

THE ONE FAULT.

BY MRS. EMBURY.

"Trifles make the sum of human things.
And half our misery from our foibles springs."

"Who could have believed it possible," said Charles Wharton, as he sat at the breakfast-table, impatiently awaiting the tardy appearance of his wife; "who could have believed it possible that a single fault should neutralize so many good qualities." He leaned his head on his hand, and a feeling of mortification and disgust arose in his mind, as his eye glanced over the rumpled napkins, ill-cleaned knives, and soiled table-cloth, whose varied stains told of the double duty which it was daily called upon to perform. The entrance of Mrs. Wharton at length disturbed his unpleasant meditations, but he was so thoroughly out of humour, that he scarcely noticed her pleasant face and good humoured smile, while he scanned, with severe look, her morning dress.—This, to say truth, was not exactly in the neatest possible style, for Mrs. Wharton did not adopt *strait-laced habits*, until the hour when she might expect visitors. Her usual breakfast attire was a loose wrapper, always the especial abomination of gentlemen, while her beautiful hair, uncombed, and twisted back from her forehead in stiff curl papers, certainly did not add to the elegance of her appearance.

"I wish to Heaven you would wear something descent in the morning, Mary," said her husband, as she took her seat. "I detest those slovenly loose gowns; nothing but habitual ill health is an excuse for wearing them."

"Oh, I have not time to *fix up* for breakfast, Charles."

"You found time when you were at Lebanon last summer, to dress yourself, and you never looked better than in those pretty morning-gowns you then wore."

"One is obliged to be well dressed at places, where there is so much company, but I cannot afford to wear such handsome muslins at home, so as soon as we returned, I had them altered into dinner dresses."

"It is a pity a woman would not always consider her husband as *company*," said Charles, snappishly, as he took his cup of coffee.

"What is the matter with you, Charles," said Mrs. Wharton, when the uncomfortable meal was nearly at an end; "I never saw you so out of humour; you have done nothing but scold since I came down stairs."

She spoke with the utmost cheerfulness, and her placid countenance was in singular con-

trast with the husband's vexed look. It was scarcely possible for a man of Charles Wharton's really good temper to answer harshly, and he replied gravely:

"I have been vexed by petty things, Mary, and they always try the temper more severely than serious troubles. I had an appointment with a gentleman at nine o'clock, and it only wanted ten minutes of that time when you came down to breakfast, so that I have been compelled to disappoint him; then your delay has completely spoiled every thing—the coffee is cold, the eggs like stones, the toast good for nothing, and this wretched breakfast is set before me on a table-cloth which would disgrace a well-ordered kitchen."

Mrs. Wharton looked serious as she replied, "I am sorry, Charles, but indeed I was very sleepy this morning, and I only took a short nap after the bell rung for breakfast."

"And the consequence of your short nap, Mary, is that I must go without my breakfast, and perhaps loose the chance of making a thousand dollars."

"Why did you not tell me you were in haste?" asked Mrs. Wharton.

"Oh, because I am heartily tired of being obliged to make daily and hourly requests for those things which ought to be habitual to you. There is a want of attention *somewhere*, and it is time you discovered where the fault lies, Mary."

"I am sure I do not know what you mean; I do every thing I can, but my housekeeping never seems to please you, although almost all my time is spent in looking after the servants."

"If half that time was bestowed in teaching them some regular system, you would have less care, and I more comfort."

"What do you want me to do, Charles?"

"That is precisely the thing which I cannot tell you, but which you ought to know already, Mary; it is not a man's business to teach housekeeping."

"I wish we could afford to hire a housekeeper," sighed Mrs. Wharton, despondingly.

"That is a very vain wish, madam; you had better wish for the possession of a little more knowledge on the subject, and then we should not need one."

"Charles, you are never satisfied. I am sure I know a great deal more about housekeeping than most of the young wives of our acquaintance."

"I can only say, then, that I am sorry for the husbands of those that know less," mut-