

spoken—those words which are so easily repeated after they have once occurred. The first quarrel—that sad era in married life—had taken place between us, and both felt that, henceforth, that perfect love which we had hitherto enjoyed could return no more. Could we ever divest ourselves of the memory of those cruel words? “But we might still be comparatively happy if this evil occurred no more;” so said my weeping wife, when, after a passion of tears, she offered me her hand. Things passed on smoothly for a time; but the bonds were broken, and I ceased to check the ebullitions of anger which the slightest circumstance called forth. Before the second year of my married life had passed away, I became that worst of all oppressors—a household tyrant. At any annoyance, no matter how slight—if my meals were not prepared at the appointed hours—if a paper, or a book was mislaid—I would give way to expressions of anger of which, afterward, I really felt ashamed, knowing how unworthy they were of a man; and yet, when again angered, I repeated them, and more violently than before. My wife bore this with patience, but her indulgence chafed me, and I sometimes uttered taunts which no human being could suffer in silence. Then came a reply, and when this reply did come—such scenes as occurred! I would work myself into an insane passion, and utter words which in my cooler moments I shuddered at, and which invariably drove her, weeping, from the room. And yet, soon after, would she come to me and beg to be forgiven for the very words which I had forced her to utter. The demon within me rejoiced to see her pride thus humbled before mine, for never, no matter how much in fault, did I seek a reconciliation.—My temper became more and more violent, and at length, in one of our usual quarrels, I proposed a separation. Had a serpent stung her she would not have gazed on it as she did on me. Never shall I forget her look, so deathly pale, as she came near me and placed her hand on my arm.

“Horace,” said she, “do you think I could survive such an act? Do you think I would cast a stain upon my young sisters? Do you think I would send my gray-haired parents sorrowing to the grave? Would see another woman your bride? Would bear the world’s sneering pity? Never! never!

—I will die first. Persecute me, torture me, inflict every refinement of cruelty upon me, even strike me, if you will; but never will I consent to such a proceeding—never shall the world call me other than your wife so long as we both shall live. You came to me when I was young and happy; you took me from a home where I had never known sorrow; you have blighted the hopes of my young life, and now, now you seek to cast me away like a toy of which you have wearied.”

I recoiled at myself; but I remained unchanged.

We had been married four years, and Emily had greatly changed in that time.—The gay, light-hearted girl had become the calm, dignified woman. The world looked upon us as examples of matrimonial happiness, for we were both too proud to betray the truth. Of late Emily’s manner had altered; she ceased to reply to my fits of passion; neither did she now come and seek to effect a reconciliation with me. An icy calm reigned between us. This existed for some time; but, while I wished it broken, my pride prevented me from making the first advances. Fain would I have had it dispelled by any means which would not humiliate me; for, with all my unkindness, I really loved my wife, regretted the violence of my temper, and lamented my want of self-control. But now—what should I do? My pride forbade any advances from my side, and I feared that none would come from hers. I saw at length that her pride was aroused, and I dreaded that she would obey its dictates, even though it broke her heart, for I knew she still loved me. Day by day her cheek grew paler—her form thinner, and I saw she suffered; but my fiendish pride would not give way. Sometimes, when I had almost conquered myself, when I had determined to effect a reconciliation, when next we met a cold bow from her, with her stately manner, again awoke the demon within me, and my good resolutions were broken. Thus matters stood when, one day, I entered the room where she was sitting, and excited by wine, which, lately, was frequently the case, I commenced upbraiding her about some trifle. She answered not, but continued her work—a piece of delicate embroidery. Enraged at her silence, I snatched it from her hands, threw