

'Why, I should like it well enough.' 'Ah, but you would not be willing to try it.'

'Yes, I would,' said John, at a venture. 'Will you remain here every evening next week, and let me spend them among my female friends?' asked Emma.

'Certainly I will; and I assure you I shall not be so lonesome as you imagine.'

With this the husband went out, and was soon among his friends. He was a steady, industrious man, and loved his wife truly; but, like thousands of others, he had contracted a habit of spending his evenings abroad, and thought of no harm. His only practical idea of home seemed to be, that it was a place which his wife took care of, and where he could eat, drink, and sleep, as long as he could pay for it. His wife had frequently asked him to stay at home with her; but she had never ventured upon any argument before, and he had no conception of how much she missed him. She always seemed happy when he came home; and he supposed she could always be so.

Monday evening came, and John Wilson remained true to his promise. His wife put on her bonnet and shawl; and he said he would remain and 'keep house.'

'What will you do while I am gone?' Emma asked.

'Oh, I shall read, and sing, and enjoy myself generally.'

'Very well. I shall be back in good time.'

The wife went out, and the husband was left alone. He had an interesting book, and he began to read it. He read till eight o'clock, and then he began to yawn, and refer frequently to the clock. The book did not interest him as usual. Ever and anon he would come to a passage which he knew would please his wife, and instinctively he turned as though he would read it aloud; but there was no wife to hear it. At half-past eight he arose from his chair and began to pace the floor. Then he went and got his flute, and performed several of his favorite airs. Finally the clock struck nine, and his wife returned.

'Well, John, I am back in good time. How have you enjoyed yourself?'

'Capitally. I had no idea it was so late. I hope you have had a pleasant evening?'

'Oh, splendid! I had no idea how much enjoyment there was away from home. Home is a dull place, after all, isn't it?'

'Why, no; I can't say it is,' returned John. 'I rather like it.'

'I'm glad of that,' retorted Emma; 'for we shall both enjoy ourselves now. You shall have a nice comfortable week of it.'

John winced at this; but he kept his countenance, and determined to stand it out.

On the next evening Emma prepared to go away again.

'I shall be back in good time,' she said.

'Where are you going?' her husband asked.

'Oh, I can't tell exactly. I may go to several places.'

So John Wilson was left alone again, and he tried to amuse himself as before; but he found it hard work. Ever and anon he would cast his eyes upon that empty chair; and the thought would come, 'How pleasant it would be if she were here!' The clock finally struck nine, and he began to listen for the step of his wife. Half an hour more slipped by, and he became very nervous and uneasy.

'I declare,' he muttered to himself, after he had listened for some time in vain, 'this is too bad. She ought not to stay out so late!'

But he happened to remember that he often remained away much later than that; so he concluded that he must make the best of it.

At fifteen minutes to ten Emma came.

'A little late, am I not?' she said, looking up at the clock. 'But I fell in with some old friends. How have you enjoyed yourself?'

'First-rate,' returned John, bravely. 'I think home is a great place.'

'Especially when one can have it all to himself,' added the wife, with a sidelong glance at her husband.

But he made no reply.

On the next evening Emma prepared to go out as before; but this time she kissed her husband ere she went, and seemed to hesitate somewhat.

'Where do you think of going?' John asked, in an undertone.

'I may drop in to see Uncle John,' replied Emma. 'However, you won't be uneasy. You'll know I'm safe.'

'Oh, certainly.'

When the husband was left to his own reflections he began to ponder seriously upon the subject thus presented for consideration. He could not read, he could not play, he could not enjoy himself in any way while that arm chair was empty. In short, he found that home had no real comfort without his wife. The one thing needed to make his home cheerful was not present.

'I declare,' he said to himself, 'I did not think it would be lonesome. And can it be that she feels as I do, when she is here all alone? It must be so,' he pursued, thoughtfully. 'It is just as she says. Before we were married, she was very happy in her childhood's home. Her parents loved her, and her brothers and sisters loved her, and they did all they could to make her comfortable.'

After this he walked up and down the room several times, and then stopped again and communed with himself. 'I can't stand this. I should die in a week. If Emma were only here I think I could amuse myself very well. How lonesome and dreary it is. And only eight o'clock. I declare I've a mind to walk down to Uncle John's, and see if she is there. It would be a relief to see her face. I won't go in. She shan't know yet that I hold out so faintly.'

John Wilson took another turn across the room, glanced once more at the clock, and then took his hat and went out. He locked the door after him, and then bent his steps towards Uncle John's. It was a beautiful moonlight evening, and the air was keen and bracing. He was walking along, when he heard a light step approaching him. He looked up, and—he could not be mistaken—saw his wife. His first impulse was to avoid her, but she had recognized him.

'John,' she said, in surprise, 'is this you?'

'It is,' was the response.

'And you do not pass your evenings at home?' she asked.

'This is the first time I have been out, Emma, upon my word; and even now I have not been absent from the house ten minutes. I merely came out to take the fresh air. But where are you going?'

'I am going home, John. Will you go with me?'

'Certainly,' he returned.

She took his arm, and they walked home in silence.

'When Emma had taken off her things, she sat down and gazed up at the clock.

'You came home early to-night,' remarked John.

The young wife looked up into her husband's face, and, with an expression half-smiling and half-tearful, she answered.

'I will confess the truth, John. I have given up the experiment. I managed to stand it last evening; but I could not stand it through to-night. When I thought of you here all alone, I wanted to be with you. It didn't seem right. I haven't enjoyed myself at all. I have no home but this.'

'Say you so,' cried John, moving his seat to his wife's side, and taking one of her hands. 'Then let me make my confession. I have stood it not a whit better. When I left the house this evening I could bear it no longer. I found that this was no game for me while my sweet wife was absent. I thought I would walk down to Uncle John's, and see your face, if possible. I had gazed upon your empty chair till my heart ached.'

He kissed her as he spoke, and then added, while she reclined her head upon his arm:

'I have learned a very good lesson. Your presence here is like the bursting forth of the sun after a storm; and if you love me as I love you—which, of course, I cannot doubt—my presence may afford some sunlight for you. At all events, our next experiment shall be to that effect. I will try and see how much home comfort we can find while we are both here to enjoy it.'

Emma was too happy to express her joy in words; but she expressed it nevertheless, and in a manner, too, not to be mistaken.

The next evening was spent at home by both husband and wife; it was one of much enjoyment. In a short time John began to realize how much comfort was to be found in a quiet and peaceful home; and the longer

he enjoyed this comfort the more plainly did he see and understand the simple truth, that it takes two to make a happy home; and that if the wife is one party, the husband must be the other.'

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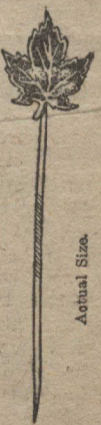
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