

WORK VS. POVERTY.

In a Prussian roadside inn one hot summer's day, several men were smoking and drinking. The room was dirty and uncared for, and the men, who looked quite in keeping with it, were railing at the way in which Providence did her work, and contrasting the luxury and idleness of the rich with the misery and hardships of the poor.

During the conversation a stranger, a young man, came in to eat his bread and cheese, while his team rested in the shade before the inn. For a time he listened silently to the talk, and then joined in saying, "You must strike!"

"Strike against what?" asked the peasants.

"Against poverty!" answered the young man, "and the weapon with which to strike is work."

"Well said! Sensibly spoken!" laughed the peasants.

"It would have been well for me had I always been as sensible," continued the stranger, "but I used to be an idle rogue. I was strong and healthy, but I would not work, and if now and then I was obliged to do anything, I was off at once to the alehouse, and like lightning the money was out and the brandy was in. I went from place to place—that means, that everywhere I was turned away, for no master wants a loafer about, I'd soon had enough of farm service, and then I went about to fairs and public houses as a fiddler. Wherever anyone would hear me, I scraped my violin, but with all my scraping I was never able to get a whole shirt to my back. Soon I grew tired of music and then tried begging. I went up and down the country, but most doors were shut in my face. People said a healthy young fellow like I was ought to work. That enraged me. I grumbled that God had not made me a rich man, and I was envious of all who were better off than myself. I would have liked to have turned the world upside down that I might have been able to lord it over the rich. One day I went into an inn, sat down in a corner, and began uttering my begging speeches. At a table not far from me sat a gentleman (he is, as I afterwards heard, a writer of books); he kept glancing at me and I kept glancing at him, for I thought he would be sure to give me a good alms, and so he did. I'm spending it still."

"What was it?" asked the men, who had listened attentively.

"He came up to me and asked me about my early life. I told him I had been a farm servant, and sent from place to place—in short, I told him everything. He listened quietly, shook his head, and at last said, 'Shew me your hands!' Astonished, I held out my hands; he examined them all over, pushed up my shirt sleeves, and again shook his head.

"What powerful hands! What strength there must be in those arms!" he said. "My lad, you must join in the war."

"I what war?" I asked.

"In a war against your misery?" he exclaimed, in a loud voice. "You fool, you imagine you are poor—poor with such hands! What a mad idea! He only is poor who is sick in body or in mind! You are healthy in body and mind. Good heavens! with such hands, poor! Set your wits to work and reflect upon the treasure God has given you in your strong healthy limbs. Recover your senses and march forward in the war."

"Bravo! That was very good," laughed the peasants.

"And so I joined in the war," continued the young man. "I looked for a place, and now I am a farm servant as before—nothing better and no richer; but I am content and industrious, and I have served the same master these five years, and shall stay with him until one of us dies."

It is hardly necessary now to call attention to the celebrated "White Shirts," made by White, of 65 King Street West. Being made of the best material, by skilled labor, and mathematically cut, they recommend themselves to all who wish a really fine article. Every shirt warranted to give satisfaction. A. White, 65 King Street West, Toronto.

Children's Department.

CHRIST'S KINGDOM COMING.

When you rise from praying this bit of the Lord's Prayer, "Thy kingdom come," work for its coming. Be kind, copy your King, try every day to do something for the King. He has many poor children whom you may help into the kingdom—naughty, hungry, and ragged little ones, but still His. Say to yourself, "What can I do for so-and-so? I should like to help them into the kingdom to please Christ my King." Every bit of good you do, every improvement in yourself, helps on the answer to this prayer, for the minute he can come the Lord Jesus will; and do not forget every naughty passion you indulge, every bad thing you do, keeps back that happy time when there will be no more pain, or hunger, or sorrow of any kind. When everybody is good and everybody is happy, then god's kingdom will have come, but not till then.

A LESSON; AND HOW TWO LEARNED IT.

BY H. M. S.

Betty sighed. Now why she should have sighed at this particular moment no one on earth could tell. And it was all the more exasperating because John had just generously put into her little, shapely hand a brand new ten-dollar bill. And here began the trouble.

"What's the matter?" he said, his face falling at the faint sound, and his mouth clapping together in what those who knew him but little called an "obstinate pucker"—"now what is it?"

Betty, who had just begun to change the sigh into a merry little laugh rippling all over the corners of the red lips, stopped suddenly, tossed her head, and with a small jerk, no ways conciliating, sent out the words, "You needn't insinuate that I'm always troublesome!"

