

in a whirl of occupation and amusement, to silence "the still small voice" within me. It is in vain—it is in vain! It ever cries: 'You have wronged the orphan!' 'You have betrayed the trust of a dying friend!' Sometimes for a long period, I drive reflection away by the succession of business and pleasure; but it returns with redoubled force, and my sufferings, seem more intense for the interval of ease.

My wife tries in vain to penetrate my secret; but I drive her away when my dark hour is upon me—her presence only aggravates me. Yes, even she, dear as she is, can afford no relief by her affection. I feel how unworthy I am of her tenderness. I am conscious how she would spurn from her, one no better than a common swindler. Should I listen to her persuasions and unburden myself to her—how her high soul would reject me! She never must know it—no, never! Cost what it will the secret must die with me!

Five years have passed, and I am still unable to refund my spoils, without retrenching greatly. In short, I have given up all idea of it. When I first appropriated it, I should have started with horror from the thought of never repaying it. I laid the "flattering unction to my soul," that I was only borrowing it, and should soon return principal and interest; but now I have become familiarized with the idea of retaining it—thus do we travel downward in the path of guilt! I cannot repay it without ruin; and what does this little girl want with this large property? She probably leads a calm and quiet life with her grandmother, unmolested by the cares which riches bring. No doubt she has all the comforts of life, and never having known wealth, needs it not. It is very different with Cornelia: she has ever been accustomed to the elegancies of life, and could not live without them. It will not do! Whilst I am reasoning thus, I feel the fallacy of it. Perhaps this girl, this Lousia Seymour, as she is called—how grating is the sound of that name to my ears—it seems as if some fiend were whispering it to me. In the midst of business or pleasure, sleeping or waking, I hear it—I see it written in letters of fire. Perhaps she may need the necessaries of life, whilst I, I am rioting in abundance which belongs to her. But no, no, I will not believe it. She is happy, far, oh, far happier, than he who wronged her of her patrimony. After all, how little is necessary to true happiness! How few things do we really need! how little do riches conduce to that peace of mind which has its seat in the soul. Were it not, oh, were it not for that devouring fiend—ambition, who knows no laws, acknowledges no moral control in its onward path. Why, why cannot I break from this thralldom, and place my desires on what is truly worth obtaining—virtue?

One crime leads to another: I often find myself wishing the death of this girl; and then I should not feel as if there was a being living whom I had wronged. Why, when death is visiting almost every family, taking the young and blooming, why cannot she be called? She the fatherless, the motherless, with no one to mourn for her. Then I could breathe freely—a weight would be removed from my breast. Can it be that I, who am so profuse in my charities, so soft in my feelings—am wishing the death of a harmless, inoffensive being, who has never crossed my path, who knows not of my existence?

A Sunday has passed—a warm, bright spring day—so calm, so still—the bustle of business has ceased—all seems quiet and peaceful. I have been to church. Oh! that I could join in the prayers, and find that peace of mind which all can find but me. I cannot, with an unrequited sin upon my soul! How it bears me down—what an eternal load; sleeping or waking, I am ever conscious of it. The sermon to day, indeed every Sunday, it always seems directed to me. Yes, me—the wronger of the fatherless. The clergyman always looks towards me. Can he divine? Does he know? But these are foolish fancies. Oh! how I wish I could never go to church! Cornelia, however, makes such a point of it, I cannot refuse;

though I am always worse afterward. As I placed my wife in our carriage, the most tasteful and most costly of any in the city—necks were stretched eagerly forth to obtain a smile, a look, or nod from her. The wealthiest, the most distinguished, pressed forward to proffer a hand to me. Was I satisfied then? No! I envied the honest mechanic, as he walked to his home, possessed with an unsullied integrity. I envied the meanest who could say, there lived no human being whom he had injured.

I am blessed with beautiful and healthy children; my wife adores me, for I am a devoted husband and fond father. Men esteem me—they call me a pattern of integrity; I am so in all things but that one act. Yes, as if to redeem my crime as much as possible, I am over-scrupulous in every moral duty—and especially severe in correcting the least apparent dishonesty in all under my control. Do the praises which are poured into my ears, satisfy me? No! they sound like mockery; and yet I cannot live without them. There is a secret consciousness within me, which turns all my blessings into curses, and leaves me a blasted tree—on which the dews of heaven may descend—the sun may shine, but it can never, never blossom again.

I have not sought my pen to relieve suppressed feelings for a long time. I have contrived to drown thought, to banish care. I have been gay—yes gay—the life of the social circle; and I have made Cornelia happy by my good spirits. How her noble countenance is illuminated when she sees me apparently free from care. We have been in a constant round of amusement, and I banished to the depths of my soul all dark reflections—but was it happiness? Was it gaiety which I felt? How different from the tranquil delight of a soul at peace with itself—which I can imagine, but can never feel—no, never, much as I hope for it. My sensations are of a wretch who seeks relief from laudanum for acute bodily pain. The agony of suffering may be lulled, and a wild delirium succeed; but it cannot be called enjoyment. This unnatural state however, is over, and my dark hour is now darker than ever.

