

I have been to both ever since I was born, so I think I must be encased in the whole armor, and can ward off any fiery darts that may fly toward me."

"Archie, you shock me!"

"I only mean, mother dear, that I have been too well brought up to become a rowdy in taste or practice. Truly, I'll come home early, and not do or see or hear anything wrong. Come, mother, now do let me go."

"I don't know what your father would say, if I should."

"He never need know it. You are old enough and wise enough to give your own child one permission from your own heart."

"Oh, Archie, I don't know!"

"Well, I know! You'd just as lief, and I am going; and if father finds out, you can make it all straight; and really, mother, I ought to see the menagerie; it will help me in my natural history. I am sure I ought to see those animals."

"I am sure your father will let you; I'll ask him that," and the mother's face brightened.

"Yes, and he'll go down with me, and hold on to my hand as if I were a three-year-old. Come, mother, I think you might trust me this once."

"You must never ask again, if I say yes this time."

"No. I never will."

And she let him go, and no voice whispered, "The cigar, the circus are little seeds which may or may not grow up harmful, but to wink at what you have taught is sin; to teach deception and falsehood; to undermine the honor due the father, is to pat out roots which will sink deep in a fertile soil, and send forth branches which will cast a dense shade, if they do not wholly shut out the sun at your eventide."

v.

Years have passed. The mother has watched her child in sickness; soothed his boy troubles; sympathized in his pleasures; helped him in his studies; listened to his little love fancies; petted his favorite girls; invited his play-fellows; won for him many a hesitating permission; smoothed many little rough places, and thus concealed many little weaknesses; and many a dollar has passed quietly from her purse into his. And it was a delight to her to have him called "mother's boy," and to feel that "a child that so loves his mother will never go far astray." And she would repeat the words sometimes when Archie came in from the festival, or the ride, or party, with breath flavored with the wine.

And she often gently remonstrated with "merry" tasks it not to seem odd. But she had not thought it best to tell his father, for he was a very strict temperance man, and never could be made to see the first wrong step that didn't lead to the second, or that the straight and narrow way was not just as straight and narrow as when he was a boy; all quite proper for him, but a terribly straight-laced jacket to put a modern boy in. And youth comes but once, life's duties will come soon enough, and the father would be so strict, that the boy would be restless and all three unhappy, and she could not see or feel that it was wise or kind to bring any trouble into this happy, happy home.

But there came a night in which trouble stalked in at the open door and laid a heavy hand on the sweet, gentle mother. And though the father slept calmly, and the son heavily, she tried to think and see what to do and how to act. But heart and brain refused to see but one sight, her only child, her cherished son helped home and helped to bed, and hear but two sounds, that hic-cough, and that laugh. In both her own she took the strong, unconscious hand beside her, and bathed it with her tears. He must, he should know all; but would it not make him less miserable, more merciful, to have Archie confess? Yes, and so it should be, and together they would ask his forgiveness, and soften his heart toward the child.

The morning found her with a severe nervous headache, but she poured her husband's coffee, with a smile and pleasant words, and to his question said:

"Archie is asleep, and I did not try to wake him: he is not often late."

Before noon one of the Raven class, who can only creak, dropped into his place of business, and told him of the last night, and of the outgoings, and incouings, and shortcomings of his son for the last two years or more, not omitting the usual additions.

The father repelled the charge, and resented the impertinence; but as soon as the man was gone, he seized his hat and went home.

"Where is Archibald?"

He has not come down yet. He went quickly to his room. The heavy breathing, the air full of his breath, were enough, too much. He shook him, and the dull awakening confirmed it all.

In that bitter moment his strong tower of pride fell, and his trust in his wife, his hopes for his son, his plans for himself, were buried

beneath it. He came down heavily as one bearing a great burden; he came, cold and stern and bitter, to the loving, suffering, sorrowing mother. The tears he should have wiped, he saw not, but saw only the wrong she had done him, and in that wrong the ruin of his son. And, though she was crushed to the earth by her own burden of grief, he rolled his upon her, and piled on that his reproaches.

It was a day of utter misery to the mother. She knew that in her boy the father's proud spirit lived; and often it had required all her tact and care to prevent its breaking forth. She knew, too, that her boy loved her, and would not see her blamed; and she looked forward to the collision of father and son, with mortal terror. Often she went to the chamber to watch his awakening, and to weep and to pray.

In the afternoon, when he was fully himself, she spoke to him of the last night, told him of his father. Withholding his bitter censure of her, and harsh words of him, she spoke only of his surprise and grief; and Archibald, in his shame and humility, in his sorrow for his parents' sorrow, and love for their love, swore to reform.

And strong in her great fear and greater love she dared even implore her husband to remember the sin was all hers; that it was a first real offence; there must have been outside influence; and added, she knew her noble husband would be Christ-like in his great gentleness. Overwheeled by the fierceness of his wrath, and soothed by the assurance of a virtue about which he had been a little doubtful, he grew gentle and accepted his son's frank confession, and manly humility, and solemn pledge, kindly, and with a feeling of relief; for, next to himself, he loved his son.

