasant talk with my friend. That's good children. And I want you to be very quiet, for dear little Eddy is fast asleep, and I'm going to lay him in his crib.'

"Away went the children, and I heard no more of them for the half hour during which I staid. With the child in her arms, Mrs. Eldridge went up to her chamber, and I went with her. As she was laying him in the crib, I took from the mantle a small porcelain figure of a kneeling child, and was examining it, when she turned to me. 'Very beautiful,' said I. 'It is,' she replied.—'We call it our Eddy, saying his prayers. There is a history attached to it. Very early I teach my little ones to say an evening prayer. First impressions are never wholly effaced; I therefore seek to implant, in the very dawning of thought, an idea of God, and our dependence on him for life and all our blessings, knowing that, if duly fixed, this idea will ever remain, and be the vessel, in after years, for the reception of truth flowing down from the great source of all truth. Strangely enough, my little Eddy, so sweet in temper as he was, steadily refused to say his prayers. I tried in every way that I could think of to induce him to kneel with the other children, and repeat a few simple words; but not his aversion thereto was unconquerable. I at last grew really troubled about it. There seemed to be a vein in his character that argued no good. One day I saw this kneeling child in a store. With the

sight of it came the thought of how I might use it. I bought the figure, and did not show it to Eddy until he was about going to bed. The effect was all I had hoped to produce. He looked at it for some moments earnestly, then dropped on his little knees, clasped his white hands, and murmured the prayer I had so long and so vainly striven to make him repeat.'

"Tears were in the eyes of Mrs. Eldridge, as she uttered the closing words. I felt that she was a true mother, and loved her children with a high and holy love. And now, let me give you a picture that strongly contrasts with this. Not far from Mrs. Eldridge, resides a lady, who is remarkable for her devotion to the church, and, I am compelled to say, want of charity towards all who happen to differ with her—more particularly, if the difference involves church matters. It was after sundown; still being in the neighborhood, I embraced the opportunity to make a call. On ringing the bell, I heard, immediately, a clatter of feet down the stairs and along the passage, accompanied by children's voices, loud and boisterous. It was some time before the door was opened, for each of the four children, wishing to perform the office, each resisted the others' attempts to admit the visitor. Angry exclamations, rude outcries, ill names, and struggles for the advantage continued, until the cook, attracted from the kitchen by the noise, arrived at the scene of contention, and after jerking the children so roughly as to set the two youngest crying, swung it open, and I entered. On gaining the parlor, I asked for the mother of these children.

"'She isn't at home,' said the cook.

"'She's gone to church,' said the oldest of the children.

"'I wish she'd stay at home,' remarked cook in a very disrespectful way, and with a manner that showed her to be much fretted in her mind. 'It's Mary's day out, and she knows I can't do anything with the children. Such children I never saw! They don't mind a word you say, and quarrel so among themselves, that it makes one sick to hear them.'

"At this moment a headless doll struck against the side of my neck. It had been thrown by one child at another; missing her aim, she gave me the benefit of her evil intention. At this, cook lost all patience, and seizing the offending little one, boxed her soundly, before I could interfere. The language used by that child, as she escaped from the cook's hands, was shocking. It made my flesh creep!

"'Did I understand you to say that your mother had gone to church?' I asked of the oldest child.

"'Yes, ma'am,' was answered. 'She's been every day this week. There's a protracted meeting.'

"'Give me that book!' screamed a child, at this moment. Glancing across the room, I saw two of the little ones contending for possession of a large family Bible, which lay upon a small table. Before I could reach them, for I started forward, from an impulse of the moment, the table was thrown over, the marble top broken, and the cover torn from the sacred volume."

The face of Mrs. Andrews became instantly of a deep

crimson. Not seeming to notice this, her friend continued.

"As the table fell, it came within an inch of striking another child on the head, who had seated himself on the floor. Had it done so, a fractured skull, perhaps instant death, would have been the consequence."

Mrs. Andrews caught her breath, and grew very pale. The other continued.

"In the midst of the confusion that followed, the father came home.

"'Where is your mother?' he asked of one of the children.

"'Gone to church,' was replied.

"'O dear!' I can hear his voice now, with its tone of hopelessness,—'This church-going mania is dreadful. I tell my wife that it is all wrong. That her best service to God is to bring up her children in the love of what is good and true,—in filial obedience and fraternal affection. But it avails not.'

"And now, Mrs. Andrews," continued the lady, not in the least appearing to notice the distress and confusion of her over-pious friend, whom she had placed upon the rack, "When God comes to make up his jewels, and says to Mrs. Eldridge, and also to this mother who thought more of church-going than of her precious little ones, 'Where are the children I gave you?' which do you think will be most likely to answer, 'Here they are, not one is lost?'"

"Have I not clearly shown you that even church-going may be perverted into an evil? That piety may attain an inordinate

growth, while charity is dead at the root? Spiritual pride; a vain conceit of superior goodness because of the observance of certain forms and ceremonies, is the error into which too many devout religionists fall. But God sees not as man seeth. He looks into the heart, and judges his creatures by the motives that rule them."

And, as she said this, she arose, the silent and rebuked Mrs. Andrews, whose own picture had been drawn, following her down to the gay drawing rooms.

Many a purer heart than that of the humbled Pharisee beat there beneath the bosoms of happy maidens even though their feet were rising and falling in time to witching melodies.

ROMANCE AND REALITY

"I MET with a most splendid girl last evening," remarked to his friend a young man, whose fine, intellectual forehead, and clear bright eye, gave indications of more than ordinary mental endowments.

"Who is she?" was the friend's brief question.

"Her name is Adelaide Merton. Have you ever seen her?"

"No, but I have often heard of the young lady."

"As a girl of more than ordinary intelligence?"

"O yes. Don't you remember the beautiful little gems of poetry that used to appear in the Gazette, under the signature of Adelaide?"

"Very well. Some of them were exquisite, and all indicative of a fine mind. Was she their author?"

"So I have been told."

