

when Mr. Briscoe's bell having been answered by Tom Coles, the office boy, he returned and said, 'Mr. Page, Mr. Briscoe says he is now ready to see you.' Mr. Page rose and went into the inner room, shutting the door behind him.

Joseph Briscoe directly turned to Howard, and said,—

'Well, old boy, how did you get on last night?'

'I did not get on at all,' replied Howard; 'I rather got back: for, to tell you the truth, Joe, my mother sets her face dead against our plan, so that I think I shall give it up altogether.'

'Not quite such a milksop as that, I should hope!' returned Joe. 'Why, I might make the same excuse, if I chose, for abandoning our noble enterprise; for my poor mother cried and sobbed at a fine rate, and my pompous father stamped and frowned, and kept saying, "I will not hear of it, sir; I forbid anything of the kind, sir!" But what's the use of listening to them. No, no, I have made up my mind; and go I will; and if you, like a coward, begin to draw back, you are not the good fellow I took you for—that's all.'

'Well, Joe, I tell you I have not made up my mind; and as you gave me a week to think of it, it is rather unreasonable to expect me to give an answer at once.'

'Well, then,' said Joe, 'you know yesterday was Friday; so, remember, I do not wait one day after next Friday. I know a right good fellow who will go with me if you don't; so do as you like.'

But Mr. Page was still in Mr. Briscoe's office when the two separated.

'I tell you, Page,' Mr. Briscoe was saying, 'it is of no use talking, and it is only because I have known you so many years, and under such different circumstances, that I have listened so long.'

'I thank you, sir,' said Mr. Page; 'believe me, it is only the interest I take in you and yours that urges me to such boldness, and I pray you not to be angry if I beg you once more, and for the last time, to be less—less—' Mr. Page hesitated; he was going to say, 'less severe,' but he feared giving offence, so he qualified it, and said, 'less particular with Mr. Joseph. I think, sir, he is a young man who can be led by kindness better than—' Again he hesitated.

'Well, Page, what would you recommend me to do with this hopeful son of mine? He has been a trouble to me from his infancy; and his foolish mother spoils him, so that he thinks he may lead me as he does her.'

'Ah! sir,' said Mr. Page, "'a house divided against itself cannot stand." Take your son into your confidence, and—'

'And let him share the profits, I suppose!'

'The love of money is the root of all evil,' said Mr. Page, 'and the Wise Man tells us, "There is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing."'

'Thank you, Mr. Page—that will do, sir: when I want a sermon again, I will send for you. I wish you good-morning.'

Mr. Page knew that this was his dismissal for the present. Indeed, he felt, after his last words had been uttered, that they had, perhaps, been over-bold; so he thought it best to retire, and slowly left the room.

CHAPTER II.

'Some feelings are to mortal's given,
With less of earth in them than heaven;
And if there be a human tear
From passion's dross refined and clear,—
A tear so limpid and so meek,
It would not stain an angel's cheek,—
'Tis that which pious fathers shed
Upon a dutious daughter's head!'

—Sir Walter Scott.

'Mildred, dear, you are working too hard,' said Bertha Latimer to a sweet-looking girl who had just despatched some eighteen or twenty little ones from her school; 'I'm sure this teaching day after day, so many noisy unruly children, is more than you ought to do. Give it up, dear Mildred, do give it up.'

Mildred shook the long golden ringlets from a face—oh! so very fair!—as she looked up at her friend, and with a smile, replied,—

"As thy days, so shall thy strength be,"

'Oh, yes, I know that text, Mildred, and it is a glorious one. But, see how pale and ill you are looking. Do you think it right to continue what is evidently too much for you?'

After a little Mildred continued:—

'Ah! you forget that I am the eldest of nine motherless ones; and, besides my poor father's stipend as curate of Levington is very small. Mrs. Mason gave up her school, and offered me the advantage of it if I liked to continue it. When I went to the parents of the little pupils, I found them all, without one single exception, willing to leave their children with me. Their being all so young was one great inducement for me to attempt it; and another inducement was this—I knew I could educate my three little sisters with the rest. As to my looking ill and anxious, dear Bertha, your fond love fancies the former; and if I do look anxious, as I may, do you think it would lessen my anxiety to be doing nothing?'

Bertha threw her arms around her friend, saying, 'You are right dear Mildred, as you always are; only promise me, then that you will let me help you if I can.'

