

# THE WINSTALLS A TALE OF LOVE AND MONEY

OF  
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BY  
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## CHAPTER XI.

### CIGARS, SERMONS AND SOCIALISM.

It was on the following Monday evening that Mr. Erwin had been invited to tea with Mr. Stuart. In the old land plain people dine at one o'clock and Mr. Stuart followed that custom. Apart from the habit itself, which becomes more or less a second nature, he believed it to be more conducive to health and to work. So he had invited Mr. Erwin simply to tea.

Mr. Erwin arrived punctually, as was his custom, and the two friends greeted each other with a heartiness which one could hardly have expected from such a brief acquaintance. Each found in the other a peculiar degree of kinship and sympathy. And it is not external relationship, or identity of talent, or taste, or experience, that alone creates such sympathy. There is something deeper and more subtle than any of these things. Here were two men widely diverse in many ways—the one was a Presbyterian and the other an Episcopalian. The one had been a preacher for nearly twenty years; the other for the same period had been a member of the Stock Exchange. The one was minister of a wealthy church, and was highly honored in his profession; the other was seeking an entrance into the ministry, and would hail the humblest appointment with thankfulness. How did these two men come into such close sympathy with such a brief acquaintance? If we cannot account for it we can note the fact at any rate. Each of the two felt that he had found a true friend.

After tea the two gentlemen retired to Mr. Stuart's study. A small fire was blazing in the open grate. The evening was not cold, but Mr. Stuart liked to have an excuse for a fire. He had been brought up with open fires, and he held that people were happier in mind and healthier in body who had open fires. He abhorred stoves. He said they made him homesick. It was the open fire partly that attracted him to this lodging.

Mr. Stuart produced cigars—an attention which Mr. Erwin appreciated. Mr. Stuart did not smoke himself.

"Why do n't you smoke?" said Mr. Erwin. "Or if you don't why do you expect me to do so?"

"Oh," said Mr. Stuart, "if I don't smoke it is not because I have any superlative virtue that makes me superior to the habit. The fact is, I did smoke—or tried to, several times; but it did not agree with me. So I don't try it now."

"But don't you think it is a bad habit," said Mr. Erwin, "and ought to be discouraged?"

"Oh, I don't know," said Mr. Stuart. "For some, no doubt, it is a bad habit. Those with whom it does not agree certainly ought not to do it. Neither ought very young people; and smoking to excess must be bad for all. But several friends have told me that it is a solace after hard work, especially after mental work; and if they find it so I don't see any harm in their doing it."

"You are certainly liberal," said Mr. Erwin. "Most of us, you know, are very hard

on the sins, or supposed sins, from which we ourselves are free."

"Oh, yes," said Mr. Stuart, "I suppose we are all Pharisees, more or less. No doubt we ought to be good in small things as well as great. The trouble is, that when we become too exact about trifles we are liable to become less exact about things of real importance. The Pharisees, you know, were very punctilious about forms, but they forgot all about mercy and judgment."

"What you say is true," rejoined Mr. Erwin. "I knew one young man on the Stock Exchange who set up to be a paragon of character. He cultivated all the small proprieties of life with punctilious exactness, and I suppose he was not a hypocrite, at least consciously; but he committed a barefaced piece of roguery which many men who make no profession would scorn to be guilty of."

"That is the trouble," said Mr. Stuart, "we are not proportionate. Many of us are too small, and when we get hold of a few small virtues they fill up the whole man, leaving no room for larger things. Then that leads to self-deception, and we may be led far astray before we know it. But come now! I did not intend to preach a sermon. How are you getting along?"

"Well," said Mr. Erwin, "I have seen my bishop. You know Dr. Stone, don't you?"

"Well, yes," said Mr. Stuart, "I know him slightly. I have met him on the platform of some public meetings. A rather fine man I take him to be. But I suppose you would find him rather cold."

"Certainly, rather so," replied Mr. Erwin, "still not more so than I expected. An influential friend had spoken to him first, and possibly that had some effect. You know that he is a man very much wedded to what is regular and formal, and my case was exceptional."

"Yes, but could he not make allowance for the exceptional? Form and order are very good and necessary, but a man should not be a slave to them."

"Ah, that is just the trouble," said Mr. Erwin, "especially in our church. Form counts for so much. So the bishop is of opinion that my long career in business very much disqualifies me for the ministry. Now I may say that my wife, who is not a bishop, takes just the contrary view. She thinks the experience I have gained of men and the world is one of the best qualifications I could have."

"And I venture to think your wife is right," said Mr. Stuart. "With all respect to the bishop, your wife knows you better than he does, and if you will allow me to say so, I think Mrs. Erwin is a lady of rare spiritual insight."

"She never swerved an iota from the high ideal with which we started in life," said Mr. Erwin. "I was far away below and behind her; and that gives me hope that she may be right in this matter too. But the bishop did not say that my case is quite hopeless. He asked me to prepare a sermon for him. I saw that he deemed that to be one of my weakest points, and I am afraid that he is not wrong there."

"Well, that has to be tested," said Mr.

Stuart. "You have learned the habit of putting your mind on a thing, and when a man can do that and be in earnest about his work, what may he not do? Have you fixed yet on the theme of this coming sermon?"

"No," said Mr. Erwin, "not at all. A number of subjects have been running through my mind, but I have not settled on any of them."

"That is no unusual experience with preachers," said Mr. Stuart. "I have known brethren who would spend the greater part of the week hunting for a text. Now if I might give you a suggestion I would say—Choose some worthy theme; one that is congenial to you, and yet high, so that it will tune you up. The theme has a good deal to do in making both the sermon and the man."

"Thank you for the suggestion," said Mr. Erwin. "I have no doubt it is a good one, and I shall remember it. And that leads me to say that if I could learn a little of your method I think that might be an immense help."

"Well, I don't know that I have much of a method," said Mr. Stuart. "I suppose every man finds his own way very much. Of course if there is any hint in the world that I can give you, I shall be glad to do it."

"What was your subject yesterday morning, for instance," asked Mr. Erwin, "and how did you treat it? I might get a useful hint there. Not that I would try to copy your method, but I might be helped to form one of my own. You remember the synopsis you gave us at Mr. Winstall's. It had a few plans like that before me, they might aid me, I think."

"How would it do," said Mr. Stuart, "if I gave you simply my text, and see if you cannot find your own way of dealing with it? Now the text yesterday was 'Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out.' You might reflect a few minutes and see what you would make of that."

Mr. Erwin was pleased with the idea. Mr. Stuart took a book that he might not disturb him. After ten minutes or so Mr. Erwin spoke.

"I think," he said, "I might treat the subject something in this way. I might first show some of the things that men need to come for. And there would be a good deal of scope there. For instance, men are sinners, and they need to come for forgiveness. There is, again, a feeling of unrest, and they need to come for peace. Some are in trouble and need to come for consolation. Others are struggling with temptation and need to come for power. And everybody needs to come for a sure hope of immortality. Would that be something in the right line?"

"Splendid," said Mr. Stuart. "And what would you do next, or would there be anything more?"

"Oh, yes," said his friend. Having pointed out these great needs, I would like to show where they can be supplied. They can be met only in Christ. Pardon, for instance, can be found only in Him who died to put away our sins. He gives peace, too, for He is the Prince of Peace. He gives Comfort by the Spirit who is called the Comforter. He gives power also to overcome, and He gives a good hope of eternal life. I think such points might be made very clear."

"Surely," said Mr. Stuart. "And I may say that I am more than surprised that you could formulate such a plan in so short a time. It would take some men whole days to put those ideas in such order. Now after dealing with those two main divisions of your subject, would you add anything further?"