

"If I can be an honourable character and maintain myself honestly by my own exertions, I shall not trouble myself about white hands and gentlemanly notions, Owen, I assure you.

These two lads were about the same age, and, in accordance with an annual custom, were visiting, with a large family party, at their grandfather's mansion. Just as Owen had uttered his last remark, the prayer-bell rang, and their venerable relative entered with the usual salutations of the new year. Their own response was chastened by the conviction that he could not survive to witness many more such anniversaries, and that each returning period might be the last of their family gatherings round his cheerful fire side. He might have heard some part of our friends' conversation, but he made no allusion to the circumstance, save that, in his morning supplications at the domestic altar, he prayed most fervently that "the God of their fathers would bless the lads now standing on the threshold of active life, with guidance as to their future course on earth, and crown its close with an abundant entrance into eternal life."

"Mr. M—— complained of difficulty in speaking to young people upon religious subjects, yet they perpetually felt how warmly he was interested in their welfare; and many of his grandchildren regarded him as their most confidential and indulgent friend, a title which he richly merited and sedulously turned to their advantage.— After breakfast he distributed the customary New Year's Gifts to all except Owen and Edmund, whom he invited into his study to receive the neat substantial watches which he always presented to those who had just quitted the routine of school.

"This is an important era to you, my dear lads," he remarked, as he contemplated the delight with which they examined the bright little monitors, which they deemed a great addition to their dignity. "You read of epochs of time in history, of critical

junctures in the career of heroes, of 'golden opportunities' in every individual's life, and all these unite in the experience of to-day! Having completed one brief period of preparatory discipline and study, you have arrived at a point where many ways meet, or rather, where many paths branch off; and need direction as to the one you should choose for your onward course. Have you thought at all what you should be?"

"Oh, yes!" replied Owen. "I mean to be a gentleman; that has been decided long ago."

A smile lurked for a moment in Mr. M——o's eye, as he turned towards Edmund with the query, "And *you*, is your choice made?"

"I must be a worker, sir," answered Edmund, "and suppose I shall follow my father's profession, and try to cure, or at least to alleviate, my neighbours' sufferings."

"Well, that is a very honorable, useful, and influential post, Edmund, though involving much self-denial, much patient study, and much persevering activity; and I trust you will be blessed and made a blessing to thousands in your day and generation."

"I had thought of the law, or engineering, or mercantile pursuits," continued Edmund, "but I felt afraid of the temptations I might encounter there."

"There is no sphere free from temptations, my boy; and some fancy the medical student is more exposed to scepticism, infidelity, and dissipation than most others; but there is One, Edmund, able and willing to shield all who seek his protection. While preserving your own integrity, he may enable your steady consistency to attract your associates to the service of the same Master."

"And so, Owen," pursued Mr. M——, turning to his other grandson, "your design is to be a gentleman?"

"Yes, sir, I hate work, and shall have a handsome income when I am of age; so I think it will be a good