

# "BEACON LIGHTS."

BY EMILIE "ARCHFIELD."

## THE ROOT OF ALL EVIL.

"Such as the tree is, such is the fruit."

YEARS and years ago, a stately mother led her daughter adown the old oaken staircase of her ancestral home. The maiden's cheek was pale, although her eye flashed proudly; once, only once, her step faltered, and then that mother whispered a word in her ear, and she went on, decked in her bridal finery, but with a heart cold and heavy, to give her hand and troth to the mammon of the world—GOLD. A lesson might be learnt from her life, but we hasten onward, onward to the after result; for surely, surely such marriages are as a drag upon society, filling the world, as it were, with their bitter fruits.

Again we see the cold hearted bride, middle-aged and widowed, watching over the future of an only daughter. Not in merry England has the girl been trained, and it seems to the mother, that amid the 'witching loveliness of the scenes around her, her child has caught the trick of their grace and beauty and why not? Watch a face, the face of one possessing a soul deep, true, and impressionable; set before it a something to delight the eyes, and lo! that same delight sinks down into the soul, causing the countenance, however ordinary, to glow and kindle with the true beauty which painters strive to portray; a beauty which is indeed felt, but never expressed. So Esther Westlake grew up beautiful as a dream, and with a soul keenly alive to the surroundings of her daily life. But was there no sort of resemblance to her mother and grandmother? Alas, yes; and the time was fast approaching when the tiny germ would spring up and assert itself.

They, the mother and daughter, had wandered far from their home (St. Goar on the Rhine), and standing by the Loreley, both gazed upon the fair waters and the grandly-shaped rocks and mountains. Others were present, but to these two it seemed that they were alone; alone, to muse as they liked upon the present, past, and future. Esther's thoughts were mainly busy with this last—she was looking on and craving for herself a future of wealth and power. And the mother? Was she dreaming of her own youth as she gazed upon the young face she loved so well? Did she now regret the step she had taken upon her wedding morning? Did she now think kindly of the husband her coldness had repulsed? Was she sorry for the great and bitter wrong she

had wrought upon his young life? And now where was the gold for which she had bartered her life's happiness? She possessed but just sufficient for her daily wants—the bulk of it having been left, in preference to herself, to a distant relative of her deceased husband. Where, too, was the man whom once she had truly loved? Ah, that were indeed a bitter question! and raising her eyes to the blue heavens she prayed—yes, prayed—that Esther might be spared all this; for although she had sown the seeds of mammon in her child's heart, Esther was her idol, the one thing she loved truly in the world. It was even now more the beauty of the calm evening than anything else which had roused the accusing voice within her, and prompted so true and pure a wish for the daughter by her side; and yet she loved the girl. But can I lead you to understand—she loved gold even more. She was the same, and yet not the same as of old—

only there are moments in all our lives when that which ought to have been ours of purity and unselfishness visits us, perchance though, only, to make us feel when it is gone, how utterly hollow and withered our souls have become without it. And Esther, too—the sweet, subtle influence was drawing her as well away from the worship of the yellow dross of earth, to that which shall alone endure, when earth and its voices shall have died away, and heaven with its true charity have dawned upon the soul. Yes, and years and years after, she remembered the time, remembered it with bitterness too deep, too full of anguish for human tongue to tell. The steamer came in sight, and Esther and her mother, moving on down to the pier, took their places upon it to return home—and out there, in the still, purple twilight, Esther met her fate.



"No, no! I'm all right, my boy!"

A slight commotion arose on board, something being a little wrong with the boiler, as they afterwards discovered; and our two ladies, with the rest, were very nervous and frightened, till a gentleman coming forward and explaining the matter as a something; very slight indeed, and of no consequence whatever, set their minds at rest. It seemed that Esther's face struck him then; anyhow, he devoted himself to them during the remainder of the way, and seemed loath to part from them at their journey's end. He was but a holiday-seeker, and was to go further on the morrow; but it came and passed with many another morrow, and still he lingered, for the girl with her grace and charms had bound him fast, so that when at last he bade farewell to St. Goar it was but to hasten to England, in order to prepare for the due reception of his promised bride. "Come home and be married," such was the plea of his parents; and when, six