WITHOUT A HOME.

By Edward P. Roe, Author of "Barriers Burned Away," "Opening a Chestnut Burr," "Success with Small Fruits," Etc., Etc.

CHAPTER XXXVII.—*Continued.*

"Stop!" thundered Roger; "beware how you say another word against those whom sorrow should render sacred. You know less about them than about heaven. Do you forget that I am of age? You made me an offer, and I thanked you for it honestly and gratefully. What's more, I was base enough to be tempted by it. Oh, yes"—with a bitter laugh—"I was an Atwood enough for that. If you had not coupled it with the condition that I should, like a coward, desert helpless and unfortunate women to whom my word is given, I would have fulfilled your best hopes and ambitions, and have made your old age glad with my grateful love and service. In your cold-hearted worldliness you have overreached youself, and you wrong yourself more than me, even though I perish in the streets. But I won't starve. Mark my words; I'll place the Atwood name where you can't, with all your money, and I shall not make broken faith with those who trust me, the foundation of my fortunes."

"Very well, then," said his uncle, who had quieted down into an anger of white heat; since you prefer those disreputable strangers to your familiy, go to them. I wash my hands of you, and shall write to your father to this effect to-night. I'm a prompt man and don't dilly-dally."

"Mrs. Jocelyn and her daughters are no more disreputable than you are, sir, and calling me 'soft-hearted fool' doesn't make me one. I know the duty I owe my parents, and shall perform it. I shall write to them also. They shall hear both sides, and were your fortune multiplied a thousand times, I won't sell my manhood for it. Am I to have shelter another night, or do you wash your hands of me here and now?"

"Oh, stay, by all means, or you may find yourself in the same cell in which your paragon spent last night," replied his uncle, whose rage now passed all bounds.

"Those words are brutal," said Roger sternly, "and if you are not ashamed of them after thinking them over, you are not the man I took you to be," and he stalked out of the room and out of the house, slamming the door after him.

The old merchant sank into a chair, trembling with both anger and chagrin, for he felt that he had been worsted in the encounter. He did regret the words as soon as spoken, and a certain rude sense of justice made him feel, even in his excitement, that his nephew, although an egregious fool of course, had been true to his sense of right and honor. He was assuredly the victim of a designing lot of women, but believing them to be true, his course had been manly, and the thought already came into his perturbed mind, "Since he was so faithful to them, he would have been equally so to me, and he might have found the hussies out in time to prevent trouble." And now he had said words which the same as turned his brother's son out of doors at midnight. With a groan and an oath he resolved not to write that night, and see how he felt in the morning. His nephew on provocation had proved as great a Tartar as he knew himself to be, and he now remembered that the former had some excuse in his hot young blood, and that he had a right to choose against his offer, if feel enough to do it, without being reviled and insulted.

After a wretched night he found on the breakfast table a brief, cold note from Roger, saying that he would inform him in a day or two where to send his effects and such part of his salary as remained unpaid. The old man frowned, and the Atwood pride and obstinacy took possession of him like evil spirits. In grim reticence he resumed his old routine and life, and again gave himself up to the mechanical accumulation and saving of money.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

NO "DARK CORNERS."

From his uncle's house Roger went to a small hotel and obtained a room in which to spend a sleepless night. After the excitement of anger passed, he recognized the difficulties of his position. He was worse than friendless in the great city, for when he sought employment and gave an account of his antecedents, people would ask suspiciously why he left his uncle. The reasons were of too delicate a nature to be babbled about in business offices.

At first he was much depressed, and complained that "luck was dead against him." Moreover he felt that he had responded too harshly to his uncle, who after all, was only trying to aid him in his cold-blooded way. Nevertheless he too had his share of the Atwood pride and obstinacy, and he resolved that the man who had called him a "soft headed fool" for sacrificing himself to his sense of honor and duty, must apologize before there could be any reconciliation. His good sense had led him to make one wise resolution, and early in the morning he carried it out by making a clean breast of it to Mr. Wentworth. The good man listened with deep interest and heartened the young fellow wonderfully by clapping him on the shoulder and saying, "You are made of the right stuff, Atwood, and although the material is yet a little raw and crude, experience and Christian principle will temper it in time into the finest metal."

"Don't ascribe Christian principle to me," growled Roger, "for I'm tempted to swear like a pirate."

"Very likely, and not without some reason. I occasionally feel a little that way myself, but I don't do it; neither ought you."

Roger stared. "You're not a bit like a minister," he burst out.

"Sorry to hear it."

"That isn't what I mean. You are a man. Our dominie up at Forestville was only a minister."

"I have my share of human nature, Roger, and am glad of it, for I know from experience just how you young fellows feel. But it involves many a big fight. Christian principle doesn't mean a cotton-and-wool nature, or a milk-and-water experience, to put it in a homely way. It's Christian principle that makes Mildred Jocelyn, as you say, one of the bravest and best girls in the world. She's worth more than all your uncle's money, and you needn't be discouraged, for you'll win her yet. A young fellow with your pluck can make his way unaided, and thousands have done so without your motives or your ability. "I'll stand by you, for you are the kind of man I believe in. To make your course completely blameless, you must write a long filial letter to your mother, explaining everything; and if you'll take my advice you will send something like this to your uncle:" and sitting down he scratched off the following words:

"On calmer reflection I perceive that your intentions toward me were kindly and friendly. I should have remembered this and the respect due to your years and not have spoken so harshly. For all that it was not right for me to say, I apologize. At the same time it is my undoubted right and unwavering purpose to be guided by my own conscience. Our views of life and duty vary so widely that it will be best for me to struggle on alone as I can. This, however, is no reason why we should quarrel, or forget the ties of blood which unite us, or our characters as gentlemen."