"I can very readily believe it; for never have I met with a woman who possessed such a brilliant intellect. Her power of expression is almost unbounded. Her sentences are perfect pictures of the scenes she describes. If she speaks of a landscape, not one of its most minute features is lost, nor one of the accessories to its perfection as a whole overlooked. And so of every thing else, in the higher regions of the intellect, or in the lower forms of nature. For my own part, I was lost in admiration of her qualities. She will yet shine in the world."

The young man who thus expressed himself in regard to Adelaide Merton, was named Charles Fenwick. He possessed a brilliant mind, which had been well stored. But his views of life were altogether perverted and erroneous, and his ends deeply tinctured with the love of distinction, for its own sake. A few tolerably successful literary efforts, had been met by injudicious over praise, leading him to the vain conclusion that his abilities were of so high a character, that no field of action was for him a worthy one that had any thing to do with what he was pleased to term the ordinary grovelling pursuits of life. Of course, all mere mechanical operations were despised, and as a natural consequence, the men who were engaged in them. So with merchandizing, and also with the various branches of productive enterprise. They were mere ministers of the base physical wants of our nature. His mind took in higher aims than these!

His father was a merchant in moderate circumstances, engaged in a calling which was of course despised by the son, notwithstanding he was indebted to his father's constant devotion to that calling for his education, and all the means of comfort and supposed distinction that he enjoyed. The first intention of the elder Mr. Fenwick had been to qualify his son, thoroughly, for the calling of a merchant, that he might enter into business with him and receive the benefits of his experience and facilities in trade. But about the age of seventeen, while yet at college, young Fenwick made the unfortunate discovery that he could

produce a species of composition which he called poetry. His efforts were praised—and this induced him to go on; until he learned the art of tolerably smooth versification. This would all have been well enough had he not imagined himself to be, in consequence, of vastly increased importance. Stimulated by this idea, he prosecuted his collegiate studies with renewed diligence, storing a strong and comprehensive mind with facts and principles in science and philosophy, that would have given him, in after life, no ordinary power of usefulness as a literary and professional man, had not his selfish ends paralysed and perverted the natural energies of a good intellect.

The father's intention of making him a merchant was, of course, opposed by the son, who chose one of the learned profession as more honorable—not more useful; a profession that would give him distinction—not enable him to fill his right place in society. In this he was gratified. At the time of his introduction to the reader, he was known as a young physician without a patient. He had graduated, but had not yet seen any occasion for taking an office, as his father's purse supplied all his wants. His pursuits were mainly literary—consisting of essays and reviews for some of the periodicals intermixed with a liberal seasoning of pretty fair rhymes which rose occasionally to the dignity of poetry—or, as he supposed, to the lofty strains of a Milton or a Dante. Occasionally a lecture before some literary association brought his name into the newspapers in connection with remarks that kindled his vanity into a flame. Debating clubs afforded

another field for display, and he made liberal use of the facility. So much for Charles Fenwick.

Of Adelaide Merton, we may remark, that she was just the kind of a woman to captivate a young man of Fenwick's character. She was showy in her style of conversation, but exceedingly superficial. Her reading consisted principally of poetry and the popular light literature of the day, with a smattering of history. She could repeat, in quite an attractive style, many fine passages from Homer, Virgil, Milton, Shakspeare, Pope, Byron, Shelley, Coleridge, and a host of lesser lights in the poetic hemisphere—and could quote from and criticise the philosophy and style of Bulwer with the most edifying self-satisfaction imaginable—not to enumerate her many other remarkable characteristics.

A second visit to Adelaide confirmed the first favorable impression made upon the mind of Fenwick. At the third visit he was half in love with her, and she more than half in love with him. A fourth interview completed the work on both sides. At the fifth, the following conversation terminated the pleasant intercourse of the evening. They were seated on a sofa, and had been talking of poetry, and birds, and flowers, green fields, and smiling landscapes, and a dozen other things not necessary to be repeated at present. A pause of some moments finally succeeded, and each seemed deeply absorbed in thought.

"Adelaide," at length the young man said in a low, musical tone, full of richness and pathos—"Do you not feel, sometimes,

when your mind rises into the region of pure thoughts, and ranges free among the beautiful and glorious images that then come and go like angel visitants, a sense of loneliness, because another cannot share what brings to you such exquisite delight?"

"Yes—often and often," replied the maiden lifting her eyes to those of Fenwick, and gazing at him with a tender expression.

"And yet few there are, Adelaide, few indeed who could share such elevating pleasures."

"Few, indeed," was the response.

"Pardon me, for saying," resumed the young man, "that to you I have been indebted for such added delights. Rarely, indeed, have I been able to find, especially among your gentler sex, one who could rise with me into the refining, elevating, exquisite pleasures of the imagination. But you have seemed fully to appreciate my sentiments, and fully to sympathize with them."

To this Adelaide held down her head for a moment or two, the position causing the blood to deepen in her cheeks and forehead. Then looking up with an expression of lofty poetic feeling she said—

"And, until I met you, Mr. Fenwick, I must be frank in saying, that I have known no one, whose current of thought and feeling —no one whose love of the beautiful in the ideal or natural—has seemed so perfect a reflection of my own."

To this followed another pause, longer and more thoughtful than the first. It was at length broken by Fenwick, who said, in a voice that trembled perceptibly.

"I have an inward consciousness, that sprung into activity when the first low murmur of your voice fell upon my ear, that you were to me a kindred spirit. Since that moment, this consciousness has grown daily more and more distinct, and now I feel impelled, by a movement which I cannot resist, to declare its existence. First pardon this freedom, Adelaide, and then say if you understand and appreciate what I have uttered in all frankness and sincerity?"

Not long did our young friend wait for an answer that made him happier than he had ever been in his life—happy in the first thrilling consciousness of love deeply and fervently reciprocated. To both of them, there was a degree of romance about this brief courtship that fully accorded with their views of love truly so called. The ordinary cold matter-of-fact way of coming together, including a cautious and even at times a suspicious investigation of character, they despised as a mere mockery of the high, spontaneous confidence which those who are truly capable of loving, feel in each other—a confidence which nothing can shake. And thus did they pledge themselves without either having thought of the other's moral qualities; or either of them having formed any distinct ideas in regard to the true nature of the marriage relation.

