

appearance of it; for we are ordered to seem busy whether we are or not. Oh, sir, if you only knew the misery and mischief which have gone on for the last thirty years, accumulating and progressing, you would see the necessity of a change."

"No, I do not see it," returned the host, "and I disapprove of this discontent among young people, and beg to hear no more of it. Young people must take their chance, and work their way, as others have done before them."

Yes, in as mortal danger of life as the soldier on the battle-field (*for this is the computed ascertained fact*)—from breathing foul air—from want of sufficient rest—from continued over-exertion—from hurried and irregular meals, and frequently improper food; and in the peril of mind and morals which must result from the systematic teaching of much falsehood, and absence of all leisure for establishing religious principles—for cultivating the intellectual nature, and enjoying the healthful influence of social intercourse. But Mr. Markham, who spoke thus, considered himself a person of strict principles, and, above all, of business habits—so that he thought it his duty to apprise the governing powers in the establishment of Messrs. Scrape and Haveall (they had lately given him a large order for groceries), that they had a dangerous rebel in their house. The next day William Howard was discharged!

Again three months have passed—changing now golden, glowing August, to dull November.

In a very humble dwelling were assembled, one Sunday evening, William Howard, his mother, and Alice Markham. An open Bible was on the table, from which the latter had been reading aloud, until the gathering tears stayed her voice, and she paused; her listeners knowing too well the reason of her silence to ask it. Alas! William Howard was now a confirmed invalid;—anxiety of mind from losing his situation, and probably, a cold taken in going about seeking another, had completed the work so long begun—the fiat was gone forth—Consumption had marked him as its own. He knew the truth, and was resigned to the will of God; not with that dogged, hardened, brute courage, which may meet death unflinchingly, but with that holy trust in His mercy, that while the heart feels the dear ties of life, it has yet strength to say meekly—"Thy will be done!"

"So you think, dear Alice," said Mrs. Howard, making an effort to change the current of all their thoughts, "you think that Herbert and yourself will obtain situations in the establishment we were speaking of, where they close at seven o'clock!—blessings on them, for having the courage and humanity to set such an example."

"I have no doubt of it," said Alice, trying to speak cheerfully; "for they only wait to see Mr. Haveall, and whatever evil may have been going on in the house, he cannot accuse us of participating in it. Ah, William, what a happiness it must be to you, to know that your influence saved Herbert from becoming as false and unworthy as so many of his companions; and I—oh! how much do I owe you!"

William Howard was scarcely allowed to speak, for the slightest exertion brought on the cough, but he wrote on a slate which was kept near him;

"Less, dearest, than I owe you—truth and virtue never seemed so lovely, as when reflected from your conduct."

There was a long pause after the writing was erased—and presently the bells from neighbouring churches were heard sounding for evening service. William Howard wrote upon the slate:

"Mother, will you go to church to-night, and leave me, as you have sometimes done, with Alice?"

Mrs. Howard rose, and kissing his pale forehead, said solemnly:

"I will pray for all of us—I am inconsiderate to leave you so seldom together."

"No, no," murmured her son, "only for to-night."

The lovers were together. Lovers! what an earthly word for two such beings as William and Alice. The one,

"Whose shadow fell upon the grave
He stood so near,"

the other, in the years of opening life, with, in all human probability, a long and solitary course before her. The heart of Alice was too pure for her to play the prude for an instant. She knelt on a stool beside the large easy chair in which he was supported, and passing her arm round his neck, rested her own head upon his pillow, so that she could overlook the little slate on which he wrote, and murmur her answers into his ear. Nay, I think she pressed a kiss or two upon the skeleton fingers, before they traced these words:

"Tell me the truth, dear Alice,—where does the money come from, by means of which I am surrounded with so many comforts? It cannot be my mother's needlework that earns it."

"And you are too proud to take a little of our savings?"

"No, darling, I am not. Pride does not become the dying; but more is spent than even this accounts for."

"Then I will tell you," said Alice, after a pause; "I think the truth will give you pleasure. The fellow-assistants who profited by your ad-