

not concern him!—but she would “manage him.” It is strange how low and cunning persons do often manage higher and better natures than their own:

“Martha,” he called at last in a loud voice, “I cannot afford to give longer credit to Peter Croft.”

“I thought he was one of your best customers: he is an excellent workman; his wife has much to do as a clear-starcher; and I am sure he spends every penny he earns here”—such was Martha’s answer.

“And more!” replied Matthew—“more! Why, last week the score was eighteen shillings—besides what he paid for.”

“He’s an honorable man, Matthew,” persisted Martha. “It is not long since he brought me six tea-spoons and a sugar-tongs, when I refused him brandy, (he will have brandy.) They must have belonged to his wife, for they had not P. C. on them, but E.—something; I forget what.”

Matthew waxed wroth. “Have I not told you,” he said—“have I not told you that we must be content with the flesh and blood, without the bones and marrow of these poor drunkards? I am not a pawn-broker, to lend money upon a man’s ruin. I sell, to be sure, what leads to it, but *that* is his fault, not mine.”

“You said just now it was *yours*,” said his sister, sulkily.

“Is it a devil or an angel that prompts your words, Martha?” exclaimed Matthew, impatiently; then leaning his pale, thoughtful brow on his clasped hands, he added: “but, however much I sometimes try to get rid of them, it must be for my good to see facts as they are.”

Martha would talk: she looked upon the last word as a victory. “He must have sold them whether or not, as he has done all his little household comforts, to pay for

what he has honestly drunk; and I might as well have them as any one else. My money paid for them, and in the course of the evening went into your till. It’s very hard if, with all my labor, I can’t turn an honest penny in a bargain sometimes, without being chid, as if I were a baby.”

“I am sorely beset,” murmured Matthew, closing the book with hasty violence—“sorely beset; the gain on one side, the sin on the other; and she goads me, and puts things in the worst light: never was man so beset,” he repeated helplessly; and he said truly he was “beset”—by *infirmity of purpose*, that mean, feeble, pitiful frustrator of so many good and glorious intentions.

It is at once a blessed and a wonderful thing how the little grain of “good seed” will spring up and increase—if the soil be at all productive, how it will fructify! A great stone may be placed right over it, and yet the shoot will come forth—*sideways*, perhaps, after a long, noiseless struggle amid the weight of earth—a white, slender thing, like a bit of thread that falls from the clipping scissors of a little heedless maid—creeps up, twists itself round the stone, a little, pale, meek thing, *tending upward*—becoming a delicate green in the wooing sunlight—strengthening in the morning, when birds are singing—at midday, when man is toiling—at night, while men are sleeping, *until it pushes away the stone*, and overshadows its inauspicious birthplace with strength and beauty!

Yes! where good seed has been sown, there is always hope that, one day or other, it will, despite snares and pitfalls, despite scorn and bitterness, despite evil report, despite temptations, despite those wearying backslidings which give