A few months sufficed to consummate their union, when, in accordance with the gay young couple's desire, old Mr. Fenwick furnished them out handsomely, at a pretty heavy expense, in an establishment of their own. As Charles Fenwick had not,

heretofore, shown any inclination to enter upon the practice of the profession he had chosen, his father gently urged upon him the necessity of now doing so. But the idea of becoming a practical doctor, was one that Charles could not abide. He had no objection to the title, for that sounded quite musical to his ear; but no farther than that did his fancy lead him.

"Why didn't I choose the law as a profession?" he would sometimes say to his young wife. "Then I might have shone. But to bury myself as a physician, stealing about from house to house, and moping over sick beds, is a sacrifice of my talents that I cannot think of without turning from the picture with disgust."

"Nor can I," would be the wife's reply. "And what is more, I never will consent to such a perversion of your talents."

"Why cannot you study law, even now, Charles?" she asked of him one day. "With your acquirements, and habits of thought, I am sure you would soon be able to pass an examination."

"I think that is a good suggestion, Adelaide," her husband replied, thoughtfully. "I should only want a year or eighteen months for preparation, and then I could soon place myself in the front rank of the profession."

The suggestion of Charles Fenwick's wife was promptly adopted. A course of legal studies was entered upon, and completed in about two years. Up to this time, every thing had gone on with our young couple as smoothly as a summer sea. A beautifully furnished house, well kept through the attention of two or three servants, gave to their indoor enjoyments a very

important accessory. For money there was no care, as the elder Mr. Fenwick's purse-strings relaxed as readily to the hand of Charles as to his own. A pleasant round of intelligent company, mostly of a literary character, with a full supply of all the new publications and leading periodicals of the day, kept their minds elevated into the region of intellectual enjoyments, and caused them still more to look down upon the ordinary pursuits of life as far beneath them.

But all this could not last forever. On the day Charles was admitted to the bar, he received a note from his father, requesting an immediate interview. He repaired at once to his counting room, in answer to the parental summons.

"Charles," said the old man, when they were alone, "I have, up to this time, supplied all your wants, and have done it cheerfully. In order to prepare you for taking your right place in society, I have spared no expense in your education, bearing you, after your term of college life had expired, through two professional courses, so that, as either a physician or a lawyer, you are fully equal to the task of sustaining yourself and family. As far as I am concerned, the tide of prosperity has evidently turned against me. For two years, I have felt myself gradually going back, instead of forward, notwithstanding my most earnest struggles to maintain at least the position already gained. To-day, the notice of a heavy loss completes my inability to bear the burden of your support, and that of my own family. You must, therefore, Charles, enter the world for yourself, and there struggle as I have done, and

as all do around you, for a living. But, as I know that it will be impossible for you to obtain sufficient practice at once in either law or medicine to maintain yourself, I will spare you out of my income, which will now be small in comparison to what it has been, four hundred dollars a year, for the next two years. You must yourself make up the deficiency, and no doubt you can easily do so."

"But, father," replied the young man, his face turning pale, "I cannot, possibly, make up the deficiency. Our rent alone, you know, is four hundred dollars."

"I am aware of that, Charles. But what then? You must get a house at one half that rent, and reduce your style of living, proportionably, in other respects."

"What! And compromise my standing in society? I can never do that, father."

"Charles," said the old man, looking at his son with a sterner countenance than he had ever yet put on when speaking to him, "remember that you have no standing in society which you can truly call your own. I have, heretofore, held you up, and now that my sustaining hand is about to be withdrawn, you must fall or rise to your own level. And I am satisfied, that the sooner you are permitted to do so the better."

The fact was, that the selfish, and to old Mr. Fenwick, the heartless manner in which Charles had received the communication of his changed circumstances, had wounded him exceedingly, and suddenly opened his eyes to the false relation

which his son was holding to society.

"You certainly cannot be in earnest, father," the son replied, after a few moments of hurried and painful thought, "in declaring your intention of throwing me off with a meagre pittance of four hundred dollars, before I have had a chance to do any thing for myself. How can I possibly get along on that sum?"

"I do not expect you to live on that, Charles. But the difference you will have to make up yourself. You have talents and acquirements. Bring them into useful activity, and you will need little of my assistance. As for me, as I have already told you, the tide of success is against me, and I am gradually moving down the stream. Four hundred dollars is the extent of what I can give you, and how long the ability to do that may last, Heaven only knows."

Reluctantly the young couple were compelled to give up their elegantly arranged dwelling, and move into a house of about one half of its dimensions. In this there was a fixed, cold, common place reality, that shocked the sensibilities of both even though throughout the progress of the change, each had remained passive in the hands of the elder Mr. and Mrs. Fenwick, who had to choose them a house, and attend to all the arrangements of moving and refitting the new home. For Charles to have engaged in the vulgar business of moving household furniture, would have been felt as a disgrace;—and as for Adelaide, she didn't know how to do any thing in regard to the matter, and even if she had, would have esteemed such an employment as entirely beneath

her.

While the packing up was going on under the direction of her husband's mother, Adelaide, half dressed, with an elegant shawl thrown carelessly about her shoulders, her feet drawn up and her body reclining upon a sofa, was deeply buried in the last new novel, while her babe lay in the arms of a nurse, who was thus prevented from rendering any assistance to those engaged in preparing the furniture for removal. As for her husband, he was away, in some professional friend's office, holding a learned discussion upon the relative merits of Byron and Shelley.

After the removal had been accomplished, and the neat little dwelling put, as the elder Mrs. Fenwick termed it, into "apple-pie order" the following conversation took place between her and her daughter-in-law.

"Adelaide, it will now be necessary for you to let both your nurse and chambermaid go. Charles cannot possibly afford the expense, as things now are."