Then, in the sublime confidence that his wife had learned to trust his judgment, and the son his wisdom, and now all would be well, and he more than ever lord of his home, he slept. The mother, forgetting, or rather not seeing, his injustice to herself, in her joy at his kindness to Archie, and the love that they had shown each other, and the hope that it would now broaden and deepen, and with her own love rekindled by his unwonted tenderness, slept also.

But to the son sleep came not, nor did he seek it; but, resting his head against the case-ment, he let the night air cool his excitement. He loathed himself, and loathed his parents as never before. He felt his father's kind and gentle words in every fibre of his being, and wondered he could so long have been blind and deaf to his love, and resolved in all the strength of his soul to be worthy of it. And prayers, and watchings, and hidings, and his lip quivered, and his eye moistened, as he promised, to himself and to God, nevermore to cause her a tear or a fear.

And the dark cloud lifted, and the bow of promise spanned the home.

But in the morning the father's old nature, which had not been recognized in the new evening dress, put on its usual garb. He had passed a grave offence too lightly. Archibald must be made to feel his sin and to see its consequences, or he would go down, down, down, and the blood of his soul would be found on his father's skirt; for he had indeed been verily guilty in that he had trusted a woman to bring up the son God had given him, and whose soul he would require at his hands!

The son's love and contrition were checked in their outflow by the tone in which his father said:

"Good morning, Archibald."

After a silent breakfast, the father sat back firmly; read the chapter solemnly; took off his glasses deliberately and laid them on the paper; hemmed twice and commenced:

"Archibald! I have thought much and deeply of you the past night, while you have been wrapped in unheeding slumber. I see you standing at the junction of two roads; one is broad and stretches out smoothly before you, but it will lead you from your father's house (for no drunker, rowdy shall disturb this home which my industry has erected); will lead you down to a drunkard's grave, a degraded, miserable wretch, only fit to spend your eternity with boon companions; the very devils themselves.

"The other is narrow, but leads to honor, to wealth, to a happy home, a loving wife, children around your hearth: (I trust none of them will follow in your footsteps, bring shame to their parents' hearts, and perhaps bring down their grey hair with sorrow to the grave) and at the end, heaven.

"I am sorry to add that already your footsteps are turned in the former road, and your companions, and tastes, and appetites, beckon you on; but I, to whom you owe your life and the enjoyments and luxuries that have surrounded it, reach out my hand to lead you back to happiness and to heaven. Will you come?"

Had he said fondly:

"Come, Archie, my boy, with me to-day," he would have fallen on his neck and followed

wherever he might have led: but this speech fired all his spirit, and only his mother's pleading face prevented its blazing forth.

"You are silent! You have no confessions to make! You have none for me to hear up, with your mother's and my own, on my wings of faith and love, to heaven."

"There is confession enough to be made for me, but I can see none for mother; she is the best woman that ever breathed, and your example has been perfect."

"I feel no hesitation in saying my example and all my manner of life and conversation has been perfect before you, and you would have been but just, had you added my precepts also. Had you heeded them, this black hour would have been spared us. Yet I have somewhat to confess; I have not watched over your mother and you as I ought, and like our first parent, I have been betrayed."

"Father! You cannot mean to censure mother!"

"I can and I do, though less bitterly than her own conscience does and must."

"If mother's conscience is not clear, an angel's would not be."

"She has screened you and deceived me, as she confesses to me."

"If she has not run and told you every fault of mine, it has been as much to save you pain, as to save me censure; if she has sometime used her judgment as to what I might do, she had a mother's right to half the governing of me. But for her love and sympathy and tenderness, I should have been much worse than I am; that I have not been fully worthy of her trust is my fault, not hers."

"I would not extenuate your faults in the very least. I wish you to see them in all their grossness; a young man not quite reached his majority, but older in sin than his father in half a century; that were enough, full enough without this disrespect to me, or this over-praise of your mother, which is an implied censure disrespectful to me."

"I cannot stand this talk, and I won't, whatever may be the consequences."

"You invite the consequences! Take them then. Let me never hear you speak until you ask forgiveness."

And, closing the Bible, he strode off, forgetting to pray, and perhaps it was as well; for the "forgive us our debts as we forgive" would not have brought down very rich blessings on his head.

And now the mother's heart was full. Two men, both wrong and both right. Each seeing distinctly where he himself was right and the other wrong; each fully convinced he had done more than he ought. Each recalling only the words he had spoken, and not seeing that, even if true, they were as ill-timed as a douche bath to one over-heated, were like two flints being struck together by an unseen but powerful force, and to prevent the sparks igniting, the sweet woman threw herself between. But every blow that hit her, fired her son.

The father only grew harder, as he saw the idolatry of mother and son, and felt that just so much was taken from him who should be first in each of their hearts. The more severe and unjust he grew, the more fearless grew the son, the more convinced that it was his duty to protect his mother, who had borne too much and too long. At length the son was sent away.