"I didn't insinuate—who's talking of insinuating?" cried John, thoroughly incensed at the very idea, and backing away a few steps, he glared down from his tremendous height in extreme irritation. "It's you yourself that's forever insinuating, and all that, and then to put it on to me, it's—abominable!"

The voice was harsh, and the eyes that looked down into hers were not pleasant to behold.

"And if you think, John Peabody, that I'll stand and have such things said to me, you miss your guess—that's all!" cried Betty, with two big, red spots coming in her cheeks as she tried to draw her little, erect figure up to its utmost dimensions. "Forever insinuating! I guess you wouldn't have said that before I married you! On now you can, of course!"

"Didn't you say it first, I'd like to know?" cried John in great excitement, drawing nearer to the small creature he called "wife," who was gazing at him with blazing eyes of indignation. "I can endure everything."

"And if you bear more than I do," cried Betty, wholly beyond control now, "why then I'll give up," and she gave a bitter little laugh and tossed her head again.

And here they were in the midst of a quarrel! These two who but a year before had promised to love and protect and help each other through life.

"Now," said John, and he brought his hand down with such a bang on the table before him that Betty nearly skipped out of her little shoes, only she controlled the start, for she would have died before she had let John see if, "we'll have no more of this nonsense!" His face was very pale, and the lines around the mouth so drawn that it would have gone to any one's heart to have seen their expression.

"I don't know how you will change it or help it," said Betty, lightly, to conceal her dismay at the turn affairs had taken. "I'm sure," and she pushed back, with a saucy indifferent gesture, the light waving hair from her forehead.

The hair that John always smoothed when he potted her when tired or disheartened, and called her "childie." Her gesture struck to his heart as he glanced at the sunny hair, and the cool, indifferent face underneath, and before he knew it he was saying, "There is no help for it now, I suppose."

Oh yes, there is," said Betty, still in the cool, calm way that ought not to have deceived him. But men know so little of women's hearts, although they may live with them for years in closest friendship. "You needn't try to endure it, John Peabody, if you don't want to. I'm sure I don't care!"

"What do you mean?" Her husband grasped her arms and compelled the merry brown eyes to look up to him.

"I can go back to mother's," said Betty provokingly. "She wants me any day, and then you can live quietly and live to suit yourself, and it will be better all around."

Instead of bringing out a violent protestation of fond affection and remorse, which she fully expected, John drew himself up, looked at her fixedly for a long, long minute, then dropped her arm, and said through white lips, very slowly:

"Yes, it may be as you say—better all around. You know best," and was gone from the room before she could recover from her astonishment enough to utter a sound.

With a wild cry Betty rushed across the room, first tossing the ten-dollar bill savagely as far as she could throw it, and flinging herself on the comfortable old sofa, broke into a flood of bitter tears—the first she had shed during her married life.

"How could he have done it—oh, what have I said—oh John, John!"

The bird twittered in his little cage over in the window among the plants. Betty remembered like a flash how John and she filled the seed cup that very morning, how he laughed when she tried to put it in between the bars, and when she couldn't reach without getting upon a chair, he took her in his great arms, and held her up, just like a child, that she might fix it to suit herself. And the "bits" that he had said in his tender way, why they had gone down to the depths of the foolish little heart, sending her about her work singing for very gladness of spirit. And now!

Betty stuffed her fingers hard into her rosy ears to shut out the bird's chirping.

"If he knew why I sighed," she moaned. "Oh, my husband! Birthdays—nothing will make any difference now. Oh, why can't I die?"

How long she stayed there, crouched down on the old sofa, she never knew. Over and over the dreadful scene she went, realizing its worst features each time in despair, until a voice out in the kitchen said, "Betty!" and heavy footsteps proclaimed that some one was on the point of breaking in upon her uninvited.

Betty sprang up, choked back her sobs and tried with all her might to compose herself, and remove all traces of her trouble.

The visitor was the worst possible one she could have under the circumstances. Crowding herself on terms of the closest intimacy with the pretty bride, who with her husband had moved in the village a twelvemonth previous, Miss Elvira Simmons had made the very most of her opportunities, and by dint of making great parade over helping her in some domestic work, such as house-cleaning, dressmaking, and the like, the maiden lady had managed to ply her other vocation, that of news-gatherer, at one and the same time, pretty effectually.

She always called her by her first name, though Betty inly resented it; and she made a great handle of her friendship on every occasion, making John rage violently, and vow a thousand times the "old maid" should walk!

