

## CHOICE LITERATURE.

## TOM'S HEATHEN.

## CHAPTER XV.—TWO SIDES OF ONE MAN.

Late the next morning my patient awoke, rational, but very weak. For some time he was unable to speak, and for several days needed careful nursing. Through these days I was with him the greater portion of the time. He was a man to feel keenly any kindness, and in his subdued condition thoroughly appreciated the little I could do for him. Some one was officious enough to tell him of my supposed agency in his recovery, and his gratitude knew no bounds. However little he may have valued life, however much he may have wished to overtake death, when death turned upon him and he was pursued instead of pursuing, it was quite another matter.

He was still in a nervous and critical condition, and the hospital sights and sounds annoyed him greatly. As soon as practicable he was removed to a pleasant, private room not far from the apartments occupied by Mr. Dyer and his daughter. He submitted to my will, asking no questions. He knew only that I was an American physician disposed to help a disabled fellow-countryman. He "took to me," as the phrase goes. He had lived such a vagabond, uncared-for life that he had grown to consider himself part of the offscouring of the earth. And now in his low estate to be taken up, cared for, and treated with consideration, was to him a grateful surprise.

Many times a day he declared that the remainder of his life should be devoted to my service. But I knew much of this would pass with returning health and strength, and that after a while old appetites and passions would re-assert themselves with renewed ferocity. Now was the golden opportunity. Now, too, was the time to tell Joel Dyer.

He brightened up as if new vitality were injected into every fibre of his being. No solitary prisoner confined in underground cell, reeking with horrors, could have been more rejoiced at the prospect of freedom than was Joel Dyer at the thought of giving this man his money and getting free from the torment of his mental presence. He was so eager and so hurried that he could scarcely be restrained from pouncing in upon him, throwing the money in his hands and bidding him be gone forever.

Robert Lyon—I still called him Norman Lee—had no suspicion that I knew anything of his former life or of his half-brother, Thomas Peebles. From time to time he told me fragments of his past, and among the rest the episode of Dyer and his experience in stock speculation. He withheld the name, but dwelt with great bitterness upon that one transaction and its effect upon his subsequent life. He was not one who would naturally hold a resentment long, and the fact of his extreme detestation of this man told that Dyer had made upon him the one indelible impression of his life. He was speaking of this one day when I said:

"You may recover that money yet?"

"Never. The stars fight against me."

"But the man may see that he has wronged you, and be disposed to make up the loss."

He laughed—a bitter, incredulous laugh.

"It is not impossible," said I, after a little. "The Lord can make him see that he has wronged you."

"The Lord?" and he laughed again. "Why, that man is one of the Lord's pets. My mother used to say that nothing happened without the Lord's knowledge and consent. Well, if that is true, and I don't say that it is not true, why then the Lord knew that this man was going to rob me, and He consented. And see how he has been coddled ever since. He began as he once told me without a dollar in the world, and to-day he lays claim to a million or more. Well, how did he get that? By steady, honest work? No man gets rich that way. If he is industrious he earns a living and saves something, but he does not get rich. How then? By breaking into bank-vaults, or by highway robbery? Oh no. He is far too shrewd for that. There is a neater and more respectable way. He over-reaches some one, his best friend perhaps, in some business transaction, and picks his pockets so deftly, and so entirely within the law, all the while appearing so plausible and so friendly, that until his eyes are suddenly pried open he is inclined to believe him a philanthropist or an evangelist, or some other sugar-coated sham. He always makes another man's necessity his opportunity. I have seen him watch a man whose financial footing was getting insecure, and when a helping hand would steady him through the storm, not only refuse that help himself, but by insinuations and wise looks keep others from helping. Then how he would watch and watch, gloating over his drowning struggles, and just as he was going under, step up with a cool smile and buy him out clean."

"I was not the only one, by many, that he robbed—legally, of course, all legally. Oh, the cursed foresight of that man! He knew just when to buy and just when to sell, and when he had clutched a handsome fortune he knew enough to leave the broking business; knew enough to put his hand on the throat of his thirst of gold and say: 'Look here! Steady! Steady! No more risks!' No man ever had himself better in hand. This cursed foresight was equalled only by cursed self-control. Now he could afford to go into banking in a slow but safe and highly respectable way. No other man could have held himself like that. Stockbroking is a mania, and when it has once taken possession of a man he can no more help gambling than a drunkard can help drinking; nor would he, except that he was specially favored by his Maker. One of these days he will die, and probably leave a goodly share of his gains as hush money. Perhaps he will endow a hospital, or create a theological seminary, and the ministers will say: 'See this good man!' and the people, with the exception of the poor fools he has swindled, will cry 'Amen!'"

