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The Timely Warning.

A THRILLING STORY.

My father, after an absence of three years, returned to the house so dear to him. He had made his last voyage, and rejoiced to have reached a haven of rest from the perils of the sea. During his absence I had grown from a child and baby of my mother's (for I was her youngest,) into a rough, careless, and headstrong boy. Her gentle voice no longer restrained me; and I was often willful, and sometimes disobedient. I thought it indicated manly superiority to be independent of a woman's influence. My father's return was a fortunate circumstance for me. He soon perceived the spirit of insubordination stirred within me. I saw by his manner that it displeased him, although for a few days he said nothing to me about

It was an afternoon in October, bright and golden, that my father told me to get my hat, and take a walk with him. We turned down a narrow lane into a fine open field—a favorite play-ground for the children in the neighborhood. After talking cheerfully on different topics for a while, my father asked me if I observed that huge shadow, thrown by a mass of rocks that stood in the midst of the field. I replied that I did.

"My father owned this land," said he. "It was my play-ground when a boy. That rock stood there then. To me it is a beacon, and whenever I look at it I recall a dark spot in my life—an event so painful I dwell upon that if it were not as a warning I should not speak of it. Listen then, my dear boy, and learn wisdom from your father's errors.

My father died when I was a mere child. I was the only son. My mother was a gentle, loving woman, devoted to her children, and beloved by everybody. I remember her pale, beautiful face—her sweet, affectionate smile—her kind and tender voice. My childhood I loved her intensely. I was never apart from her, and she, fearing that I was becoming too much of a baby, sent me to a high school in the village. After associating for a time with ruder boys, I lost, in a measure, my fondness for my home, and my reverence for my mother; and it became more and more difficult for her to restrain my impetuous nature. I thought it indicated a want of manliness to yield to her authority, or to appear penitent, although I knew that my conduct pained her. The epithet I most dreaded was *girl boy*. I could not bear to hear said by my companions that I was tied to my mother's apron strings. From a quiet, home-loving child, I soon became a wild, boisterous boy. My mother used every persuasion to induce me to

seek happiness within the precincts of home! She exerted herself to make our fireside attractive, and my sister, following her self-sacrificing example, sought to plan enticing games and diversions for my entertainment. I saw all this, but did not heed it.

It was an afternoon like this, as I was about leaving the dining-table, to spend my intermission between the morning and evening school in the street, and, as usual, my mother laid her hand upon my shoulder, and said, mildly, but firmly, 'My son, I want you to come with me, I would have rebelled, but there was something in her manner that awed me.' She put on her bonnet, and said to me, 'We will take a walk together. I followed her in silence; and as I was passing out of the door, I observed one of my rude companions, skulking about the house, and knew he was waiting for me. He sneered as I went past him. My pride was wounded to the quick. He was a very bad boy, but being several years older than myself, he exercised a great influence over me. I followed my mother sulkily, till we reached the spot where we now stand, beneath the shade of this huge rock. O, my boy, could that hour be blotted from my memory, which has cast a dark shadow over my whole life, gladly would I exchange all that the world can offer me, for the quiet peace of mind I should enjoy. But no! like this huge unsightly pile, stands the monument of my guilt forever.

My mother, being feeble in health, sat down and beckoned me to sit down beside her. Her look, so full of tender sorrow, is present to me now. I would not sit, but continued standing sullenly beside.

'Alfred, my son,' said she, 'have you lost all love for your mother?'

I did not reply.

'I fear you have,' she continued, 'and may God help you to see your own heart, and me to do my duty.'

She then talked to me of my misdeeds, of the dreadful consequence of the course I was pursuing. By tears, entreaties, and prayer, she tried to make an impression on me. She placed before me the lives and examples of great and good men; she sought to stimulate my ambition. I was moved, but too proud to show it, and remained in dogged silence beside her. I thought, 'what will my companions say, if after all my boasting, I yield at last, and submit to be led by a woman?'

What agony was visible on my mother's face, when she saw that all she had said and suffered failed to move me! She rose to go home, and I followed at a distance. She spoke no more to me till we reached our own door.