

bring something for him. Could I bear that what I brought him was death? And the other, among so many clever and healthy children, is the only one sick, and less intelligent than they; he depends upon us altogether; he is always holding by his mother's finger or carried in my arms. Besides, perhaps he will grow stronger; and then how happy we shall be!"

"In short, sir, of all the things you possess you will give up nothing in exchange for riches."

"But I wish to be rich; other people are rich. My neighbour, Mr. Hemp, has twelve children, yet he is very rich."

"Would you change with him altogether?"

"No."

"Why not?"

"That's no matter; but, for instance, his children are very inferior to mine. I should like to be in his situation, but not to be himself."

"Well, I see you are like other people. You want to keep what you have got and to add something more. But that's not the bargain. You may have something else, but not something more."

"Then I must bear my cross as I can. There's no help. Farewell, sir."

And now there appeared at the entrance a presence more splendid and more imposing than any of the former. Her carriage, for it was a lady, was seen at the door; her footmen officiously put aside the crowd at the entrance, and she came forward, richly dressed, beautiful and graceful, and with the conscious ease of one who attracted all eyes and disappointed none. Everybody made way; a chair was set for her by the officious attendants, and she placed herself, with a slight pleasant movement of acknowledgment, beside the counter. What could that adorned and favoured being wish for more? With health, wealth, beauty, liberty, and a kindly nature such as she showed, was it possible that she could covet anything further? Mr. Destiny seemed to have these ideas in his head, for he inquired,

"Is there anything, madam, for which you can form a wish?"

"I wish to be happy," said the lady.

"Alas!" said Destiny, "if you are not happy, who can be so?"

"I don't come to argue on the fact," said the lady, "I only state what I wish."

"True, madam, I beg your pardon," answered Mr. Destiny. "I have only to ascertain which among your many advantages you will resign for the attainment of it. Now, you must allow me to observe that if a person who has every external means which creates happiness is not happy, the sacrifice of all those means is worth while to become so."

"Most true," said the lady.

"The sacrifice of all advantages may be required in exchange for happiness."

"It is worth them all," answered the lady.

"At the same time," continued Destiny, "there is a sort of happiness derived from external things which has its attractions. It is pleasant to have a habitation upon which everybody congratulates you, to have unbounded means of moving whithersoever you will, to carry such a figure into society as shall make 'many a sudden friend,' to be able to give largely, spend without control, and so on."

"Yes," said the lady, "they are things to be enjoyed when one is happy. They add to happiness, but they don't give it."

"Well said," answered Mr. Destiny. "Then let us proceed to business—"

"But, first, I must observe," said the lady, "that the possession of external advantage, such as you have enumerated, does not by any means exclude happiness. What numbers possess them in a greater or less degree who are happy into the bargain!"

"Yes; there are numbers not desirous of coming to me at all," answered Mr. Destiny. "They may have certain wishes, but on the whole they are content; or their wishes may be such as they themselves are in the way to gratify. Those wishes belong to their profession or their natural state in life, and they are using their own means to obtain them. On the other hand, it is too true that some people who would seem to be

best off are not endowed with happiness: and, as I said, they may well part with everything to obtain it."

"And would, with everything," said the lady, wiping her eyes (which had moistened while he spoke) with a handkerchief trimmed with lace at a guinea a yard.

"If that is your conviction, madam, I will lay an exchange before you, I don't mean an exchange with any one else, but with yourself. I will describe an existence which is very happy, and for a similar one you may change yours. To exchange with another, both parties must agree, and I don't think the person I propose to describe would consent to want happiness even if she could gain your advantages. The position is this:—A little plain woman, who is devoutly loved by her husband."

"Ha!" murmured the lady.

"She has a dutiful son, but he's dull enough; on the other hand, she does not perceive it, for her time is occupied with the care of her family, visiting the cottagers, and what is called doing plain work. But she has a book which she reads on Sundays, and makes a dog-eared to find the place where she left off. She and her husband and son sometimes pay a visit to a neighbour in their little shawl-ridden. She has some pleasure in putting on her silk gown, and a great deal in the friendly gossip: she is busy all day, sleeps all night; murmurs an old song for lightness of heart."

"It's all very well," said the lady, interrupting him; "but it is not possible I could be happy under those circumstances."

"Only she is happy. That you should be happy is the bargain; and that you are not happy is the complaint."

"Better be miserable than so ignorantly happy," said the lady, suddenly rising.

"You are quite wrong, madam."

"May be so, but I can't help it." And with a graceful and gracious bend of her head she rustled through the shop, and mounting her well-appointed carriage, drove off amid the delight of a certain number of boys assembled at the door.