"Let my nurse and chambermaid go!" exclaimed Adelaide, with a look and tone of profound astonishment.

"Certainly, Adelaide," was the firm reply. "You cannot now afford to keep three servants."

"But how am I to get along without them? You do not, certainly, suppose that I can be my own nurse and chambermaid?"

"With your small family," was Mrs. Fenwick's reply, "you can readily have the assistance of your cook for a portion of

the morning in your chamber and parlors. And as to the nursing part, I should think that you would desire no higher pleasure than having all the care of dear little Anna. I was always my own nurse, and never had assistance beyond that of a little girl."

"It's no use to speak in that way, mother; I cannot do without a nurse," said Adelaide, bursting into tears. "I couldn't even dress the baby."

"The sooner you learn, child, the better," was the persevering reply of Mrs. Fenwick.

But Adelaide had no idea of dispensing with either nurse or chambermaid, both of whom were retained in spite of the remonstrances and entreaties of the mother-in-law.

Driven to the absolute necessity of doing so, Charles Fenwick opened an office, and advertised for business. Those who have attempted to make their way, at first, in a large city, at the bar, can well understand the disappointment and chagrin of Fenwick on finding that he did not rise at once to distinction, as he had fondly imagined he would, when he turned his attention, with strong reasons for desiring success, to the practice of his profession. A few petty cases, the trifling fees of which he rejected as of no consideration, were all that he obtained during the first three months. At the end of this time he found himself in debt to the baker, butcher, milkman, tailor, dry-goods merchants, and to the three servants still pertinaciously retained by his wife.—And, as a climax to the whole, his father's business was brought to a termination by bankruptcy, and the old man,

in the decline of life, with still a large family dependent upon him for support, thrown upon the world, to struggle, almost powerless, for a subsistence. Fortunately, the Presidency of an Insurance Company was tendered him, with a salary of fifteen hundred dollars per annum. On this he could barely support those dependent upon him, leaving Charles the whole task of maintaining himself, his wife, and their child.

To be dunned for money was more than the young man could endure with any kind of patience. But creditor tradesmen had no nice scruples in regard to these matters, and duns came, consequently, thick and fast, until poor Charles was irritated beyond measure. Cold, and sometimes impatient, and half insulting answers to applications for money, were not to be endured by the eager applicants for what was justly their own. Warrants soon followed, as a matter of course, which had to be answered by a personal appearance before city magistrates, thus causing the infliction of a deeper mortification than had yet assailed him. Added to these came the importunities of his landlord, which was met by a response which was deemed insulting, and then came a distraint for rent. The due bill of the father, saved the son this utter prostration and disgrace.

The effect of all this, was to drive far away from their dwelling the sweet angel of peace and contentment. Fretted and troubled deeply in regard to his present condition and future prospects, Charles had no smiling words for his wife. This, of course, pained her deeply. But she readily found relief from present reality in

the world of pure romance. The more powerful fictions of the day, especially the highly wrought idealities of Bulwer, and those of his class, introduced her into a world above that in which she dwelt,—and there she lingered the greatest portion of her time, unconscious of the calls of duty, or the claims of affection.

A single year sufficed to break them up entirely. Expenses far beyond their income, which rose to about three hundred dollars during the first year of Charles' practice at the bar, brought warrants and executions, which the father had no power to stay. To satisfy these, furniture and library had to be sold, and Charles and his wife, child and nurse, which latter Adelaide would retain, were thrown upon old Mr. Fenwick, for support.

For four years did they remain a burden upon the father, during which time, unstimulated to exertion by pressing necessities, Charles made but little progress as a lawyer. Petty cases he despised, and generally refused to undertake, and those of more importance were not trusted to one who had yet to prove himself worthy of a high degree of legal confidence. At the end of that time both his father and mother were suddenly removed to the world of spirits, and he was again thrown entirely upon his own resources.

With no one now to check them in any thing Charles and his wife, after calculating the results of the next year's legal efforts, felt fully justified in renting a handsome house, and furnishing it on credit. The proceeds of the year's practice rose but little above four hundred dollars, and at its conclusion they found themselves

involved in a new debt of three thousand dollars. Then came another breaking up, with all of its harrowing consequences —consequences which to persons of their habits and mode of thinking, are so deeply mortifying,—followed by their shrinking away, with a meagre remnant of their furniture, into a couple of rooms, in an obscure part of the town.

"Adelaide," said the husband, one morning, as he roused himself from a painful reverie.

"Well, what do you want?" she asked abstractedly, lifting her eyes with reluctant air from the pages of a novel.

"I want to talk to you for a little while; so shut your book, if you please."

"Won't some other time do as well? I have just got into the middle of a most interesting scene."

"No—I wish to talk with you now."

"Well, say on," the wife rejoined, closing the book in her hand, with her thumb resting upon the page that still retained her thoughts, and assuming an attitude of reluctant attention.

"There is a school vacant at N–, some twenty miles from the city. The salary is eight hundred dollars a year, with a house and garden included. I can get the situation, if I will accept of it."

"And sink to the condition of a miserable country pedagogue?"

"And support my family comfortably and honestly," Fenwick replied in a tone of bitterness.

"Precious little comfort will your family experience immured

in an obscure country village, without a single congenial associate. What in the name of wonder has put that into your head?"

"Adelaide! I cannot succeed at the bar—at least, not for years. Of that I am fully satisfied. It is absolutely necessary, therefore, that I should turn my attention to something that will supply the pressing demands of my family."

"But surely you can get into something better than the office of schoolmaster, to the sons of clodpoles."

"Name something."

"I'm sure I cannot tell. That is a matter for you to think about," and so saying, Mrs. Fenwick re-opened her book, and commenced poring again over the pages of the delightful work she held in her hand.

Irritated, and half disgusted at this, a severe reproof trembled on his tongue, but he suppressed it. In a few minutes after he arose, and left the apartment without his wife seeming to notice the movement.

