

ple of the village was all that caused them to show lenity to the erring boy. The conduct of Earnest had borne heavier upon them than their years; they had fondly loved the beautiful and friendless boy, and it almost broke their hearts to see him go thus astray. Many there were who advised them to cast him off, as he seemed given over to evil, and even treated them with unkindness and disrespect; but with all his faults, they still clung to him, hoping almost against hope that he would yet reform.

"I promised his mother," said Mr. Humphrey, "that I would care for her boy so long as I lived to do so, and that promise I intend to keep." "And," added Mrs. Humphrey, "as long as we possess a home, he shall not be homeless. For if we can do no more we can at least pray for him; and I have a hope that the prayers offered in faith will yet meet with an answer."

Time passed on, till the evening preceding the fourteenth birth-day of Ernest. Mr. Humphrey sat with his wife by their lonely fireside, Ernest had gone out directly after tea, and the hour was growing late. They were speaking of him, for they felt very sad.

"I often wonder," said Mr. Humphrey, addressing his wife, "in what duty I have failed to Ernest. I have endeavored to set before him a good example, and to do by him in all things as I would have done by my own son. I have prayed with and for him; and yet since quite a little child, he has been a source of grief and anxiety to us, by his evil conduct."