There were many more applicants who came with their wishes. Few accomplished a bargain, but some did; and of the latter I thought the most part made but disadvantageous terms.

One good-looking young fellow's wish was to marry an heiress; he had no other clear idea on the subject, the mere fact of an heiress was his desire. Mr. Destiny was rather hard upon him.

"It is all fair you should marry," said he; "and so that your wife has money, what will you consent she shall be without? Money you are to have, that's settled. Will you give up beauty?"

"Yes."

"Sense?"

"Yes."

"Good temper?"

"Yes."

"Your own way?"

"Oh! I'll manage to get that."

"No; it is in the bargain that you shall not have it; will you give it up?"

"Well, yes; but I'll try."

"You are to fail. What do you say?"

"I'll give all up for money."

"Well, you deserve a very rich bride. Have your wish then."

Another applicant desired that her daughter should marry; and Mr. Destiny thought the wish deserved accomplishment at the price of the daughter's society, her utility at home, the pleasure and grace she had given to her native place, the seven-eighths of her heart bestowed on her husband, while the parents kept only one-eighth.

Again one came, and said a legacy had been left him, and he wished it was more. Mr. Destiny laughed, and said he regretted he could do nothing for him. Another, who was an old man, certainly midway between seventy and eighty, wished he had a knowledge of entomology; and Mr. Destiny, praising his energy, proposed to him to give away one of his remaining years in exchange for the knowledge. In like manner a young man who wished he understood

German, was told to give for it three hours out of the four-and-twenty for half a year. "You will still have twenty-one hours," said Mr. Destiny.

And now, as the interest in others began to slacken, I bethought me that it would be as well if I went up and expressed my own wishes; and accordingly I approached the counter and told Mr. Destiny that I wished for health.

"Indeed," said he; "you look as if you needed that possession. What ails a young fellow like you to be so sick?"

"Hard work, I think," said I. "I am obliged to be in my chambers at the call of my clients, the attorneys, ten hours a day, and to work five hours more to get through the business they give me."

"In short, you are a successful lawyer?"

"Very much so; but a miserable invalid."

"Had you ever health and spirits?"

"Yes, I had. In my university days I was so very happy and so very glad, that my companions named me Festive."

"Then, my dear sir, let me observe that you have already made one of those exchanges for that for which men come to me. You have exchanged health for success; and now you want both health and success; but it seems you can't have both. Give up at least a portion of the last. Work half your time, and get back half your health and lightness of heart."

"How is that possible? If I refuse any business I shall probably lose it all."

"Nay; there is a limit to business somewhere. Nobody can work more than three hundred and sixty-five days, of twenty-four hours each, during the year; therefore you can, if you will, cut off even the half."

"Not so easily; I must work in proportion to other people; some of whom can bear employment for eighteen hours a day."

"If so, they are able to do it, by being originally endowed with health, such as does not come into your destiny."

"But it would be hard to fall behind those whom I have surpassed. Nobody can work more hours than there are in the year; but for success they must work in proportion to other people."

"Harder, I should think, to bear the restless anguish which is in your face."

"That's bad enough, indeed."

"Besides the probability of being unable to do no work whatever."

"That's much worse."

"Take my advice: give half your success for half your time; and give that time for your wish—Health."

"Sir, I must think about it."

"Don't think too long, for fear the opportunity should pass."

"Well, I dare say you're right; and to-morrow I will let you know."

I returned home, and next morning when I woke in my bed I found I was in the shivers of a nervous fever. Ideas raced through my brain with a rapidity which defied my efforts to catch them; I talked, but I knew not what I said; sometimes I cried, sometimes I laughed, and I remember but little till complete exhaustion seemed to sink me into a profound sleep, from which I woke, and heard some one say, "He will live."

And live I did. I was frightened at what had happened, and I took measures to exchange my wealth for health. I steadily refused to plead for Jennings *versus* The Plausible Insurance Office; and I bought a horse, which I kept last winter at Dunchurch, and hunted from London twice a week. I soon got better; and what is remarkable, though I went several times in search of Newstreet, beyond the Tower, and Mr. Destiny's Wishes Shop, I never could find either.

SPEAKING ENGLISH.—Two Dutchmen once got into a dispute about the English language, each one contending that he could command the best. They made a bet at length, and appointed a judge to decide between them, and accordingly they began:—"Vell, Chon," said the first, "did it rain to-morrow?"—"I shall tink it vash," said John.—"Wasn't that judge in a quandary?"