"Good morning, Mr. Fenwick!" said a well known individual, coming into the lawyer's office a few minutes after he had himself entered.

"That trial comes on this afternoon at four o'clock."

"Well, John, I can't help it. The debt is a just one, but I have no means of meeting it now."

"Try, and do so if you can, Mr. Fenwick, for the plaintiff is a good deal irritated about the matter, and will push the thing to

extremities."

"I should be sorry for that. But if so, let him use his own pleasure. Take nothing from nothing, and nothing remains."

"You had better come then with security, Mr. Fenwick, for my orders are, to have an execution issued against your person, as soon as the case is decided."

"You are not in earnest, John?" suddenly ejaculated the lawyer, rising to his feet, and looking at the humble minister of the law with a pale cheek and quivering lip. "Surely Mr. – is not going to push matters to so uncalled-for an extremity!"

"Such, he positively declares, is his fixed determination. So hold yourself prepared, sir, to meet even this unpleasant event."

The debt for which the warrant had been issued against Mr. Fenwick, amounted to ninety dollars.

The whole of the remaining part of that day was spent in the effort to obtain security in the case. But in vain. His friends knew too well his inability to protect them from certain loss, should they step between him and the law. Talents, education, brilliant addresses, fine poetry "and all that," turned to no good and useful ends, he found availed him nothing now. Even many of those with whom he had been in intimate literary association, shrunk away from the penniless individual, and those who did not actually shun him had lost much of their former cordiality.

The idea of being sent to jail for debt, was to him a terrible one. And he turned from it with a sinking at the heart. He said nothing to Adelaide on returning home in the evening,

for the high communion of spirit, in which they had promised themselves such deep and exquisite delight, had long since given place to coldness, and a state of non-sympathy. He found her deeply buried, as usual, in some volume of romance, while every thing around her was in disorder, and full of unmitigated realities. They were living alone in two small rooms, and the duty of keeping them in order and providing their frugal meals devolved as a heavy task upon Adelaide—so heavy, that she found it utterly impossible to do it justice.

The fire—that essential preliminary to household operations—had not even been made, when Fenwick reached home, and the dinner table remained still on the floor, with its unwashed dishes strewn over it, in admirable confusion.

With a sigh, Adelaide resigned her book, soon after her husband came in, and commenced preparations for the evening meal. This was soon ready, and despatched in silence, except so far as the aimless prattle of their little girl interrupted it. Tea over, Mrs. Fenwick put Anna to bed, much against her will, and then drew up to the table again with her book.

Cheerless and companionless did her husband feel as he let his eye fall upon her, buried in selfish enjoyment, while his own heart was wrung with the bitterest recollections and the most heart-sickening anticipations.

Thoughts of the gaming table passed through his mind, and with the thought he placed his hand involuntarily upon his pocket. It was empty. Sometimes his mind would rise into a

state of vigorous activity, with the internal consciousness of a power to do any thing. But, alas—it was strength without skill—intellectual power without the knowledge to direct it aright.

Late on the next morning he arose from a pillow that had been blessed with but little sleep, and that unrefreshing. It was past eleven o'clock before Adelaide had breakfast on the table. This over, she, without even dressing Anna or arranging her own person sat down to her novel, while he gave himself to the most gloomy and desponding reflections. He feared to go out lest the first man he should meet, should prove an officer with an execution upon his person.

About one o'clock, sick and weary of such a comfortless home, he went out, glad of any change. Ten steps from his own door, he was met by a constable who conveyed him to prison.

Several hours passed before his crushed feelings were aroused sufficiently to cause him even to think of any means of extrication. When his mind did act, it was with clearness, vigor, and decision. The walls of a jail had something too nearly like reality about them, to leave much of the false sentiment which had hitherto marred his prospects in life. There was, too, something deeply humiliating in his condition of an imprisoned debtor.

"What shall I do?" he asked himself, towards the close of the day, with a strong resolution to discover the best course of action, and to pursue that course, unswayed by any extraneous influences. The thought of his wife came across his mind.

"Shall I send her word where I am?"—A pause of some moments succeeded this question.

"No," he at length said, half aloud, while an expression of pain flitted over his countenance. "It is of little consequence to her where I am or what I suffer. She is, I believe, perfectly heartless."

But Fenwick was mistaken in this. She needed, as well as himself, some powerful shock to awaken her to true consciousness. That shock proved to be the knowledge of her husband's imprisonment for debt, which she learned early on the next morning, after the passage of an anxious and sleepless night, full of strange forebodings of approaching evil. She repaired, instantly, to the prison, her heart melted down into true feeling. The interview between herself and husband was full of tenderness, bringing out from each heart the mutual affections which had been sleeping there, alas! too long.

But one right course presented itself to the mind of either of them, and that was naturally approved by both, as the only proper one. It was for Fenwick to come out of prison under the act of insolvency, and thus free himself from the trammels of past obligations, which could not possibly be met.

This was soon accomplished, the requisite security for his personal appearance to interrogatories being readily obtained.

"And now, Adelaide, what is to be done?" he asked of his wife, as he sat holding her hand in his, during the first hour of his release from imprisonment. His own mind had already decided —still he was anxious for her suggestion, if she had any to make.

"Can you still obtain that school you spoke of?" she asked with much interest in her tone.

"Yes. The offer is still open."

"Then take it, Charles, by all means. One such lesson as we have had, is enough for a life time. Satisfied am I, now, that we have not sought for happiness in the right paths."

The school was accordingly taken, and with humbled feelings, modest expectations, and a mutual resolution to be satisfied with little, did Charles Fenwick and his wife re-commence the world at the bottom of the ladder. That he was sincere in his new formed resolutions, is evident from the fact, that in a few years he became the principal of a popular literary institution, for which office he was fully qualified. She, too, learned, by degrees, to act well her part in all her relations, social and domestic—and now finds far more pleasure in the realities, than she ever did in the romance of life.

BOTH TO BLAME

"OF course, both are to blame."

