

value of steady and prudent conduct; assistance would, I trust, work wonders.

"But you tell me nothing of yourself, Fred," said West, interrupting his reverie.

"I have but little to relate; but for the circumstances you know, and my having, as I now think, foolishly changed my name, I should be a happy man. I am prosperous in the world—I have an unblemished name, and am blest with an excellent wife; and West, let me conjure you to keep my secret. I have never forgotten your friendly conduct in my trouble. I will prove it by even distressing myself to serve you, and have considered the means of doing it."

"Rely upon my prudence, I was going to say; but I have but little of that good quality to boast of, and thank you, my dear fellow, for your good intentions."

"If by a loan and credit," continued Frederick, "I establish you in a business, which I know is to be disposed of in a town some distance from here, I ask you seriously, can I depend upon you? You have excellent talents for business; with care you may again attain respectability, and I shall have the pleasure of serving in my turn a generous friend."

Ned was affected to tears at his friend's noble offer; it sobered his manner. "God forbid that I should lead you into error. I trust that you would never repent your kindness—my gratitude, I am sure, will suffice to keep me steady. Oh, Rose, had you been near me, I should not have played the fool as I did." Poor West wept like a child.

"Forget the past, then," replied Rose, "and determine well for the future. Pray be guarded, and mind that my name is Wilson."

Frederick lost no time in carrying into effect his promise; by advances from his own funds to a considerable amount, and credit from the firm, West was placed, as had been proposed, and for some time conducted himself well.

Frederick may be accused of a lack of judgment and caution, in hazarding so much in behalf of a man whom he had known a giddy and lavish youth; he might have considered that a dissolute course for several years would render him incapable of the steady exertion and regularity of conduct he vainly hoped for. Rose judged of others by himself—he thought that amendment of life would follow such severe experience of the results of improvidence and dissipation; but West had become an inebriate, and Rose had yet to learn how almost impossible it is to reclaim a man who has surrendered himself to the degrading vice of drunkenness. For a time, West, mindful of the responsibility his friend had incurred for him, struggled against

himself. He relapsed little by little. At some distance from Hull, Frederick had not sufficient opportunity to observe his proceedings; in brief, a total loss of the sum advanced, and a large debt to the firm, were the results of this unlucky experiment. Rose was thunderstruck. His own loss, though large, he cared not for; but he felt that he had compromised the interests of his former masters, to, it appeared to him now, an almost ruinous extent. Nothing less than a personal assumption of the loss could justify him, and to this determination he had arrived. But he was not permitted to be his own judge; some circumstances connected with the previous history of the unfortunate West, became known to Messrs. Bell & Clinton, and Rose was summoned formally to an explanation of the affair.

"Mr. Wilson," said the first named of these gentlemen, a worthy man, of severe morals and strict habits of business—merit from him was sure of its reward, indiscretion of but little mercy—"myself and Mr. Clinton are utterly unable to conceive the reason of your exposing us to a loss of this extent by the person called West; we are astonished to hear also, that you, aware as you must have been, that he has been for some time known as a vagabond strolling player, should have recommended him to us—the thing looks very strange, Mr. Wilson."

What reply could Rose make to this, spoken in a manner he had never before experienced or deserved? He felt himself once more a criminal.

"Sir," he replied at length, "I am to blame, most certainly, and am willing to be personally answerable for the amount due from him."

"We do not require that of you," was the answer. "It is a very unpleasant business, and I can perceive that for some cause or other you are not disposed to explain it. The loss we will bear with, but I am compelled to say it will be necessary, in fact, indispensable, that your connexion with us should cease."

Poor Frederick trembled with emotion. Could they know all? Still his conscious integrity gave him confidence to reply with indignation:

"Gentlemen, after years spent in your service—and, thank God, I can look back with satisfaction to a review of my conduct—is this treatment deserved by me? is this harshness justifiable? I will not condescend to explain anything; I will leave you as you wish; but, understand me, not without securing to you every sixpence of this sum."

His partners, rather disconcerted, exchanged glances, and Mr. Clinton began to make a conciliatory answer. Rose had pride—interest was forgotten—in a haughty manner he added that he wished to hear no more on the subject, and withdrew abruptly.