

MY MOTHER'S ONLY SON.



HE rain is falling heavily to-night. It has a dull, desolate, lonely sound, as if it were bent upon reminding me of another night more desolate, dull, and lonely even than the present. What right have I, who have so much happiness about me now to be searching the dark annals of past sorrow? Yet that rainy dismal night does come back to me with a force and terror I would rather not remember. I would rather not remember it, because my son just budding into manhood, has left me to-night, for the first time, and gone to take his place in an old firm in a neighboring city.

The world and its allurements are temptingly laid out before him. He is a noble handsome boy, so bright and promising. They tell me he will always have friends, plenty of friends; that he has all the elements of popularity, and is destined to become a general favorite. My own brother was all this. We had everything to hope from him; he had everything to hope for himself.

With prospects fair and bright an old banker, a friend of my father's, gave him an eligible situation. It was an office of trust; he was proud of the confidence placed in him, and left home with the full resolve of filling it with honor to himself and credit to the good man who had placed him there. His letters were pleasant and joyous, full of new pleasures he had never dreamed of in our quiet life at home. His grateful manners and natural gentleness soon established him as a favorite in society; his social pleasures were daily increasing, and his attention to business was both active and energetic.

My mother had a slight misgiving. It was only the shadow of a thought, she said—that Arthur in the new pleasures that surrounded him, might become

weaned from us or might learn to be happy without us. In her deep love for her gifted boy she had never thought such an event possible, and instantly reproached herself for the thought,

In going from home, my brother had left a great waste, an empty place behind him, and his letters were our only comfort. There were only three of us, and while his letters were so fresh and vigorous, they almost kept up the delusion that we were not separated; but there came a change. We may have been slow in discovering it, but we did discover it, and then to miss him as we missed him through the long winter nights seemed like losing a star that had led us, that we had followed, until it passed under a cloud and left us, still waiting, still watching for it to come again. He paid us a flying visit now and then, and my mother unconscious of the cause of his disquietude—for he was both anxious and disturbed—would redouble her exertions to bring back his waning love, making every allowance for the indifference, the coldness and the neglect that were so glaringly apparent to other eyes, yet so delicately obscured from her motherly vision.

Her beautiful boy seemed to carry the sunshine of her life with him; she thought him caressed and petted, the favorite of society, and the embodiment of all that was noble. He has seen so much of the luxury and elegance of life in the great city, how can we expect him to be contented with our home where everything is so different? Thus she would reason with me, and thus, I sometimes thought, she would reluctantly reason with herself.

One day a letter came to us from the banking-house, where my brother had gradually risen to an honored position. It was from the banker himself, our dear old friend, he told in the tenderest manner, that Arthur had acquired a habit which rendered him unfit for an office of trust.