

# THE WINSTALLS A TALE OF LOVE AND MONEY

OF  
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BY  
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## CHAPTER III.

### BROKEN VOWS.

The day for labor and the night for rest; that seems to be heaven's beneficent law. In some cases, however, it is better to wake than sleep, even in the night season. It was so just now with Mr. Erwin. It can hardly be imagined that at such a critical time he would sleep very soon or soundly. To be sure his heart was eased of a great load, and there had come to him a new sense of restfulness and hope. Still there hung over him the uncertainty of what tomorrow might bring; a crisis was impending; it might issue favorably and relieve this terrible strain; or it might barely open a way of escape, at the same time involving him in an obligation of honor, which to him was no less binding than the most amply secured debt in the world. It would be no wonder if Mr. Erwin did not sleep well.

But there was more than this. He was going through another crisis that night, and one that touched deeper parts of his being than even the financial crisis could touch. This was a spiritual crisis. He said not a word about it to his friend; no, not even when that friend had so magnanimously come to his rescue. He had an instinctive feeling that in this deeper crisis Winstall could give him no aid, no advice, hardly even any sympathy. No; he must settle this question alone, with his own conscience and his God. When he would see his way made plain—when he would get his feet on some solid foundation—then he could tell his friend what he had done. But while the issue was doubtful—while his own heart was weak—while there was any danger of going back to the course to which his own conscience urged him on, he must take no advice that might lead him to swerve from the straight line of duty. He felt that the course he would choose now would give its coloring to his whole future life. Twenty years ago he had graduated from an Episcopal Theological Seminary with a view to the Episcopal ministry. He had not chosen this profession for himself, in the first instance; his father had chosen it for him, in faith and prayer that the young man himself would ratify the choice himself in due time, and give himself to the ministry in the spirit which such sacred work demands. The father's faith was rewarded, for the son, a year prior to the end of his course, had most earnestly espoused and consecrated himself to the ministry. It so happened, however, that when he was ready work was not immediately forthcoming. Whether from the fact that the Erwin family had not the proper influence, or for some other reason, the young man did not find an opening for some months, and the prospect did not seem to be improving. His father had a little money on the stock exchange in earlier years, but had the wisdom to quit in time, and was now living comfortably on a farm fifty miles outside the city. To keep the young man from moping the father advanced him a small sum of money, and told him to try his luck in a small way in speculation. He did try, and succeeded; tried again and succeeded; tried a third time, and still succeeded. The

amounts ventured were small, and the gains small in proportion; but the result was that the young man's appetite was whetted for larger speculations. His father made a further advance and larger speculations were made. So the habit grew and the ministry began to be lost sight of. There were many ups and downs of fortune. Their might be a lucky stroke of business one day, to be offset by an equally unlucky stroke next day or next week. So the time went on, months merging into years, and years increasing, until twenty years had passed, and all visions of the ministry seemed to have faded away. Quite often Erwin was on the verge of bankruptcy, and had many hair-breadth escapes. And the total result was that after twenty years he had accumulated almost nothing.

Amid all these ups and downs there was one heart that ever beat true to its first and holiest ambition. This was Erwin's wife. She had become betrothed to him during his last year at the Seminary, neither of them in the least aware of the difficulties that lay in their path. But come what might, the wife kept true to her high ideal. If delays and discouragements came, as they did, she could wait. Some day her husband would have a parish, and she would aid and sustain him in his work. So she never enjoyed the business of her husband. It was a weariness and grief to her, even when it succeeded best. She regarded it as a barrier between themselves and the goal they were to reach. But now her star of hope burned dim. It was twenty years since her husband left the Seminary. Who would want him now in the ministry, even if he still wished to enter it? And if he did enter it could he do the work? Would he have any talent for such work now, after so many wasted years? And if he had the talent, would he have the zeal? Had not the early fire of enthusiasm smoldered into ashes? Ah, it was an unhappy retrospect and a dark prospect. But cheer up, brave heart. Who knows what may be in store for you yet? "Unto the righteous there ariseth light in the darkness."

So this was the crisis that had come to Erwin. It had been long in coming, but it came now with terrible force. He had been awakening lately to the consciousness that his life had in the best sense been a failure. But how to improve or redeem it—that was the problem. Did the future hold any chance for him yet? If he turned right round, resolutely casting the world behind him, could he yet return to his first love, and his early ideals? He could never do so well or so much—that was clear enough; but could he not do something to atone for the failure of the past, and round out his life into some measure of success? Ah, if he had a chance in the ministry he could do something yet. But who would want him now? Yet he had friends now, influential friends who might aid him, as he had not before. Thus between hope and fear he was struggling for some weeks past. He said nothing to his wife of what was passing through his mind. If he did not make a radical change he would not tantalize her with a delusive hope. If he did see his way to such a change he knew well she would be with him heart

and soul. And this was the condition of his mind on that night when he retired to his chamber in Mr. Winstall's.

The crisis had come. It had narrowed itself down to a few hours. He felt that this night must settle it. We draw a veil over the scene when, with strong crying and tears, he appealed to the Strong for help. For the greater part of the night the courage and the light he needed did not come. But it came at length. He saw his way clear to break with the world altogether, and to seek the path from which his feet had strayed twenty years before. He saw all the difficulties, but he realized the need of faith. The point at which he clearly arrived was this,—that once through this unhappy transaction he would be done with business forever, and devote himself wholly to the ministry if he could secure a place; or failing that, he would take some less honorable Christian work, such as God might lead him into. It was not a very complete programme, but he realized that it was sufficient for the present. If he walked step by step in faith, he believed that God would open his way. There was just one contingency that troubled him. If he had to draw on that twenty thousand dollars for relief, how would he ever pay it back? He knew that even a decent parish, if he secured one, would never enable him to refund such an amount. Then for a moment the temptation came to him to keep on with his business till the advance was paid. It was but for a moment, however, for a better solution came. He knew that being an only child he was heir to his father's farm, and that in a few years at most it must come into his possession. This would more than satisfy the claim. But he would mention that point to his friend in the morning. No doubt he would be entirely satisfied. So his heart was at rest. He felt peaceful, hopeful, happy. What joy it is to have a good conscience, if one has nothing else. Soon he slept, and it was a sleep of innocence and peace, in which he dreamed of his wife and their marriage day, when all the world was bright, and their hopes were high.

### The Baby Beaver.

All kinds of animals do wonderful things without ever being taught. Each in its own line inherits an education—an education which, in common language goes by the name of instinct. A Canadian professor convinced a friend who did not believe in this inherited faculty, in this way:—He bought a baby beaver of a hunter, and sent it to his skeptical friend. The creature became a great pet in the house, but showed no signs of wanting to build a dam until, one Monday morning, a leaky pail full of water was put on the floor of the back kitchen. The beaver was there. He was only a baby, to be sure, but the moment he saw the water oozing out of a crack in the pail he scampered out into the yard, brought in a chip and began building his dam. His owner was called, and watched the little fellow very much astonished at what he saw. He gave orders to have the pail left where it was, and the industrious beaver kept at his work four weeks, when he had built a solid dam all around the pail.

Mothers keep in mind that your children can never be young again. Therefore strive to make their childhood one to which they can in after years look back to as the merriest, happiest period of their lives.

Watchmaker—"All that ails your watch is that the hands are crossed. The big one seems to be holding the little one." Miss Gay (demurely)—"Isn't that the right way?"