"Of course. You may always set that down as certain when you see two persons who have formerly been on good terms fall out with each other. For my part, I never take sides in these matters. I listen to what both have to say, and make due allowance for the wish of either party to make his or her own story appear most favorable."

Thus we heard two persons settling a matter of difference between a couple of their friends, and it struck us at the time as not being exactly the true way in all cases. In disputes and differences, there are no doubt times when both are *equally* to blame; most generally, however, one party is *more* to blame than the other. And it not unfrequently happens that one party to a difference is not at all to blame, but merely stands on a just and honorable defensive. The following story, which may or may not be from real life, will illustrate the latter position.

"Did you hear about Mrs. Bates and Mrs. Tarleton?" said one friend to another.

"No; what is the matter?"

"They are up in arms against each other."

"Indeed; it's the first I've heard of it. What is the cause?"

"I can hardly tell; but I know that they don't speak. Mrs. Tarleton complains bitterly against Mrs. Bates; and Mrs. Bates,

they say, is just as bitter against her. For my part, I've come to the conclusion that both are to blame."

"There is no doubt of that. I never knew a case of this kind where both were not to blame."

"Nor I."

"But don't you know the ground of the difference?"

"They say it is about a head-dress."

"I'll be bound dress has something to do with it," grumbled out Mr. Brierly, the husband of one of the ladies, who sat reading a newspaper while they were talking.

"My husband is disposed to be a little severe on the ladies at times, but you mustn't mind him. *I* never do," remarked Mrs. Brierly, half sarcastically, although she looked at her husband with a smile as she spoke. "He thinks we care for nothing but dress. I tell him it is very well for him and the rest of the world that we have some little regard at least to such matters. I am sure if I didn't think a good deal about dress, he and the children would soon look like scarecrows."

Mr. Brierly responded to this by a "Humph!" and resumed the perusal of his newspaper.

"It is said," resumed Mrs. Brierly, who had been asked to state the cause of the unhappy difference existing between the two ladies, "that Mrs. Bates received from her sister in New York a new and very beautiful head-dress, which had been obtained through a friend in Paris. Mrs. Tarleton wanted it very badly, and begged Mrs. Bates for the pattern; but she refused to let her have

it, because a grand party was to be given by the Listons in a few weeks, and she wanted to show it off there herself. Mrs. Tarleton, however, was not going to take 'no' for an answer; she had set her heart upon the head-dress and must have it. You know what a persevering woman she is when she takes anything into her head. Well, she called in almost every day to see Mrs. Bates, and every time she would have something to say about the head-dress, and ask to see it. In this way she got the pattern of it so perfectly in her mind that she was able to direct a milliner how to make her one precisely like it. All unknown to Mrs. Bates, Mrs. Tarleton came to the party wearing this new style of head-dress, which made her so angry when she discovered it, that she insulted Mrs. Tarleton openly, and then retired from the company."

"Is it possible!"

"That, I believe, is about the truth of the whole matter. I have sifted it pretty closely."

"Well, I declare! I was at the party, but I saw nothing of this. I remember Mrs. Tarleton's head-dress, however, very well. It certainly was very beautiful, and has become quite fashionable since."

"Yes, and is called by some the Tarleton head-dress, from the first wearer of it."

"This no doubt galls Mrs. Bates severely. They say she is a vain woman."

"It is more than probable that this circumstance has widened the breach."

"I must say," remarked the other lady, "that Mrs. Tarleton did not act well."

"No, she certainly did not. At the same time, I think Mrs. Bates was served perfectly right for her selfish vanity. It wouldn't have hurt her at all if there had been two or three head-dresses there of exactly the pattern of hers. But extreme vanity always gets mortified, and in this case I think justly so."

"Besides, it was very unladylike to insult Mrs. Tarleton in public."

"Yes, or anywhere else. She should have taken no notice of it whatever. A true lady, under circumstances of this kind, seems perfectly unaware of what has occurred. She shuns, with the utmost carefulness, any appearance of an affront at so trivial a matter, even if she feels it."

Such was the opinion entertained by the ladies in regard to the misunderstanding, as some others called it, that existed between Mrs. Bates and Mrs. Tarleton. Both were considered to blame, and nearly equally so; but whether the parties really misunderstood their own or each other's true position will be seen when the truth appears.

Mrs. Bates did receive, as has been stated, a beautiful head-dress from a sister in New York, who had obtained it from a friend in Paris. The style was quite attractive, though neither unbecoming nor showy. Mrs. Bates had her own share of vanity, and wished to appear at a large party soon to take place, in this head-dress, where she knew it must attract attention. Although a

little vain, a fault that we can easily excuse in a handsome woman, Mrs. Bates had a high sense of justice and right, and possessed all a lady's true delicacy of feeling.

The head-dress, after being admired, was laid aside for the occasion referred to. A few days afterwards, Mrs. Tarleton, an acquaintance, dropped in.

"I have something beautiful to show you," said Mrs. Bates, after she had chatted awhile with her visitor.

"Indeed! What is it?"

"The sweetest head-dress you ever saw. My sister sent it to me from New York, and she had it direct from a friend in Paris, where it was all the fashion. Mine I believe to be the only one yet received in the city, and I mean to wear it at Mrs. Liston's party.

"Do let me see it," said Mrs. Tarleton, all alive with expectation. She had an extravagant love of dress, and was an exceedingly vain woman.

The head-dress was produced. Mrs. Tarleton lifted her hands and eyes.

"The loveliest thing I ever saw! Let me try it on," she said, laying off her bonnet and taking the head-dress from the hands of Mrs. Bates. "Oh, it is sweet! I never looked so well in anything in my life," she continued, viewing herself in the glass. "I wish I could beg it from you; but that I havn't the heart to do."

Mrs. Bates smiled and shook her head, but made no reply.

"Here, you put it on, and let me see how you look in it," went on Mrs. Tarleton, removing the cap from her own head

and placing it upon that of her friend. "Beautiful! How well it becomes you! you must let me have the pattern. We can wear them together at the party. Two will attract more attention than one."