But she never had—and now, scenting dimly, like a carrion after its prey, that trouble might have come to the pretty little white house, the make-mischief had come to do her work, if devastation had really commenced.

"Been crying?" she said, more plainly than politely, and touching the pretty cheek with her long, thin forefinger. "I wouldn't—he ain't worth it."

"What do you mean?" cried Betty, in the extreme consternation and indignation.

"Oh, nothing," said Miss Simmons carelessly, and sinking down into the pretty chintz-covered rocking-chair with an energy that showed she meant to stay, and made the chair creak fearfully. "Only folks do say that you and your husband don't live happy—but law! I wouldn't mind—I know 'tain't your fault."

Betty's heart stood still. Had it come to this! John and she not live happily! To be sure they didn't, as she remembered with a pang the dreadful scene of words and hot tempers; but had it gotten around so soon—a story in everybody's mouth!

With all her distress of mind she was saved from opening her mouth. So Miss Simmons, failing in that, was forced to go on.

"An' I tell folks so," she said, rocking herself back and forth to witness the effect of her words, "when they git to talking, so you can't blame me, if things don't go easy for you, I'm sure!"

"You tell folks so?" repeated Betty vaguely, and standing quite still. "What? I don't understand."

"Why, that the blame is all his'n," cried the "old maid," exasperated at her strange mood and her dullness. "I say, says I, why there couldn't no one live with him, let alone that pretty wife he's got. That's what I say, Betty. And then I tell 'm what a queer man he is, how cross, an'—"

"And you dare to tell people such things of my husband?" cried Betty, drawing herself up to her extreme height, and towering so over the old woman in the chair, that as she jumped up in confusion at the storm she had raised, and stared blindly into the blazing eyes and face rosy with righteous indignation, her only thought was how to get away from the storm she had raised, but couldn't stop. But she was forced to stay, for Betty stood just in front of the chair, and blocked up the way, so she slunk back into the smallest corner of it, and took it as best she could.

"My husband!" cried Betty, dwelling with pride on the pronoun—at least, if they were to part, she would say it over lovingly as much as she could till the last moment; and then, when the time did come, why people should know that it wasn't John's fault—the best, the kindest, the noblest husband that was ever given to a woman. I've made him more trouble than you can guess, my hot temper has vexed him—I've been cross, impatient, and—"

"Hold!" cried a voice; "you're talking against my wife!" and in a moment big John Peabody rushed through the door, grasped the little woman in his arms, and folded her to his heart, right before the old maid and all!

"Oh," said Miss Simmons, sitting up straight, and setting her spectacles more firmly.

"And, no, that you've learned all that you can," said John, turning round to her, still holding Betty, "why—you may go!"

The chair was vacant. A disolving view through the door was all that was to be seen of the gossip, who started up the road hurriedly, leaving peace behind.

"Betty," said John, some half hour afterward, "what was the sigh for? I don't care now, but I did think, dear, and it cut me to the heart, how you might have married richer. I longed to put ten times ten in your hand, Betty, and it galled me because I couldn't."

Betty smiled, and twisted away from his grasp. Running into the bedroom, she presently returned, still smiling, with a bundle rolled up in a clean towel.

This she put on her husband's knee, who stared at her wonderingly.

"I didn't mean," she said unpinning the bundle, "to let it out now, but I shall have to. Why, John, day after to-morrow is your birthday!"

"So 'tis!" said John. "Gracious! has it come around so soon?"

"And you, dear boy," said Betty, shaking out before his eyes a pretty brown affair, all edged with silk of the blindest shade, that presently assumed the proportions of a dressing-gown—"this is to be your present. But you must be dreadfully surprised, John, when you get it, for oh! I didn't want you to know!"

John made the answer he thought best. When he spoke again, he said, perplexedly while a small pucker of bewilderment settled between his eyes: "But I don't see, Betty, what this thing," laying one finger on the gown, "had to do with the sigh."

"That," said Betty, and then she broke into a merry laugh, that got so mixed up with the dimples, and the dancing brown eyes, that for a moment she couldn't finish. "Oh, John, I was worrying so over those buttons, they weren't good enough, but they were the best I could do then. And I'd only bought 'em yesterday—two whole dozen. And when you put that ten-dollar bill in my hand, I didn't hardly know it, but I suppose I did give one little bit of a sigh, for I was so provoked that I hadn't waited buying them till to-day."

John caught up the little woman, dressing-gown and all! I don't think they have ever quarrelled again—at least I never heard of it.