I was so fortunate as to possess a young man in my employ, who is the very perfection of men. He was in matters of business a second self. He had the entire control of every thing, and was acquainted with all my concerns, except that one dark spot—which had he known it how he would have despised me—me, one whom he looked on as one of the first of human beings. He was every thing to me, so indefatigable, he seemed to live only to serve me; and I determined to place him in the path of fortune if it were in my power.

One day he informed me he was on the point of marriage. I was pleased to hear it, and resolved to increase his salary. I had been for a longer time than usual in one of my cheerful moods. We were at breakfast one morning, when Cornelia, taking up the newspaper, turned, as is usual with ladies, first to the marriages.

'Ah! Charles Leslie is married!' she exclaimed—knowing the intelligence would interest me.

'Indeed,' said I, 'and what is the fair one's name? Charles did not mention it to me.'

'Lousia Seymour,' said she, reading from the paper.

The cup fell from my hand, I felt as if struck by a thunder bolt. A dark cloud gathered over my face, and I rushed from the room. 'Lousia Seymour!' I cried in fury: 'could he find no other name but that to blast me with? Are there not girls enough for him to marry, but he must seek her in her obscurity? I suppose she will have children too, who will inherit their mother's rights, and I never, never shall be free from the load which oppresses me!'

I felt as if Leslie had done me some wrong, and I was irritated against him. When we met I could scarcely bring myself to congratulate him; and it was done with a very ill grace. From that time, I never treated him with the same friendliness as formerly. His presence constantly irritated me; and my dark hours grew more and more frequent. If Leslie had married that girl on purpose to torment me, I could not have felt

more displeased with him. He never could act afterwards to my satisfaction. I found fault with every thing he did; and when he informed me of the birth of a son, my ire could no longer be restrained. In short he perceived he could not remain with me. He hinted something of the same—and I caught at it with avidity; for I felt, were he out of my sight I might grow calmer, and once more shake off the weight which dragged me down to the lowest depths of despondency. We parted, and I endeavored to dismiss him from my thoughts; for that reason I never inquired his fate—but I missed him every hour, and soon felt I had driven from me a sincere friend. My injustice to him only served to add another sting to my conscience, and my gloom increased. I have succeeded, however, in keeping my feelings under control—I conceal from Cornelia the gnawing worm within me. I am calm—whilst deep, deep in my breast there ever remains a crushing weight—I can never shake off.

It is two years since I parted with Charles Leslie. My children were assembled at home enjoying the Christmas holidays with youthful spirits, devoid of care. Their happiness, their fond affection was like sunshine to my desolate breast. I felt cheered by their innocence, and sparkling vivacity. I spared nothing to make them happy.

On New Year's Eve, as I was returning from my office, where I had been detained later than usual, I remembered I had not yet purchased a gift for my wife. I stopped my carriage at Stewart's, and a variety of elegant articles were displayed. I could not decide, however, until I saw an expensive camel's hair shawl. It was crimson, and I remembered to have heard Cornelia express a desire for one of that color: though she possessed a variety, I knew she had none like that. The price, indeed, staggered even me; however, as the young man displayed it in graceful folds, I imagined how well it would become her queenlike form. I decided to take it, and proceeded homewards with my gift. As I was entering her apartment to offer my present, I perceived a young woman leaving it, whose pale and emaciated countenance attracted my attention. Her apparel was mean and her air dejected: she held by the hand, a pale, half-fed looking boy, a perfect contrast to my own hearty one, who was bounding towards me. A sorrowful countenance always strikes one more forcibly during the holidays when all are cheerful. My wife was speaking to her in a tone of reproof, I overheard her, as I approached, say—

'Indeed, I am very much disappointed. I certainly thought I had a right to expect you would make some exertion to please me.'

'Did you know, Madam,' replied the woman, in a dejected tone, while tears filled her eyes, 'what it was to have a husband in bad health to nurse—and two children ill with the measles—with no one to assist, you would make excuses for me.'

She departed, whilst I passed on to Cornelia's room. 'Who was that woman you were scolding, Cornelia?' said I, entering the room.

'Poor thing!' she replied, 'perhaps I did speak too quickly; but, to tell the truth, I am very much disappointed. She engaged to embroider a merino tunic for Henry to-morrow, and she has just been here to tell me she cannot finish it! He will have to appear on New Year's day in his old one. You know how much he is noticed and admired, he ought to have a new dress. I could have purchased an imported one much cheaper—but this person was in want, and solicited work, and I therefore let her do it, as I had no other work to give her. She is a protegee of mine, whose distress I have often relieved, and I think she might have found some means to oblige me.'

How thoughtless even the best disposed may become, when accustomed to have every wish gratified as soon as formed.

'And who may this interesting looking protegee of your's be?' said I. 'You have never mentioned her before.'

Oh, Henry, I did not care to speak of her to you, Cornelia replied, 'for fear of annoying you. She is Charles Leslie's wife.'