

THE WINSTALLS A TALE OF LOVE AND MONEY

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BY
REV. JOSEPH HAMILTON.

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CHAPTER V.—(Continued)

The intense interest of this discussion being thus relieved, Mr. Winstall resumed his usual gay humor.

"By the way, Mr. Stewart," he said, "that was a fine anthem we had yesterday morning. And I didn't realize how fine it was until Miss Pearce showed us some of its fine points this morning after breakfast. I am sure we would all enjoy it if Miss Pearce would give those to us again."

All the company at once united in the request. But Miss Pearce shrank from such a public display. She had a gift for seeing the humorous side of things, and could amuse an intimate friend or two with her drolleries; but this company was too much for her. As Mr. Winstall persisted in his request, however, she proposed that if Mr. Winstall first gave a synopsis of the sermon she would say what she thought about the anthem. This was manifestly fair, but it put Mr. Winstall in a tighter place than he had ever been in before. He pleaded a bad memory and referred the matter to his daughter Lucinda who could do the thing creditably. But Mr. Stewart at once put in a plea for Miss Winstall. "It was not to be expected," he said, "that she could recall many points of a sermon just on the moment, and especially as he might not have made his points so clear as they should be." Miss Winstall was grateful for this timely defence, and gently suggested that perhaps Mr. Stewart himself might give a brief sketch of the sermon. Mr. Erwin heartily seconded the resolution.

"You know," said he, turning to Mr. Stewart, "I shall be wanting to learn how to sermonize myself, and judging from your clear expositions tonight, I would like to learn something of your method. Mrs. Erwin concurred in the request, so Mr. Stewart found he could not escape.

"Well," said he, "I think I can recall the plan of the sermon, so far as it had a plan. You remember the text, Miss Pearce?"

"Oh yes, indeed," she said. "To every man his work."

"Well," he said, chiefly addressing Mr. Erwin, "I tried to put it something like this. I spoke of the universality of the work; all must do something. Then the individuality of it; each man has his own work that can be done by no other. I mentioned several kinds of work that have to be done, and tried to encourage any who thought they could do little by the fact that what seems little often turns out to be the most important. Then I spoke of the effect of good work, and in doing this I did not speak of spiritual work only, but of what is called secular as well, for the secular is often closely allied to the spiritual and necessary to give it shape. I then referred to the urgency of the work, since life is so short, and our opportunities may be few. I closed, I remember, by an appeal for faith in Christ as the supreme work of every one, and the source of all success in whatever special work we do. You remember how emphatic our Lord made that point. 'This is the work of God,' he said, 'that ye believe on him whom He hath sent.' I think that was something

of the plan I followed, but I often fail to make myself clear, I am afraid."

This sketch was listened to by all, with close, respectful attention, and all united in thanking the honored minister. But perhaps there was no one present who listened with such riveted, absorbed attention as Miss Winstall. The sermon, as she heard it yesterday, touched her deeply and this was why she requested Mr. Stewart to give a sketch of it now. She was no sermon taster like Mr. Macfadyen of Drumtochty fame; she could not always remember the heads, or even the number of them; but not less did the truth make its impression. She was growing weary of late of her frivolous, useless life, and longed for something worthy to do. This sermon increased her unrest, but gave no solution of her life problem. And this eventful evening aided in her awakening. She hung on Mr. Stewart's words throughout the whole evening. She had loved her father, but she had never seen, as she saw now, the chasm that lay between him and such a man as Mr. Stewart. The one was free, easy, buoyant, self-satisfied, superficial; the other was deep, thoughtful, earnest, devout. And if the one life was sadder than the other, in her heart she preferred the sadder one with its nobler purposes and ideals.

It is not surprising then, that when Mr. Stewart's earnest sketch was ended the company did not at once call for Miss Pearce's points on the anthem. The fact is the anthem was forgotten for a time. When it was mentioned, as it presently was by Mr. Winstall, Miss Pearce pleaded to have it postponed. Trifling as she might seem at times on the surface, there was a deep vein of seriousness underneath. She had a true instinct that any marked frivolity just now would be out of place. Miss Winstall heartily appreciated her friend for asking a postponement, and gently seconded her request, which was agreed to.

