

come a public character—knowing that such a thing would never have occurred to him under ordinary circumstances.

“This was the cause, miss,” he said, pointing to his arm in the sling.

I asked him to explain.

“Why, you see, after I became blind, I took to basket-making, and did not do so badly either, and basket-making I should have been now, if I had not had an accident which deprived me of the use of one hand. One day my wife had gone out for half an hour to get something she wanted in the village. She had forgotten to leave me sufficient withs to keep me employed when she was gone, so I got up to get some myself. They were kept in a locker beneath the window, and as I was stretching out my hand to feel my way, my foot caught a chair close by the window, and in trying to save myself I fell forward, and dashed my hand through a pane; and my whole weight resting on that hand, a splint of glass run through it, and completely severed the tendons of two fingers. I was now debarred from procuring the but-sufficient existence derived from basket-making; but still, somehow I felt that the bread that hitherto never failed would not fail now; and so, living on our savings, we day by day debated what was to be done, without being able to arrive at any satisfactory result. Still, however, we did not despond; and one evening when according to custom, we were singing before we went to bed, we heard a tap at the door, and a strange gentleman entered. He asked if it was I that was singing? I said, ‘Yes.’ And then he said that his name was Mr. Elliot, and that he was going to give a concert in the neighbourhood, and offered to pay me handsomely, merely to sing one song. I hesitated, scarcely liking to take money for what would be a great pleasure to do without; but my wife, more sensible, said ‘yes’ for me.

And so I went and sung my song. I had scarcely finished when I heard loud cheers and clappings. So unused was I to this sort of thing that I thought it was intended for disapproval; and when Mr. Elliot told me that they wanted me to sing it over again, I was fairly astonished. I was half displeased on account of the noise when I commenced to sing again; but when I had finished the song, and heard again the hearty applause that followed, and knew its meaning, I was so overcome that I felt my eyes grow moist as I bowed to show my thanks. Thank God, my eyes are still of some use to me.

I looked upon this as but a piece of luck, that would only put off the evil hour of penilessness for a week or so. I had as yet no idea that I could obtain my living in this way, and if such an idea had crossed my mind I think I should have thought myself wicked to entertain it. The notion of being paid for doing that which was my chief delight was still so lateful to me. Indeed, when Mr. Elliot offered to take upon himself to procure me the tuition required for making my appearance in a large place, and to give me so large a salary, commencing at once, that six months’ pay sounded like a fortune, my brain was so confused that I could make no answer for some time, and then could only beg to be allowed a week to consider.

When I once more reached my cottage, and sat again in my old seat in the chimney-corner, I began to collect my ideas, and to ponder upon the prospect laid open to me. Thus my thoughts ran—“David,” said I, “you have hitherto lived by labour, now you are asked to live by play; hitherto, by dint of sheer hard work you have kept the wolf from the door, now, by small and pleasurable exertion, a fortune is waiting for you. David is it right for you to accept it?”