"I am sorry to deny you," replied Mrs. Bates, "but I think I shall have to be alone in my glory this time."

"Indeed, you must let me have the pattern, Mrs. Bates. I never saw anything in my life that pleased me so much, nor anything in which I looked so well. I have been all over town for a head-dress without finding anything I would wear. If you don't let me have one like yours, I do not know what I will do. Come now, say yes, that is a dear."

But Mrs. Bates said no as gently as she could. It was asking of her too much. She had set her heart upon appearing in that head-dress as something new and beautiful, and could not consent to share the distinction, especially with Mrs. Tarleton, for whom, although a friend, she entertained not the highest esteem, and for the reason that Mrs. Tarleton had rather a vulgar mind, and lacked a lady's true perceptions of propriety.

"Well, I must say you are a selfish woman," returned Mrs. Tarleton, good-humoredly, and yet meaning what she said. "It wouldn't do you a bit of harm to let me have the pattern, and would gratify me more than I can tell."

"I'll tell you what I will do," said Mrs. Bates, to this, with a reluctant effort that was readily perceived by her visitor, "I will give you the head-dress and let you wear it, as long as you seem

to have set your heart so upon it."

"Oh no, no; you know I wouldn't do that. But it seems strange that you are not willing for us to wear the same head-dress."

The indelicate pertinacity of her visitor annoyed Mrs. Bates very much, and she replied to this rather more seriously than she had before spoken.

"The fact is, Mrs. Tarleton," she said, "this head-dress is one that cannot fail to attract attention. I have several very intimate friends, between whom and myself relations of even a closer kind exist than have yet existed between you and me. If I give you the pattern of this cap and the privilege of wearing it with me for the first time it is seen in this city, these friends will have just cause to think hard of me for passing them by. This is a reason that would inevitably prevent me from meeting your wishes, even if I were indifferent about appearing in it myself alone."

"I suppose I must give it up, then," said Mrs. Tarleton, in a slightly disappointed tone.

"As I said before," returned Mrs. Bates, "I will defer the matter entirely to you. You shall have the head-dress and I will choose some other one."

"Oh no; I couldn't think of such a thing," returned Mrs. Tarleton. "That is more than I ought to ask or you to give."

"It is the best I can do," Mrs. Bates said, with a quiet smile.

"Sister," said Mrs. Tarleton, on returning home, "you can't imagine what a sweet head-dress Mrs. Bates has just received from Paris through her sister in New York. It is the most unique

and beautiful thing I ever saw. I tried hard for the pattern, but the selfish creature wouldn't let me have it. She is keeping it for the Liston's party, where it will be the admiration of every one."

"What is it like?"

"Oh, I can't begin to describe it. It is altogether novel. I wish now I had asked her to let me bring it home to show it to you."

"I wish you had. You must go there again and get it for me."

"I believe I will call in again to-morrow.—Perhaps she will have thought better of it by that time, and changed her mind. At any rate, if not, I will ask her to let me bring it home and show it to you."

This was done. Mrs. Bates did not object to letting Mrs. Tarleton take the head-dress and show it to her sister, for she had the fullest confidence that she would not do anything with it that she knew was against her wishes, which had been clearly expressed.

The sister of Mrs. Tarleton was in raptures with the head-dress.

"It is right down mean and selfish in Mrs. Bates not to let you have the pattern," she said. "What a vain woman she must be. I always thought better of her."

"So did I. But this shows what she is."

"If I were you," remarked the sister, "I would have it in spite of her. It isn't *her* pattern, that she need pretend hold it so exclusively. It is a Paris fashion, and any body else may get it just as well as she. She has no property in it."

"No, of course not."

"Then while you have the chance, take it to Madame Pinto and get her to make you one exactly like it."

"I have a great mind to do it; it would serve her perfectly right."

"I wouldn't hesitate a moment," urged the sister. "At the last party, Mrs. Bates managed to have on something new that attracted every one and threw others into the shade, I wouldn't let her have another such triumph."

Thus urged by her sister, Mrs. Tarleton yielded to the evil counsel, which was seconded by her own heart. The head-dress was taken to Madame Pinto, who, after a careful examination of it, said that she would make one exactly similar for Mrs. Tarleton. After charging the milliner over and over again to keep the matter a profound secret, Mrs. Tarleton went away and returned the head-dress to Mrs. Bates. It had been in her possession only a couple of hours.

Mrs. Pinto was a fashionable milliner and dress maker, and was patronized by the most fashionable people in the city, Mrs. Bates among the rest. The latter had called in the aid of this woman in the preparation of various little matters of dress to be worn at the party. Three or four days after Mrs. Tarleton's visit to Mrs. Pinto with the head-dress, Mrs. Bates happened to step in at the milliner's, who, during their consultation, about little matters of dress, drew the lady aside, saying—"I've got something that I know I can venture to show you.—It's for the party, and the loveliest thing you ever saw."

As she said this she took from a box a facsimile of Mrs. Bates' own beautiful head-dress, and held it up with looks of admiration.

"Isn't it sweet?" she said.

"It is the most beautiful head-dress I ever saw," replied Mrs. Bates, concealing her surprise. "Who is it for?"

"It's a secret, but I can tell *you*. It is for Mrs. Tarleton."

"Ah! Where did she get the pattern?"

"I don't know; she brought it here, but said she couldn't leave it for the world. I had to study it all out, and then make it from my recollection of the pattern."

"The pattern did not belong to her?"

"Oh, no. Somebody had it who was going to show it off at the party, she said; but she meant to surprise her."

"Have you any new patterns for head-dresses not chosen by the ladies who have made selections of you for Mrs. Liston's party?" asked Mrs. Bates, not seeming to notice the reply of Mrs. Pinto.

"Oh, yes, ma'am, a good many," and half-a-dozen really handsome head-dresses were shown—none, however, that pleased her half so well as the one she was about throwing aside. She suited herself from the assortment shown her, and directed it to be sent home.

