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Tumble Down Farm.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY," "GOING, GOING, GONE!" &c.

(From the Saturday Evening Mail.)

CHAPTER I.

Everybody exclaimed, "What beautiful places—!"—
Ab, that "if!" Martin M. farm had once produced the finest crops of wheat, and the heaviest. Its Indian corn had been a proverb. Its oats were almost equal to the English, which the emigrants from the fast-anchored isle assure us are the best in the world. Its grazing land nourished famous cattle, and, as to the small crops, they seemed to grow without culture. The lawn, tastefully arranged, was brilliant in knots of flowers, and displayed every variety of shrub and tree, indigenous and exotic. Plenty, comfort and ease attended the place and its possessor—and the primal curse appeared to have been suspended in favor of this beautiful spot. So it might still have been—"if!"

Ah, that "if!" It was not hard to guess. It was the same that we find, all the land over. It was the same hateful let and hindrance which chokes the prosperity of thousands, in country and in town. The place might still have flourished, if the owner had not preferred the debasing pleasures of strong drink to the satisfaction of watching the results of his industry, and garnering the proceeds of his labors.

Martin's daughters were fain to apologise for him:—"Father," they said, "had so much else to occupy him, that he never could find time for the ornamental arrangement of the lawn and the garden. But the merely ornamental features of the place were not all that were neglected. Gates were unhung. Boards swung loosely on out-houses. Pumps and wells were dry. The paths were grass-grown. Crops struggled for existence among graves of rank weeds. Less than a half yield of anything was produced. Fruit trees were unpruned, and matted with parasitical and useless branches. Briars and brambles almost concealed the fences. The air of a wilderness was over the whole premises. The words of Solomon were realized,—“the field of the slothful, and the vineyard of the man void of understanding.”

Martin was lounging at the gate, with the air of one who is conscious of idleness, and heartily ashamed of himself, but has not the nerve to do better; woe-worn with ennui, and forlorn with inward rebukes. Unkempt and unshaven, dilapidated in costume and wretched in appearance, he well represented the visible embodiment of the genius of the place—the spirit—an evil spirit—which haunted it; for if any may be called haunted premises, they are those of him who has surrendered

himself to "the invincible spirit of wine," which Shakespeare apostrophizes. Wine is the poetical word for the whole class of maddening beverages; but very little wine, we fancy, finds its way over the modern inebriate's lips.

And while Martin loitered, waiting and wishing for something or somebody to divert his thoughts, there rode up to his gate a personage of very different aspect. There was nothing in his appearance careless, and nothing absolutely penurious; but you read at once in his guise and costume, that he was very well aware that the price of a pair of new boots is equal to the annual interest of a hundred dollars. A new hat would touch the same figure; and as to a full suit, that would extinguish the product of a thousand. So Pettigrew Pettifogg, Esq., Counsellor and Attorney at Law, clung to his well-saved habiliments while they would cling to him, and paid no heed to obsolete fashion while the texture remained firm, and the seams entire. He was not to be taxed for the folly of young America and the benefit of tailors—not he! It would answer for those to be guilty of such nonsense who had credit with these tradesmen. Pettigrew Pettifogg always paid cash at the end of six months; or before for a handsome discount. His carriage was an antique, but perfectly sound and road-worthy; and his faithful old horse was in keeping with the rest of his establishment. Pettigrew Pettifogg was well to do in the world; but it was apparent enough that careful economy had slowly piled up this result. Nobody knew how much he was worth—and he did not care or desire that anybody should. Pettigrew was "close-mouthed," and it answered his purpose better to be supposed poor than rich. Accumulation was always in his thoughts; and he had such a horror of waste and extravagance that he always stood ready to save—for himself—what careless spendthrifts threw away. He had always been very attentive to Martin Meeker.

Martin supposed this attention was friendship, until the arrears of Pettigrew's kind offices were presented to him in a very one-sided account current. The debtor opened his eyes a little, and "supposed" that his creditor "was in no hurry." Pettifoggers and spiders seldom are in haste, until their toils are carefully woven and adjusted. The preliminaries and approaches are painfully slow; the coup-de-grace is sudden and effectual. So Pettigrew Pettifogg waited a year, and then called again with a still further increased demand. Compound interest and new charges had swelled the debt wonderfully. Martin stared again. Pettifogg hinted at a settlement, and Martin looked hopelessly blank, though strongly inclined to be indignant at the audacity of such an idea. The cunning lawyer suggested that nothing could be easier. Martin had only to execute a mortgage merely as a matter of form—and the account