

'Twenty yards at fifty-five cents! Just eleven dollars.' The customer opened her purse as she thus spoke, and counted out the sum in glittering gold dollars. 'That is right, I believe,' and she pushed the money-towards Mr. Levering, who, with a kind of automatic movement of his hand, drew forward the coin and swept it into his till.

'Send the bundle to No. 300, Argyle Street, said the lady, with a bland smile, as she turned from the counter, and the half-bewildered store-keeper.

'Stay, madam! there is a slight mistake! The words were in Mr. Levering's thoughts, and on the point of gaining utterance, but he had not the courage to speak. He had gained a dollar in the transaction beyond his due, and already it was lying heavily on his conscience. Willingly would he have thrown it off; but when about to do so, the quick suggestion came, that in acknowledging to the lady the fact of her having paid five cents a yard too much, he might falter in his explanation, and thus betray his attempt to do her a wrong. And so he kept silence, and let her depart beyond recall.

Anything gained at the price of virtuous self-respect is acquired at too large a cost.—A single dollar on the conscience may press so heavily as to bear down man's spirits, and rob him of all the delights of life. It was so in the present case. Vain was it that Mr. Levering sought self-justification. Argue the matter as he would, he found it impossible to escape the smarting conviction that he had unjustly exacted a dollar from one of his customers. Many times through the day he found himself in a musing, abstracted state, and, on rousing himself therefrom, became conscious, in his external thought, that it was the dollar by which he was troubled.

'I'm very foolish,' said he, mentally, as he walked homeward, after closing his store for the evening. 'Very foolish to worry myself about a trifle like this. The goods were cheap enough at fifty-five cents, and she is quite as well contented with her bargain as if she had only paid fifty.'

But it would not do. The dollar was on his conscience, and he sought in vain to remove it by efforts of this kind.

Mr. Levering had a wife and three pleasant children. They were the sunlight of his home. When the business of the day was over, he usually returned to his own fireside with buoyant feeling. It was not so on this occasion. There was a pressure on his bosom—a sense of discomfort—a want of self-satisfaction. The kiss of his wife, and the clinging arms of his children, as they were twined around his neck, did not bring the old delight.

'What is the matter with you this evening, dear? Are you not well?' inquired Mrs. Levering, breaking in upon the thoughtful mood of her husband, as he sat in unwonted silence.

'I'm perfectly well,' he replied, rousing himself, and forcing a smile.

'You look sober.'

'Do I.' Another forced smile.

'Something troubles you, I'm afraid.'

'O no; it's all in your imagination.'

'Are you sick, papa?' now asks a bright little fellow, clambering upon his knee.

'Why no, love, I'm not sick. Why did you think so?'

'Because you don't play horses with me.'

'Oh, dear! Is that the ground of your suspicion?' replied the father laughing.

'Come, we'll soon scatter them to the winds.'

And Mr. Levering commenced a game of romps with the children. But he tired long before they grew weary, nor did he, from the beginning, enter into this sport with his usual zest.

'Does your head ache, pa?' inquired the child who had previously suggested sickness, as he saw his father leave the floor, and seat himself, with some gravity of manner, on a chair.

'Not this evening, dear,' answered Mr. Levering.

'Why don't you play longer, then?'

'Oh pa!' exclaimed another child, speaking from a sudden thought, 'you don't know what a time we had at school to-day.'