

by no means amounts to an intention. So it was with Jeffery Jones. He had pen, ink, and paper within his reach, and his time was at his own disposal; why then could he not write his letter that night as well as in the morning?

As Jeffery continued looking at the fire and musing on things gone by, he remembered also that a neighbour of his had done him an injury, though not intentionally. It is true that he had endeavoured to make amends for it, and earnestly implored to be forgiven, but this forgiveness had never been granted. The last night of the year, however, was not a time to be implacable, so the thought of calling on his neighbour in a kindly spirit occurred to him. "I have a great mind," said he, "to call on him to-morrow."

It was but six o'clock when he said this; why then could he not have put on his hat and great-coat, and seen his neighbour at once? He would then have healed the wounded heart of another, and afforded satisfaction to his own.

As Jeffery Jones went on in his cogitations, it occurred further to his memory that a few days before a case of great distress had been mentioned to him. A poor, deserving woman, well brought up, had, by the sickness and death of her husband, been reduced to extremity, so that some temporary assistance was required to enable her to keep her house over her head and support her little ones. There were many who were ready to help her, but some one was wanted to take the lead. Jeffery Jones was rich enough to spare from his own purse the required sum without inconvenience, or by the effort of an hour he might have obtained it from others, but he neglected to take either course. The last night of the year brought the matter home to him, and he began to think of going to the poor woman and telling her what he intended to do. "I have a great mind," said he, "to go to her in the morning."

Oh, Jeffery! Jeffery! hadst thou had the cause of the poor woman at thy heart, thou wouldest have gone that very hour; the fatherless might then have blessed thee, and the widow have put thy name in her prayer.

Jeffery Jones mused another hour or two by his cheerful fire and well-swept hearth, having "a great mind" to do many things, but ending all in doing nothing. The cold weather gave an additional charm to his fire-side; a comfortable tea and a hot supper drove away from his thoughts his aged relative, his penitent neighbour, and the poor widow; and Jeffery Jones retired to a downy bed, very little affected with thoughts of other people's miseries.

The morrow came and brought with it its occupations and its cares; and though Jeffery was in a great degree a man of leisure, he found enough business of one kind or another to engage his attention; absorbed by the events of the passing hours, the reflections of the preceding night no longer held a place in his memory.

A week or two of the new year had flown before Jeffery Jones gave himself the trouble to inquire after the widow; and he then learned that, as no one had stepped forward in her favour, the landlord had

distrainted upon her for rent, and the poor broken-hearted woman with her little ones had departed no one knew where.

Go, get thee to thy comforts, Jeffery Jones; eat, drink, and sleep, if thou canst, without compunction; but for all this thou art not guiltless concerning the fatherless and the widow. "Blessed is he that considereth the poor; the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble. The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing; Thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness."

It might, perhaps, be as much as three or four months after this—for the hawthorn tree was then in blossom, and the birds were singing—when the news came suddenly upon Jeffery Jones that his neighbour had left the country for Canada, having declared that if one thing more than another oppressed his mind on quitting his native land, it was the fact of his never having obtained the forgiveness of the neighbour whom he had unwittingly injured.

And so, Jeffery, thou hast allowed thy neighbour to cross the wide seas with an arrow in his heart, though with a word of kindness thou mightest have removed it, and poured oil and balm into his wounds.

Thou hast prepared bitter herbs for thy repast, and planted thorns in thy pillow. "If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him."

It was when the reapers were at work with their sickles, and binding the sheaves in the fields, that a letter with a black seal came to Jeffery Jones, which made his heart misgive him. As he feared, it was to say that his aged relative, to whom he had acted unkindly, was dead.

And what thinkest thou now, Jeffery? The poor widow wandered away in her distress without thine aid; thy neighbour left his country without the consolation of thy forgiveness; and thine aged relative has been called away from the world without an acknowledgment from thee of thine unkindness. Truly, thou hast encompassed thyself about with many sorrows.

To waste that time in profitless musing which ought to be employed in benevolent action, is a great though a common error. When our ploughing and sowing is ideal, our harvest is not likely to be real. We may point the finger of reproach and derision at Jeffery Jones; but are we ourselves free from his sinful infirmity? Do our deeds equal our determinations? and are we aware that he who defers till to-morrow the duty of to-day, risks the hazard of never doing it at all?

Reader, time is hastening on with giant strides, and eternity with all of us is well-nigh at hand. If thou hast a fault to confess, an injury to forgive, or a kindness to perform, be not content with having "a great mind" to do it, but set about it with all thy heart, and let it be done directly—

Remembering, in this world of sin and sorrows, That one "to-day" is worth a score "to-morrows."