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## THE FAILING HOPE,

A TEMPERANCE STORY,

*From the United States Saturday Post.*

BY T. S. ARTHUR.

"Shall I read to you, ma?" said Emma Martin, a little girl eleven years of age, coming up to the side of her mother, who sat in a musing attitude by the centre table, upon which the servant had just placed a light.

Mrs. Martin did not seem to hear the voice of her child; for she moved not, nor was there any change in the fixed, dreamy expression of her face.

"Ma," repeated the child, after waiting for a few moments, laying, at the same time, her head gently upon her mother's shoulder.

"What, dear?" Mrs. Martin asked, in a tender voice, rousing herself up.

"Shall I read to you, ma?" repeated the child.

"No—yes, dear, you may read for me," the mother said, and her tones were low, with something mournful in their expression.

"What shall I read, ma?"

"Get the bible, dear, and read to me from that good book," replied Mrs. Martin.

"I love to read in the bible," Emma said, as she brought to the centre table that sacred volume, and commenced turning over its pages. She then read chapter after chapter, while the mother listened in deep attention, after lifting her heart upwards, and breathing a silent prayer. At last Emma grew tired with reading, and closed the book.

"It is time for you to go to bed, dear," Mrs. Martin observed, as the little girl showed signs of weariness.

"Kiss me, ma," the child said, lifting her innocent face to that of her mother, and receiving the token of love she asked. So breathing her gentle good night, the affectionate girl glided off and retired to her chamber.

"Dear child!" Mrs. Martin murmured, as Emma left the room. "My heart trembles when I think of you, and look in the dark and doubtful future!"

She then leaned her head upon her hand, and sat in deep and evidently painful abstraction of mind. Thus she remained for nearly an hour, until aroused by the clock which struck the hour of ten.

With a deep sigh she arose, and commenced pacing the room backwards and forwards, pausing every now and then to listen to the sound of approaching footsteps, and moving on again as the sound went by. Thus she continued to walk until near eleven o'clock, when some one drew near, paused at the street door, and then opening it, came along the passage with a firm and steady step.

Mrs. Martin stopped, trembling in spite of herself before the parlour door, which a moment after was swung open. One glance at the face of the individual who entered, convinced her that her solicitude had been in vain.

"Oh, James!" she said, the tears gushing from her eyes, in spite of a strong effort to compose herself. "I am so glad that you have come!"

"Why are you so agitated, Emma?" her husband said, in some surprise, looking enquiringly into Mrs. Martin's face.

"You staid out so late—and—you know I am foolish sometimes!" she replied, leaning her head down upon his shoulder, and continuing to weep.

A change instantly passed upon Mr. Martin's countenance, and he stood still, for some time, his face wearing a grave thoughtful

expression, while his wife remained with her head leaning upon him. At last he drew his arm tenderly around her, and said—

"Emma, I am a sober man!"

"Do not dear James, speak of that. I am so happy now!"

"Yes, Emma, I will speak of it now." And as he said so, he gently seated her upon the sofa, and took his place beside her.

"Emma," he resumed, looking her steadily in the face. "I have resolved never again to touch the accursed cup that has so well-nigh destroyed our peace forever."

"Oh, James, what a mountain you have taken from my heart!"

Mrs. Martin replied, the whole expression of her face changing as suddenly as a landscape upon which the sun shines from beneath an obscuring cloud. "I have had nothing to trouble me but that—yet that one trouble has seemed more than I could possibly bear."

"You shall have no more trouble, Emma. I have been for some months under a strange delusion, it has seemed. But I am now fully awake, and see the dangerous precipice upon which I have been standing. This night I have solemnly resolved that I would drink no more spirituous liquors. Nothing stronger than wine shall again pass my lips."

"I cannot tell you how my heart is relieved," the wife said, "the whole of this evening I have been painfully oppressed with fear and dark forebodings. Our dear little girl is now at that age, when her future prospects interest me all the while. I think of her night and day. Shall they all be marred? I have asked myself often and often. But I could give my heart no certain answer. I need not tell you why."

"Give yourself no more anxiety on this point, Emma," her husband replied, "I will be a free man again. I will be to you and my dear child all that I have ever been."

"May our Heavenly Father aid you to keep that resolution," was the silent prayer that went up from the heart of Mrs. Martin.

The failing hope of her bosom revived under this assurance.—She felt again as in the early years of their wedded life, when hope and confidence and tender affection were all in the bloom and vigor of their first development. The light came back again to her eye, and the smile to her lip.

It was about four months afterwards, that Mr. Martin was invited to make one of a small party, given to a literary man, as visitor from a neighbouring city.

"I shall not be home to dinner, Emma," he said on leaving in the morning.

"Why not, James?" she asked.

"I am going to dine at four, with a select party of gentlemen."

Mrs. Martin did not reply, but a cloud passed over her face, in spite of an effort not to seem concerned.

"Don't be uneasy, Emma," noting this change—"I shall touch nothing but wine; I know my weakness, and shall be on my guard."

"Do be watchful over yourself, for my sake, and for the sake of our own dear child," Mrs. Martin replied, laying her arm tenderly upon his shoulder.

"Have no fear, Emma," he said, and kissing the yet fair and beautiful cheek of his wife, Mr. Martin left the house.

How long, how very long did the day seem to Mrs. Martin! The usual hour for his return passed away, the dinner hardly tasted: and then his wife counted the hours as they passed lingeringly away, until the dim, grey twilight fell with a saddening influence around her.

"He will be home soon, now," she thought. But the minutes glided into hours, and still he did not come. The tea table stood in the floor until nearly nine o'clock, before Mrs. Martin sat down