"He had a clerkship offered in New York, and we thought he might try it awhile. It does young men good to be thrown upon themselves for a time," the mother said.

Heaven pity her. She is trying, policeman-like, to shield her dear ones from the world's arrows, even though her own life-blood is flowing.

vi.

Ten years of temptation resisted, and temptation yielded to, and again he is at home. But hope, heart, and honor are gone, and he vibrates between life and death.

The mother bathes the hot brow, moistens the dry lips, tempers the heat, softens the light, and whispers of the loving Saviour who died that he might live.

And the father, bowed in form and in heart, humbles himself before his son and his God, and in broken tones prays that the home refused him here, he may find in heaven.

And he prays, too.

And all that home is full of penitence, of self-censure, and love, and gentleness.

Too late! Ten years too late! But they shall meet again.

JOHN WARREN'S DERT AND THE "POOR MAN'S FRIEND SOCIETY."

(Concluded.)

But let me pass over a month. John paid three instalments, and the strike still continuing he could pay no more. Hitherto Mr. Holding had been tolerably polite; but when John appeared before him on the fourth Saturday eve, with a very long face, and a stammering apology, the money lender looked at him with a frowning face, and asked him what he meant by it.

"You get money from me," he said, "with liberty to pay it back by easy instalments, and before a month is over you fail."

"But I am out of work," urged John.

"Then get into work."

"But I can't—the strikes are everywhere."

"But you have furniture," said the money lender.

"Don't touch that for the love of all that is good," said John, starting back in horror; "be easy with me, and I will pay you one day."

"Well," said Mr. Holding, "I will be easy with you. If you can't pay the instalment, you must pay the fine."

"How much is that?" asked John.

"A penny in the shilling—fivepence."

Fivepence—it was not much, and John with a lightened heart put it down, thanked Mr. Holding, and retired. This time John did not stay to drink; both landlord and drinkers seemed to know how matters were, and let him pass through without a hail.

From this hour John was in real trouble—a volume might be filled with the miseries this loan brought upon him. The strike continuing, he had nothing but the Society money to fall back upon, and every week some of this went to the rapacious maw of the money-lender. The penny in the shilling was demanded every week for every instalment unpaid, and the five became tenpence, then fifteenpence, then one and eightpence, until the extortioner's charges threatened to swallow up all John received—and still the main debt in the little red book remained the same.

There was very little happiness now in the Warren's home, and when the furniture began to go, John and his wife were wretched in the extreme; but they were obliged to sell something or starve, and when John took the clock away—that being the article they could best spare—Mrs. Warren wept bitterly. When John came back he sat for some time scowling by the fire.

"How much did you get, John?"

"Seven shillings," he replied; "and they did not want to give that. The dealer says that it's all buying and no selling with him now the strike is on. Seven shillings, and two and elevenpence to go to Holding to-morrow."

"That dreadful debt," exclaimed Mrs. Warren.

"Ay! that dreadful debt," said John; "you may well call it by that name. I wish we had saved a little when we were well off. We should be comfortable now. Debt brings a world of trouble."

"It will ruin us unless you get into work, John."

John rose up and walked out. The misery of his position was too much for him, and he wanted to think it over in the cool air. He thought long and bitterly about it, but thought showed him no way out of the snare. Ruin seemed certain, and he was afraid that he would bring trouble upon his surety, Dick Newman. He resolved to go and see him.

John found Dick, with his hands in his pockets, lounging outside a public-house, and with a very penitent face told him the story. Dick heard all very coolly, and told John not to trouble himself.

"Holding can't hurt me," said Dick—"at least not any more than he has. He sold me up four days ago for a debt of my own."

"Sold you up!" cried John.

"Every stick and rag," replied Dick. "My wife is living with her sister until I get into work again, and I live anywhere. Holding bites badly when he shows his teeth."

Poor John! He was now completely overwhelmed, and went home with a vision of a home swept of every comfort; he was even fearful of finding the broker already there, but he found nothing worse than a wife sorrowfully brooding. On Monday the little parlor table was sold, and John's Sunday coat was put into pawn.

"We may as well get the benefit of our goods," said John desperately; "if Holding comes he won't find much, unless he comes quickly."

That very night Mr. Holding called, and quietly looking round, missed the clock.

"Where's your clock, Warren?" he said; "but I need not ask you—sold, of course. Now, understand me: you must keep your furniture here until my debt is paid, or it will come to me."

"You cannot demand any more than your instalments," said John doggedly.

"Can't I?" said the money lender; "your bill says in weekly instalments, or at once on demand."

"I don't remember that," said John.

"Then read it now," returned Mr. Holding, producing the bill.

Yes, it was written there, and John had overlooked it. He felt now the full power of the snare into which he had fallen.

"You part with another stick," said the hard hearted money-dealer as he went towards the door, "and I close at once."

When he was gone, John vowed in the bitterness of his heart that he would let every-