Mrs. Bates felt justly outraged at the conduct of Mrs. Tarleton, but she did not speak of what had taken place, except to one or two very intimate friends and to her husband. The evening of the party at length arrived. Mrs. Tarleton was there a little earlier

than Mrs. Bates, in all the glory of her ungenerous triumph. The beautiful head-dress she wore attracted every eye, and in the admiration won by the display of her taste, she lost all the shame she had felt in anticipation of meeting Mrs. Bates, to whom her meanness and dishonesty would be at once apparent.

At length she saw this lady enter the parlors by the side of her husband, and noticed with surprise that her head-dress was entirely different from the one she wore. The truth flashed across her mind. Mrs. Pinto had betrayed her secret, and Mrs. Bates, justly outraged by what had occurred, had thrown aside her beautiful cap and selected another.

Now Mrs. Bates was a woman whom Mrs. Tarleton would be sorry to offend seriously, because her position in certain circles was undoubted, while her own was a little questionable. The fact that Mrs. Bates had declined wearing so beautiful a head-dress because she had obtained one of the same pattern by unfair means, made her fear that serious offence had been given, and dashed her spirits at once. She was not long left in doubt. Before ten minutes had elapsed she was thrown into immediate contact with Mrs. Bates, from whom she received a polite but cold bow.

Mrs. Tarleton was both hurt and offended at this, and immediately after the party, commenced talking about it and mis-stating the whole transaction, so as not to appear so much to blame as she really was. Mrs. Bates, on the contrary, said little on the subject, except to a few very intimate friends, and to those who made free to ask her about it, to whom she said, after giving

fairly the cause of complaint against Mrs. Tarleton—"I spoke to her coldly because I wished our more intimate acquaintance to cease. Her conduct was unworthy of a lady, and therefore I cannot and will not consider her among my friends. No apologies, if she would even make them, could change the wrong spirit from which she acted, or make her any more worthy of my confidence, esteem or love."

"But you will surely forgive her?" said one.

"The wrong done to me I am ready enough to forgive, for it is but a trifling matter; but the violation of confidence and departure from a truly honest principle, of which she has been guilty, I cannot forgive, for they are not sins against me, but against Heaven's first and best laws."

But that did not satisfy some. Persons calling themselves mutual friends strove hard to reconcile what they were pleased to call a misunderstanding in which "both were to blame." But it availed not. To their interference, Mrs. Bates usually replied—"If it will be any satisfaction to Mrs. Tarleton to be recognized by me and treated kindly and politely in company, I will most cheerfully yield her all that; but I cannot feel towards her as heretofore, because I have been deceived in her, and find her to be governed by principles that I cannot approve. We can never again be on terms of intimacy."

But it was impossible to make some understand the difference between acting from principle and wounded pride. The version given by Mrs. Tarleton was variously modified as it passed from

mouth to mouth, until it made Mrs. Bates almost as much to blame as herself, and finally, as the coldness continued until all intercourse at last ceased, it was pretty generally conceded, except by a very few, that "both were about equally to blame."

The reader can now make up his own mind on the subject from what has been related. For our part, we do not think Mrs. Bates at all to blame in at once withdrawing herself from intimate association with such a woman as Mrs. Tarleton showed herself to be, and we consider that a false charity which would seek to interfere with or set aside the honest indignation that should always be felt in similar cases of open betrayal of confidence and violation of honest and honorable principles.

We have chosen a very simple and commonplace incident upon which to "hang a moral."—But it is in the ordinary pursuits of business and pleasure where the true character is most prone to exhibit itself, and we must go there if we would read the book of human life aright.

IT'S NONE OF MY BUSINESS

"WAS N'T that young Sanford?" asked Mrs. Larkin of her husband, as the two stood at a window of their dwelling one Sunday afternoon, noticing the passers by. The individual she alluded to was a young man who had ridden gaily along on a spirited horse.

"Yes," was the reply.

"He rides past here almost every Sunday afternoon, and often in company with Harriet Meadows. He is quite a dashing young fellow."

"He is dashing far beyond his ostensible means. I wonder at Millard for keeping him in his store. I would soon cast adrift any one of my clerks who kept a fast horse, and sported about with the gay extravagance that Sanford does. His salary does not, I am sure, meet half his expenses. I have heard some of my young men speak of his habits. They say money with him is no consideration. He spends it as freely as water."

"Strange that his employer does not see this!"

"It is. But Millard is too unsuspicious, and too ignorant of what is going on out of the narrow business circle. He is like a horse in a mill. He sees nothing outside of a certain limit. He gets up in the morning, dresses himself, goes to his store, and then devotes himself to business until dinner time. Then he goes home and dines. After this he comes back to his store and stays

until night. His evenings are either spent in reading or dozing at home, or with a neighbor at checkers. On Sunday morning he goes to church, in the afternoon he sleeps to kill time, and in the evening retires at eight, unless a friend steps in, to sleep away the tedious hours. Of the habits of his clerks, when out of his store, he knows as little as the man in the moon."

"But some one ought to give him a hint."

"It would be a charity."

"Why do n't you do it?"

"Me! Oh, it's none of my business. Let Millard look after his own affairs. I 'm not going to get myself into trouble by meddling with things that do n't concern me. It is his place to see into the habits of his clerks. If he neglects to do so, he deserves to be cheated by them."

"I do n't know. It seems to me that it would be no more than right to give him a hint, and put him on his guard."

"It would be a good turn, no doubt. But I'm not going to do it. It's no affair of mine."

"I do n't think he is fit company for Harriet Meadows," said Mrs. Larkin, after a pause.

"Nor I," returned her husband. "I should be very sorry to see our Jane riding with him, or indeed, associating with him in any way. Surely Harriet's father and mother cannot know that their daughter rides out with him almost every Sunday afternoon."

"Of course not. They are religious people and would think it a sin for her to do so. I am surprised that Harriet should act in such

direct violation of what she knows to be their real sentiments."

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.