At this stage Miss Winstall took a new departure. She did a thing she had never done before, and had no intention of doing now, until the moment and the situation inspired her. She lifted a bible from a side table, and stepping across the room, offered it to Mr. Stewart. He knew what "taking the book" meant. It is an old Scottish phrase for conducting family worship, and the phrase lingers still in some country places both in Scotland and in Ireland. In fact Mr. Stewart's mother had often told him to "take the book." So he took the book now from Miss Winstall, and as he looked up to thank her he looked into a pair of very tender blue eyes in which there was a dim suggestion of tears. He gave her a bow and a smile which expressed better than words his appreciation of her action.

A solemn hush fell on the company as Mr. Stewart opened the book to read. He turned to the ninety-first Psalm: "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty."

Mr. Stewart was a reader of rare effectiveness. His voice was rich, sweet, expressive. He needed no studied inflections; he had them naturally, and they came at will. He had emphasis, but not too marked; and pauses without any straining after effect. The

Psalm being read, the company knelt in prayer. Mr. Stewart commended each and all to the care of the Father in heaven. He sought strength for all to bear life's burdens, and courage and consecration to do life's duties. He prayed for deliverance from all temptations, and a sense of the Divine Presence and favor. He prayed for forgiveness through the atoning blood, and regeneration through the indwelling spirit. He gave thanks for all mercies and privileges, for friendship, and love and home. He remembered the poor, the sick, the lonely, the disappointed, and all who were striving to do right in the teeth of discouragement and opposition. He prayed that all sorrows would turn into benedictions, and so purify every heart for the enjoyment of the heavenly home.

After the prayer not many words were spoken. The occasion seemed to call rather for silence and meditation. The guests immediately departed. As soon as they were gone Miss Winstall asked Miss Pearce if she would retire. Then conducting her to her room, with a hurried but tender good night, she retired to her own.

Opening the casement wide she looked out upon the night. Spring had come at last and the air was balmy. She looked up at the pure silent stars. "The secret place of the Most High," she murmured softly. "The shadow of the Almighty! Oh, what grand words; and how grand to dwell in that secret place! To abide under that shadow! Oh, may that be my portion! The world is poor compared with that. And then, my work? What is that to be? Is there any work for me? If there is, how shall I find it? Oh, if I were once in the secret place I might find it. And will not God himself lead me there? I have a thought that my life will not all be a failure yet. This is the most serious evening I have ever had, but somehow I prefer it to the gayest. Oh, to get into the secret place of the most high."

Thus she meditated. Then she prayed. Surely she was looking after God, if haply she might find him.

CHAPTER VII.

BULLS, BEARS AND ANGELS.

Leaving the Winstall mansion, Mr. Stewart walked with Mr. and Mrs. Erwin to the cars two blocks away. Bidding them good-night he reminded Mr. Erwin of his promise for next Monday, and apologised to Mrs. Erwin for taking her husband from her for one evening.

It was quite a distance to Mr. Stewart's chambers and he concluded to have a walk; he could take the cars further on. He loved a long walk at times, and especially at night, when the streets were for the most part deserted. Then he could pursue his own thoughts and fancies without interruption. This night was pleasant too, so he walked on, taking little note of time until he had gone so far that he determined to finish the journey on foot. The fact is that the time had slipped past because his mind was more tranquil than usual, and he felt a strange peace enveloping him as with an atmosphere. He could not account for the pleasant change. To be sure he had enjoyed the evening, but other evenings that he had enjoyed were not usually followed by elation of spirits, but depression. Well, he thought, we can't account sometimes for our ups and downs; we are a mystery to ourselves.

With this mature reflection he arrived at his lodgings. The house was dark, the family having retired, the hour being late. As he let himself in with his latch key, groped