"Well; now all this has happened with the Lord's knowledge and consent. He has made the opportunities, and has helped this man 'to do, to do, and to do,' and now do you suppose He is going to make him undo all that He has aided and abetted him in doing? Not at all. You see I

believe in your Lord. It was bred in me when my bones were a soft gristle; I assimilated it with my mother's milk. I grant all you can say of His omnipotence and omniscience; and I know that let me go into the heart of the earth, or the depths of the sea, I cannot get away from Him. O yes; I know there is a Lord, and he makes such men as Joel Dyer, and holds them in his hand, and hedges them about lest any harm befall them. And though all the rest of the world may bow to Him, He is none of mine."

Thrills of horror, like an ague, ran over me as I looked at him and listened to his almost blasphemous words. We sat opposite each other, and he was speaking more vehemently than at any time since his recovery, and to me it was Tom's left hand that was gesticulating, and Tom's impassioned voice that rose and fell with every utterance. Even the swiftly alternating expressions of his face, pallid and thinner since his sickness, reminded me forcibly of Tom, poor Tom, who was ever praying and beseeching the Lord for this wrecked soul. I laid my hand heavily upon his knee, and with a voice that was scarcely steady said:

"Now let me show you the other side of this man. It is true that he has been greatly prospered. It is also true that he has paid for all that he has had. No man gets 'something for nothing.' This man has toiled like a galley-slave, through anxious days and sleepless nights, allowing himself no time for rest or recreation. If the actual work he has done had been compulsory, he would have died long ago. And so he has paid for all that he has honestly won. And for what he has accumulated by over-reaching and unfair advantage, for that he has also paid, and paid an awful price, and will continue to pay as long as there is a breath of life left in him; and how much longer God only knows. Do you suppose that which the Lord permits He endorses? Has He not seen the end from the beginning—and does He not know the utmost farthing that this man must pay? I tell you that every dollar dishonestly obtained costs a man a thousand times more than it is ever worth, and sooner or later, unless repented of, and as far as possible restored, burns into the accumulator's soul with unquenchable fire."

"That sounds well, and it is easy to say; but wait till you know *this* man," replied he, thrusting back his coat and shooting his thumbs into the arm-holes of his vest with the air of a man who had said something unanswerable.

"I do know him."

"Joel Dyer?"

"Yes."

"You know Joel Dyer?" and his thumbs came out of the arm-holes of his vest, and he stared at me with wide-open eyes.

"I know Joel Dyer."

"Then you know one of the greatest rascals that ever lived."

"I know one of the greatest sufferers that ever lived. You tell me that for the past twenty years you have lived a wretched life—a series of blunders, struggles, wickedness and misery—"

"All that and more!" interrupted he, with sharp earnestness.

"And that to-day you are homeless and friendless, bankrupt every way, and with an appalling future staring you in the face—"

"Yes," said he, tears of self-pity filling his despairing eyes as he looked into mine.

"Well, then, let me tell you that, notwithstanding all this, to-day you would not change places with Joel Dyer with all his money and much as you think the Lord prefers him to you. You do not begin to know what the word anguish means, compared with the knowledge that has come to that man."

"How happened you to know Joel Dyer?"

"He has been my patient for the past two years."

"And he told you all this?"

"He needed not to tell me. It is written all over him."

"And you believe it?"

"I do."

"And so will I when he offers to give back my money;" and he laughed.

"Will you go with me now, and get your money?" asked I, handing him his hat and getting my own.

He looked astounded and took the hat, not knowing what else to do. Seeing that I stood waiting he asked, "Go whither?"

"To rooms a little farther up the street."

"To whom?"

"Joel Dyer."

"Doctor," said he, looking frightened and distressed, "Doctor, one of us has gone mad. Is it you or I?"

"It is neither. This is all. Mr. Dyer wishes to return the money you lost through him. For ten years he has been trying to find you. He came to Paris for that purpose. He has been waiting several days to give you this money, and as he cannot come to you I promised to bring you to him."

He stared at me blankly, his lower jaw falling like a man losing consciousness.

"Robert Lyon!" said I, grasping his shoulder. As he heard that name the blood went rushing to his brain, his pallid face crimsoned, and he looked eagerly at me. "Yes, Robert Lyon. The Lord you disown has been watching over you all these years. He has kept track of you, has spared your life, has allowed you to commit mortal offences only against yourself and Himself, and He has put it into the heart of Mr. Dyer to restore your lost inheritance. You have only to take it, and, forgetting the past, begin life over again."

But still he hung back, bewildered or unwilling.

"Come!" said I. "You say I have been kind to you—"

"Yes," interrupted he; "and I will say it with my last breath, and forget it never. If there is any way in which I can at all repay you, it shall be done," said he, grasping my hand.

"So I thought; and there is a way in which you can more than repay me."

"Tell me!" he demanded earnestly.

"Go with me to Mr. Dyer and get your money," said I, looking straight into his eyes.

"Well, if you put it that way I will go. Though I must protest that I do not understand this at all. Joel Dyer—wants—to—give—back—my—money!" said he, slowly, and pausing between the words as if the thing was beyond his comprehension. "Well, lead on; I will go. But whether I go on my head or my feet, or whether I am going to the devil or otherwise, is more than I can tell."