"Such a note will put you right with your own conscience and your people at home," resumed Mr. Wentworth, "and there's nothing like starting right."

Roger complied at once, for the clergyman's "human nature" had gained his unlimited confidence.

"Now I'm going out," said his friend. "You stay and make my study your own. There is paper, etc. I think I know of a room that you can obtain for a small sum from a nice, quiet family, and perhaps it will just suit you. I'll see; but don't take it if you don't like it. You'll stay and lunch with us, and we'll drink to your success in generous cups of coffee that only my wife knows how to make," and he left Roger cheered, hopeful, and resolute. What was better still, the young man was starting right, as was well proved by the long, affectionate, yet firm and manly letter written to his mother.

After a genial lunch, at which he was treated with a respect and kindness which did him a world of good, he went with Mr. Wentworth to see the room, and was well pleased with it, and he added his future address to the note to his uncle. He then said,

"I keep my promise about Mr. Jocelyn, and the sooner that man is put under treatment the better."

"Why, Roger!" exclaimed his friend, "you can't do anything now."

"I can do just what I promised. I have a hundred dollars in the bank, and there is about twenty-five still due me. With the latter sum I can get along until I can find employment."

"Hold on, Roger; it seems to me that your generosity is getting the better of you now. Circumstances have greatly changed since you made your promise."

"I've not changed, and my promises don't change with circumstances. It may be some time before you can raise the money, even if you can get it at all in these hard times, and it's something that ought to be done at once."

"Give me your hand again, old fellow. The world would say we were a pair of fools, but we'll wait and see who's right. Come to me at to-morrow morning."

Mr. Wentworth had several things on hand that he meant to do, but he dropped everything and started for the offices of some lawyers whom he knew, determined to find a foothold at once for his plucky *protege*. Roger went to call on Mrs. Jocelyn, feeling that he would like to get the matter relating to her husband settled, so that he might give all his thought and energy to the problem of making his way unaided. In response to his knock a light step crossed the floor, and the door was opened a little, revealing Mildred's face, then thrown open hospitably. "Oh, Mr. Atwood," she exclaimed, "I am very glad to see you. Forgive me that I opened the door so suspiciously, but you have never lived in a tenement, and do not know what awful neighbors are often prowling around. Besides, I was alone, and that made me more timid. I am so troubled about something, and perhaps you can help me, for you seem to be able to help every one," Mildred continued hastily, for she dreaded an embarrassing silence between them unspeakably. "I've been to see my employers in the hope they would forgive that poor girl who put the lace in my cloak, and they won't. They were polite and kind to me, and offered me better wages if I would come back, but were relentless toward the girl, saying they 'meant to break up that kind of thing once for all.' Don't you think something might be done?"

"If you failed there would be no use of my trying," said Roger, smiling. "I think it was wonderfully good of you to go on such an errand."

"I've had some lessons in goodness lately," she replied, with a little friendly nod. "As I talked with those stern men, I realized more than ever what an escape I've had, and I've thanked you in my heart a thousand times."

The young fellow looked as if he had been repaid a thousand times, and wondered that he could have been so tempted by his uncle's terms, for it now seemed impossible that he could ever do aught else than serve the sweet,, sad girl who looked, into his eyes with the trust and friendliness which he had sought for so long in vain. His face became so expressive of his feelings that she hurried on to speak of another matter weighing on her mind.

"Mr. Atwood," she said hesitatingly, "I have another trouble. You looked so vindicatively at that Mr. Bissel in the courtroom that I have feared you might do something that you might afterward regret. I know how one with your honorable spirit would feel toward such a wretch, but, believe me, he is beneath your notice. I should feel so badly if you got into any trouble on my account. Indeed it seems that I couldn't stand it at all," and she said it with so much feeling that he was honestly delighted. His spirits were rising fast, for this frank, strong interest in his welfare, in contrast with her old constraint and coldness, was sweet to him beyond all words.

With a mischievous and rather wicked look in his dark eyes, he said, "You must leave that fellow to me. I'm not a saint as you are."

Mildred proved that she was not altogether a saint by inwardly relishing his spirit, for she never could overcome some of the traits of her Southern blood; but she said, honestly and anxiously, "I should feel very badly if you got into any trouble."

"That thought will make me prudent," he replied gratefully. "You would never feel badly again about anything, if I had my way."

"I believe you, Mr. Atwood, and I can't see why I did not understand you better before," said Mildred, the words slipping out almost before she knew it."

"I don't think you can understand me yet," he answered, very gently.

She did not reply, but he saw her fingers trembling with nervous apprehension as she tried to go on with her sewing; he also saw that she was growing very pale. Indeed she had almost the sick, faint look of one who is about to submit to some painful operation.

"Don't be frightened, Miss Mildred," he remarked, after watching her keenly for a moment or two. She looked up and saw him smiling broadly at her. In answer to her perplexed look he continued quietly, "I can tell you what has been the matter between us, and what is the matter now—you are afraid of me."

"Mr. Atwood—" faltered Mildred, and then words failed her, and her pale face crimsoned.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

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