'Help, who wants help?' said a voice on the other side of the hedge; and, in a minute, Howard Latimer, was by the side of his sister and her friend.

'Oh, Howard! how you frightened me!' exclaimed his sister.

'I came on purpose to frighten you,' returned Howard. 'You are to run home as fast as you can. Uncle and Aunt Fulton are come to lunch, but cannot stay long. They wish to see you, and Amy told me I would be sure to find you with Miss Linton in some of these pretty lanes. So, now, off with you; and I will take care that no mad bull comes to frighten Miss Linton.'

'Uncle and Aunt Fulton! Oh! I am so glad!' said Bertha, as she started across the field the shortest way home.

Mildred walked a few paces in silence; then Howard said,—

'What is your opinion of a listener, Miss Linton?'

'Mean, odious, contemptible,' said Mildred.

'Oh! stop, stop! you are calling me those dreadful things,' said Howard; 'for I confess I could not help listening to the last words of your talk with my sister—but not without a motive—and now the time has come that I must speak.'

'Oh! no, no,' said Mildred; for she guessed what he would have her hear, and knew the pain that would follow his avowal.

But Howard was heedless of her exclamations:—

'Mildred,' he urged passionately, 'you must know how very dear you are to me. I had not intended telling you this till I had amassed a fortune large enough to make my presumption the less in asking you to share it with me. But, though I am not rich, I think my present prospects are so bright that I should be doing you no injustice in asking you, even now, to be my wife.'

'And do you think, Howard,' Mildred answered, 'that I could so far forget my duty as to consider only myself, and leave my poor father, oppressed as he is, to struggle on with those eight little ones, when I know I can help him?'

'But,' said Howard, 'is it called for, that you should sacrifice yourself?'

'Sacrifice!' exclaimed Mildred, 'and you ask me to sacrifice the children.'

'You will let me hope, then, for some future day—'

'Let us, neither of us, bind ourselves by any promise,' said Mildred. 'I will trust in you, and you will trust in me; and may God be with us both!'

Howard tried for some time to make Mildred name some definite time; but finding it useless, he was obliged to content himself with the tacit consent she had given to their engagement, and they parted.

When Howard returned home he found his uncle and aunt about to take their departure.

'Why, my boy,' said Uncle Fulton, 'I was going to send the crier after you. Have you met a mad bull, a gorilla, or a fair lady? for sure I am, it must have been one of the three, to keep you so long. Now, then, you must come and see me. You may bring a lady detainer with you, if you like; but pray, not the bull or the gorilla.'

And Uncle Fulton, as he touched his pretty pair of ponies, went off singing—

'When the world is full of flowers,
Who would not gather them?' etc.

till his merry voice was lost in the distance.

CHAPTER III.

'There stands the messenger of truth; there stands,

The legate of the skies! His theme divine,
His office sacred, his credentials clear.

By him the violated law speaks out
Its thunders; and by him, in strains as sweet

As angels use, the Gospel whispers peace.'

—William Cowper.

We are about to introduce our readers to the pretty cottage residence of the Rev. Eustace Linton, curate of Levington. The clematis is growing luxuriantly over the lattice porch at the door, sweetly twined with a lovely and free-blowing rose, and the well-tended garden, yielding both fruits and flowers indicates that the inmates know how to combine the useful with the ornamental. Looking in at the open window we see Mildred Linton reading to her three little sisters, who are all very deep in the wonderful process of converting their own well-worn little frocks into smaller garments for the poor little ones of the parish, while the baby boy is industriously pulling the tail of the little kitten; which liberty puss returns by putting her soft paw on his little fat shoulder and leaping over his head. Passing on to a small room beyond, we see the anxious father himself, seated at a table with many small books and papers on it. What an open countenance it is which meets us as he looks up at a laborer who has just entered the room! We gather from what they say that he had just established a Penny Savings Bank in the parish, and is taking down the names of those who wish to become members. Everything is conducted with perfect order; there are many waiting in the little porch and garden, but only one enters at a time.

'Well, Adam Clare,' Mr. Linton is saying, 'I am very glad to find you among my friends to-day. I expected you would have been one of the first to have your name entered.'

'Yes, sir, yes,' replied Adam; 'times are changed to me now since I've followed your honor's advice, and left off paying my visits to the Blue Boar of nights, when I got my weekly wages. My old woman has put the money I used to spend there in our old cracked tea-pot; for you see, sir, it lets out the tea, but it has kept in the money right