I waited for no retraction, but taking his arm hurried him along the street to Dyer's apartments.

## CHAPTER XVI.—ROBERT LYON'S REFUSAL.

At Agnes's strenuous entreaty, drafts for the full amount of Robert Lyon's inheritance had been made out on a well-known banking-house in the city. It was for a considerable amount and for a while Mr. Dyer demurred, saying that he paid back a portion of his inheritance when he re-bought the stock, and if Lyon had wasted that portion in subsequent stock operations it was no fault of his. The love of money was still strong in the man. This relinquishment, now that it was at hand, gave him sharp twinges of pain. It was like an amputation. He was willing for the sake of getting rid of the whole matter, to make good the loss actually sustained by the depreciation of the stock while in Lyon's hands, and thought that in so doing he was acting with unexampled honesty and liberality. And so he was, as the world counts honesty and liberality. But when Agnes asked him how much the money Robert Lyon lost had been worth to him, how much it had been the means of making all these years, he was silent. And fearing she would insist that the entire accumulations of that sum which he had so skillfully handled should be paid over, he signed the drafts and wrote a receipt for Robert Lyon to sign.

I knew it would be unwise to keep the two men face to face longer than was really necessary, and cautioned Agnes to have the papers ready at a moment's notice.

Agnes opened the door and I presented Mr. Lyon. She grew suddenly white, but retained her self-possession and received him courteously.

Mr. Dyer was sitting by the table wrapped in his long dressing-gown, grasping with both hands the cane that stood between his knees; for he had been growing feeble of late and needed the cane in his interminable walks up and down the room. His cheeks were stained a deep scarlet as he heard the name and realized that the man he had so long sought stood in his presence. But it passed almost instantly, leaving him paler than ever. He did not rise or change his position as he recognized Robert Lyon's presence by a courteous bow.

Both men were startled by the changes manifest in each. Indeed, Joel Dyer, but for his eyes, looked more dead than alive; and Robert Lyon, aged by his excesses, looked years older than he really was. From his bald head to his drooping hands, there was little to certify that this was the fresh, handsome man Dyer had so deftly used some twenty years ago.

Agnes prevented any embarrassment by assuming the position her father was for the moment incapable of taking. She brought out the papers and inkstand and putting them on the table at her father's side said gravely and earnestly:

"Mr. Lyon, my father desires to recompense you for a loss you sustained in some business transactions with him." She was standing quite near, so near that her garments fell against him, and I knew how sad and earnest were the eyes that looked in his as she said gently: "Let me add that you will confer a great favor by receiving this money and as far as possible forgetting the past."

She, not knowing the exceeding bitterness that abode in this man's heart, made a mistake in asking him to forget. He rose to his feet, his face darkening, as he asked in a scarcely audible voice,

"Are you his daughter?"

"Yes; his only child."

"It was *you*, then, that I cursed for his sake." And seeing how fair and pure she looked, as if no thought of wrong or sin had ever fallen upon her, said bitterly, "Even my curses are failures."

Every drop of blood fled from her horror-stricken face as she heard his words, and she turned appealingly to me. I could have knocked him down, but instead grasped his arm and led him over to the table where Mr. Dyer sat absorbed in the papers he was running over for the last time.

"Are you quite ready, Mr. Dyer?" I asked hurriedly.

"Yes;" and with an unsteady hand he gave the papers to Robert Lyon, adding, "Please sign this;" pushing along the pen and receipt.

Robert Lyon unfolded the papers slowly, as if he was still bewildered, and looking them leisurely over, began to realize that they were genuine—that some good had befallen him. At last, at last, his luck had turned; that seemed his first thought, and he crushed the papers in a tight grasp as if he expected to fight for them. And then again, as if still doubting, he smoothed them out and read them carefully over, and the growing certainty made even his heavy face glow with glad surprise. How carefully and lovingly he turned them over! It was his lost inheritance, bemoaned and pursued and despaired of, unexpectedly laid in his hands. He lifted his head, breathing deeply, and seemed to grow taller and larger with a sudden influx of self-respect and manliness. It was a curious and touching thing to see, and more than repaid me for all my trouble and anxiety in the matter. I wondered if it spoke to Joel Dyer as it spoke to me.

But as he stood there, lost in pleasant thoughts of his mother, of Tom and his boyish days, of his hopes, of the time longed for and anticipated when he should come into full possession of this his inheritance, a sudden change came over him; and then as a flash of lightning on a black night at sea reveals for an instant the fathomless abyss, so now his quickened eyes saw the hideous gulf that lay between then and now—between the happy and comparatively innocent youth of twenty years ago, and the wretched, ruined man of to-day.

The papers dropped from his nerveless fingers, and turning to Joel Dyer a terrible face, and with a voice that even to us sounded like the voice of the archangel, he cried:

"Old man, keep your money!" and stretching out his empty hands tremulous with beseeching—"Give me back